

10:00 a.m.

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's 10 o'clock, and this meeting is called to order as per the appropriate provision of information to all members sometime ago.

When I consulted with individual members of the committee over the last several months and basically asked you to set aside three days, the days of December 16, 17, and 20, for this particular agenda, that was the maximum time that I thought the committee might have to take to address its work. If it's at all possible to work through this agenda and have it concluded in one day, that would not necessarily, from the chairman's position, be a negative conclusion, but that depends entirely on the members. A number of you have indicated to me that you have difficulty with the 20th, and a number of you also indicated to me that you had difficulty with some portions of the 17th. So I just provide that information to you to advise you of such. There will be no curtailment of any discussion, of course. However, if we can work towards that kind of deadline, that would be just great.

The agenda has been circulated, and as always is the case, if individual Members of the Legislative Assembly have ideas that they want to have addressed by this particular committee, they can so advise the chair, and the chair will then put those matters on the agenda.

This agenda was published several days ago. We have on this agenda: 1, of course, the Call to Order, that we've just had; 2, Approval of Agenda, which we'll come to.

The remaining portions of the agenda shall be Approval of Minutes dealing with the meetings of January 25 and 26. Business Arising from the Minutes. There are two items in there: Update on Legislative Assembly Committee Rooms, that I'll give you a brief update on, and Designation of Smoking Areas in Legislature Building and Legislature Annex, that I'll give you a briefing on as well.

There was one matter that did arise out of the minutes of January 25 and 26, and it had to do with spousal travel services. We discussed this on January 25, and further review of these minutes in the last few days would suggest that this matter was to be returned at a future meeting of the Members' Services Committee. Perhaps you can either make a notation on your own notes to deal with that as 4(c), or we'll deal with it when we come to item 6, Legislative Assembly budget estimates. I'm in your hands with respect to that.

Item 5, Old Business: Year 2000 Update and Recent Trends in Health Benefit Plans. There will be briefings that I'll provide.

Then we have item 6, Legislative Assembly budget estimates.

Then in keeping with the matter in which I have been advised by members of their desire to raise matters, we have 7(a), the Singing of *O Canada* in the Chamber, which I was advised as the chairman of this committee sometime ago would be a matter that our members would want raised.

Item 7(b), Risk Management Fund. I received input from two individual members who wanted to participate or raise matters with respect to that. The first of those is Dr. Pannu, and the second is Mr. Dickson.

Other New Business. To this point in time I've had no notifications from individual members that there would be additional other new business items that they wanted to deal with.

Number 8, of course, we'll deal with when we come to it, and number 9 we'll deal with when we come to it as well.

That's basically the agenda. If it's so in order, I would ask for a motion to approve it.

Mr. Gibbons.

MR. GIBBONS: Under business arising there are a couple of other items besides the spousal travel, that being the revisiting of computers for each member and future budget documents. You'd suggested that you were going to have a special meeting prior to today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. GIBBONS: That's three other items besides the ones you put up.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. It would be my hope to deal with those under item 6, the Legislative Assembly estimates.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay.

MS HALEY: Do you need a motion to move the agenda?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we need a motion to move the agenda.

MS HALEY: So moved.

MR. GIBBONS: I'll second that.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I had sent you a note yesterday advising you that there was a matter I hoped to deal with, and I think it would have to be raised while the agenda is being set for the one- or two-day meeting. Sequentially, I'd like an opportunity to briefly make the argument why that matter ought to be dealt with before you get to item 7(b) on the circulated agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dickson, I indicated in the overview of the agenda a couple of minutes ago that I had received notification from you. I indicated that we would recognize your participation as we dealt with items 7(a) and (b), the two you wanted to participate in, and I will. At the moment we have a motion before the committee that's seconded.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, if I might, then, I think under the Standing Orders I'm permitted as a member, although I can't vote, to participate in the discussion. I'd like to speak, if I might, to the motion to adopt the agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Dickson, under the Standing Order that we have it's quite clear that our tradition is that we would encourage members to participate in this particular committee. Recognition has always been the procedure in this particular Assembly. Certainly the procedure found in the Canadian House of Commons and certainly the procedure found in the British House of Commons would suggest that participation would be limited to members other than members of the committee when they have expressed a desire to participate in a particular matter. You have expressed a desire to participate in a particular matter. I've recognized that, and I indicated that I would be prepared to invite your participation when the two matters that you've said you wanted to participate in would come.

Now, the committee is made up of duly elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. They are members of the committee. It has never been our tradition, and certainly nothing that I've ever studied in terms of procedural rules of either the Canadian House of Commons or the British Parliament would suggest that those other than members of the committee would participate to the degree of

moving motions and other sorts of things other than for those matters of participation in a discussion when they were recognized by the chair.

We now have before the committee a motion for the approval of the agenda, and we have a seconder as well. Now, we're on the discussion, and I'll recognize Mrs. Sloan as a member of the committee.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Dickson. I'm recognizing Mrs. Sloan as a member of the committee.

MR. DICKSON: I'd ask to go on the speaking list, then, on the motion that's on the floor, please.

MRS. SLOAN: I recall, Mr. Chairman, in the context of this discussion, that last fall provisions were made for the substitution of a member to this committee when the leader of the third party was on leave. What Mr. Dickson is seeking this morning is really no different. He has provided advance notice to the chair that there are some procedural questions about one issue that he as a member would like to bring forward. I think that for the purposes of clarity for all members of the committee we would be best served to get those questions out of the way at the onset.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan, the provision provided last year was done by a motion of the House, not a motion of the committee. So for clarity let's just be absolutely one hundred percent sure of the facts.

MRS. SLOAN: Not when Dr. Pannu came the first time, I don't believe. I don't believe we had made a motion formally changing the allocation when he attended the first Members' Services Committee. He in fact did come to the committee . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you suggesting that there's going to be a substitute, then, that you want in the three members currently elected by the House to participate here?

MRS. SLOAN: All I'm saying is that precedent was already established previously.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think you're incorrect.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, I believe the item that we're discussing is the acceptance of the agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I commend you for placing Mr. Dickson's desires on the agenda. He has received due consideration as a member of the Assembly, and his topic will be discussed when we come to it. I would suggest that the motion that's been moved and seconded be voted on now, and that is the acceptance of the agenda.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I just want to go back to my first appearance before this committee. It was last January, I guess, or February. I requested to come to speak to the third party's budget, on that particular item, and the committee was kind enough to agree to allow me to make a presentation. I did not vote on anything. I spoke on that specific issue, and then, if I recall correctly, I did leave. I wasn't asked to leave, but I did leave the committee meeting at that point. I just wanted to put that on the record.

THE CHAIRMAN: The matter before us right now is the approval of the agenda.

MR. HERARD: Just put the question, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm sorry. I think we are here this morning representing the collective good of the Legislative Assembly and all members. The Standing Orders are clear that any member can come before this committee. Dr. Pannu has just clarified that the courtesy was extended previously to him to allow him the opportunity to speak to an item on the agenda of this committee, and what Mr. Dickson is asking for this morning, in my opinion, is no different. Mr. Chairman, I'm aware that Mr. Dickson is on the list to speak, and I would respectfully request that before the question is put, we allow him to make his submission.

10:10

MS HALEY: I guess for my own edification here. My understanding of the way this works is that he has requested that an item be placed on the agenda – and it has been placed on the agenda – and that he would have the opportunity to address that issue as the agenda arises. There's no question about that. What's really transpiring is a desire to have the agenda changed somehow.

MRS. SLOAN: No, that's not what's been asked for.

MS HALEY: Would you mind, Mrs. Sloan, if I just speak? Thank you.

There's an opportunity during session to have members changed on the committee; in fact, we had several members change this time. We were in session as recently as just a few days ago, so had there been a desire to have Mr. Dickson on the committee as a member, that could have easily been accommodated as recently as last Wednesday.

We have an agenda before us. We have a motion on the floor, and I would like to have the question put.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan, on the subject before us.

MRS. SLOAN: On the subject before us.

THE CHAIRMAN: Approval of the agenda.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Dickson as the House leader in his correspondence to the chair of this committee yesterday identified two issues, and they do relate to the agenda. The second issue was with respect to the items surrounding the singing of the national anthem and proposing that that as well as a number of other proposed changes should perhaps be considered or raised in the discussion between the House leaders.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mrs. Sloan, the difficulty is that now you're getting into the debate of a matter on the agenda. All we have before us is the approval of the agenda.

Where is there a suggestion that Mr. Dickson's idea would not be accepted by the committee when the matter does come up on the agenda? Why are we going into a debate on an issue on the agenda that we haven't arrived at yet?

MRS. SLOAN: Because Mr. Dickson in his points on the first item is proposing that the item risk management be debated in two contexts: the first one being procedural, and that is . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Who suggested that that wouldn't happen? Where's the suggestion that it wouldn't happen when we come to it

on the agenda? All we're talking about now is the approval of the agenda.

MRS. SLOAN: I would restate that I would prefer to hear Mr. Dickson and continue the precedent we've set previously of allowing any member to come and speak to the committee. He has sought that ability. With due respect I would like to hear his brief remarks before the question is put.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would all members in favour of the approval of the agenda as before us, please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's carried.

Item 3, the approval of the minutes of the committee for Monday, January 25, 1999, and Tuesday, January 26, 1999. There are two sets of minutes. They have been circulated for some period of time. All members have had an opportunity to deal with these drafts. The chairman would simply like at this point in time to point out one piece of information that is included in the minutes of January 25, January 26. It has to do with a memo that was before the committee dealing with Legislative Assembly budget reallocation, and it's attached to a memo dated October 23, 1998, from Ms Barrett with respect to the budget. It will come back later in the agenda, and I will just draw it to your attention then.

Are there questions arising out of the minutes?

MR. JACQUES: These are the minutes of January 25?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. JACQUES: At the bottom of page 11 and the top of page 12 I believe the sentence is the same. This looks like a duplication.

THE CHAIRMAN: The bottom of page 11?

MR. JACQUES: And the top of page 12.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed. Any other items with respect to the minutes?

Can we, then, have a motion for the approval of the minutes? Ms Haley. Mr. Coutts seconded. All in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

Business Arising from the Minutes. I indicated that there were several. First of all, the Update on the Legislative Assembly Committee Rooms. Hon. members will remember that last year we indicated that there were a number of activities going on with respect to certain provisions for space. One of the items on the agenda then was having to deal with some additional requests for space by the library for some renovations. That has been done; that has been concluded.

We continue to work with the now Department of Infrastructure on a proposal with respect to committee rooms, and a fair amount of activity has occurred on that, but at the moment there are no final recommendations that I want to bring to the attention of the committee. For information purposes these are ongoing

management things, and I've had no complaints from any members about the space they have or anything else in the last eight months, and that's been a great improvement. I think we've dealt with most of the issues.

The Department of Infrastructure has been very accommodating. In fact, I think we'll state publicly to the former minister of public works, supply, and services that whenever there was a request made on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly for improvements, they were dealt with, and I appreciated that very much. That's just an update.

Designation of Smoking Areas in Legislature Building and Legislature Annex. Well, after the great debate in here about smoking and the banning of smoking in this particular room and the banning of smoking in the Official Opposition room on the other side of the Legislative Assembly, we went upstairs and found a designated smoking room. It was done with minimal cost and minimal activity. It was put in place, and I gather that all members were quite vigilant about adjudicating any discussions or debates among themselves if their individual members of their caucus decided to light up. The room is prescribed to be nil, and it worked quite well. We've also found a little spot in the Legislature Annex for individuals so they do not have to go outside into the freezing cold, and they are in an area of some degree of privacy. So that in essence has been dealt with after all the debate and the discussion that was held with respect to that.

I indicated, as well, that there was the other item with respect to spousal travel which basically said that this matter would come back, and perhaps we might want to look at it under the Legislative Assembly budget estimates. I believe the adjournment motion was put forward by Mr. Herard, if I'm not mistaken.

MR. HERARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want to participate in it now or deal with it a little later?

MR. HERARD: Yes, I think we can go ahead with it. The disposition of this item was left, as noted in the minutes, that it would be "tabled until the next meeting so that there could be further consultation within the caucuses." I can report that that consultation has occurred within our caucus and that there was no suggestion for change with respect to the motion before the committee; in other words, the wording was acceptable to our caucus. Therefore, I would ask that the other two caucuses report progress on this, and I would propose that we put the question on the motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, we did take it back to our caucus for discussion. Although we didn't put it to a formal vote, we had a good discussion on the matter, and the general consensus was a coolness to the idea. So based on the feedback from caucus members, I would have to oppose the motion.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, my caucus is also opposed to the idea, so we would not be voting in favour.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do I take it, Mr. Herard, that you moved a motion with respect to this as well, or did you just ask for input from the various caucuses?

MR. HERARD: I said that it would be my proposal that I would move the motion after hearing from the two other caucuses.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is your intent now to move that motion then?

MR. HERARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there a seconder? Ms Haley.

Now, we have discussion on the motion before us. The motion we're talking about is on page 7 of the minutes.

Moved by Mr. Herard that the wording of the Transportation Order, RMSC 1992, c.T-2 be amended by the addition of a provision for reasonable travelling and living expenses of the spouse, family member or guest of a Member who accompanies a Member to or joins a Member in Edmonton or, providing the trip is related to the Member's public or official business, any part of the Province for up to four round trips per fiscal year.

That's the motion before us. It has been seconded. Discussion?

10:20

MRS. SLOAN: Is there not anything that compels us to define terms in these orders? Obviously, "family member" and "spouse" are commonly defined and understood, but I would restate the concern that I had relative to the definition of the word "guest" and how that might be defined, the variety of ways it might be defined by respective members of this Assembly. While Mr. Herard is basically bringing forward the motion that was made last meeting, regrettably, you haven't provided any additional clarification about how your caucus defines that word. So I'd like to hear if you had a discussion about who might be encompassed under the category of guest and would be traveling at taxpayers' expense with members in the province, what that definition consisted of according to the government members.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps before we invite any other member to participate, including Mr. Herard, I could just inform the members how this has been interpreted by the chairman, the Speaker, who is responsible for the administration of these orders and the administration in the Legislative Assembly. That transportation order was around for a significant period of time. Then the Members' Services Committee chose to terminate this program. So my understanding is that the transportation order wording that has been brought back is essentially the same as the one we had before.

Now, from time to time hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly are invited to participate in parliamentary ventures and parliamentary meetings, and encouragement is provided in fact to members to take a spouse, a family member, including children – many members have taken children with them to other events where there are children's programs available – or a guest. The chairman, the Speaker, has never qualified the definition of the word "guest" and has accepted a request from an hon. member who said that that's, quote, my significant other or whatever. It's all been based on the integrity of the member and the person traveling with the member, recognizing that there are a whole series of different kinds of relationships that do exist today.

There has never been an issue with anyone with respect to this to this point in time. Now, perhaps there's something we have to be alerted to, Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm wondering if Mr. Herard would be kind enough to respond to my question.

MR. HERARD: Sure. As I indicated in my opening remarks on this particular item, the discussion at our caucus found no need to change the wording, and therefore there was no great discussion around the question. I think the chairman is quite right. The wording of this particular provision has been around a long time. As I recall from the discussion on a previous occasion when we discussed this, there was never an occasion where a problem arose. So I just feel and our caucus feels that the wording is quite adequate.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, for the record am I not clear, though, in recalling that this provision was eliminated for whatever reason?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. SLOAN: It was eliminated. So we are now proposing to reinstate it. I respectfully submit that there should be some clarity around that term, because members taking their spouse or taking their children, I think – those are family members. It's an entitlement that many public-sector and business professionals would also have access to. But the ability to take a guest when guest is not defined – I can't support reinstating the provision for travel unless we provide more clarity under that area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, that I'm very, very sympathetic to the motion that has been brought forward. I quite frankly don't envy the position that rural members have. We only have two that have to travel any distance. I know the difficulties they have that members like myself right in the capital city don't have, so I am very, very sympathetic.

I would suggest that if the member would simply agree to amend his motion, a friendly amendment, to delete "guest" and leave it on the basis of "spouse" or "family member," our caucus would not have a difficulty with the motion. I recognize and sympathize with the member's desire to want to include a spouse or family member on those visits to the capital city. It's understandable, but I can also understand our caucus's difficulties with the definition of "guest" being just too broad.

MR. HERARD: I take it, then, that Mr. Wickman's position has changed. In the transcript of the last discussion on this, it was your position at that time that you would not want to be put in a position to guess the definition of what a guest might be, and you preferred to, in your words, keep it "liberal." You also said that "we're all responsible adults, and . . . we [can] conduct ourselves accordingly." Now I understand that you have a different position.

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. Mr. Chairman, let me clarify that. No, I don't. We were asked to go back to our caucuses for discussion. I'm simply reflecting our caucus's position that they had difficulty with the definition of "guest." Accordingly, representing caucus, I feel obligated to come forward and express their feelings on their behalf. Myself, I don't have a problem with it, and I stand by my original statement, but our caucus would feel more comfortable having us support the motion if "guest" were simply deleted or more clearly defined.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu, you wanted to speak?

DR. PANNU: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I want to make three observations on this motion. I'm certainly supportive of family members being able to visit a member, because there are times when there are long absences, you know, associated with the work that we do, particularly members who come from outside this region. I recognize that. But given the fiscal pressures that we continue to be under in this province, our health care and education and all of that, it is the kind of sacrifice we should still expect all of us to be able to make so that we don't incur additional expenses in this regard.

My second point is my discomfort with the notion of a guest. I think Mrs. Sloan's argument is quite legitimate here. I think we should not leave it in the form of a blank cheque, you know, who the guest is. I have concerns about that.

Thirdly, while I can see that during long absences from home

when we are in session, particularly during the spring, members might feel that they should have the opportunity to invite their family to visit, the last part of the motion talks about "any part of the Province for up to four round trips per fiscal year." Again, I can't support that. I was involved in one all-party committee which conducted public hearings. We did travel around the province, and I didn't see any reason to ask my spouse or my daughter to come along with me. We were so busy, in any case, and when we travel, we take our business seriously. So I can't find any good reason to support that third part of the motion as well.

So for those three reasons I find myself unable to support the motion, while I'm sympathetic to the predicament that members outside Edmonton find themselves in once in a while.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make two points. The first is that when the original decision was made to eliminate the spousal travel portion of the MLA package, it was done because we were facing a 3 and a half billion dollar deficit, we were taking a 5 percent cutback, and we were eliminating pensions. We rolled back the amount of money that members had for their sessional allowances, and we reduced committee pay as well. Now, some of those things, because of the improving fortunes of the province, have been returned. For example, the 5 percent wage rollbacks have been put back in. This is an opportunity also, I think, for the vast majority of us who do not live in Edmonton to be able to have a family member join us here from time to time. I don't think it's an overly generous package. I don't think anybody has any desire to abuse it, but I do think it's important that we recognize that family is important. Personally, I'm here over 200 days a year. It might be very nice to have one of my sons be able to join me for a day for the Speech from the Throne or for the budget day or something along that line. I don't think there's any intent by anybody to abuse it. I don't think it's ever been abused in the past.

10:30

If everybody would be more comfortable with the words being changed to eliminate the word "guest" and put in the words "spouses and family members," then my side of the table is more than happy to do that, and I will so move that amendment.

THE CHAIRMAN: May I make some clarification from an administrative point of view here. The Speaker of this Legislative Assembly has been very flexible in accepting requests from members. Some members do not have a spouse. Some members do not have a child. Some members have what is known today euphemistically as, quote, a significant other or guest. I guess ultimately I do have a tie-breaking vote on the committee, but for practical administrative purposes as the Speaker, who is also chairman of this committee, I look at all the options of all the members that we have in the Assembly.

The leader of the third party to my knowledge does not have a spouse. If the decision is made before too long that the swearing-in ceremony for the new Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta is in a location other than Edmonton and if an invitation has been provided to all Members of this Legislative Assembly to attend and if an invitation is given to somebody who does not have a spouse and other members will be able to bring their spouses, that member will then invariably come to me and say: well, whoa; how are you going to do this? Now, just let me put on the table what I think is a very, very simple administrative thing.

Mr. Woloshyn.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, thank you. You know, we're

getting hung up on something that is really quite minuscule. You're responsible for administering the program. I think the issue here is whether or not we have, by whatever definition, somebody accompanying us in our travel. If you read the motion, it says: for a function related to a member's official business within Alberta. What are we wasting our time about? Let's pass the motion and move on. People who have a problem defining "guest" could see you in private, and you could have a long discussion of what a guest really is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we have a motion from Ms Haley, but it was not seconded.

MS HALEY: I'd be happy to withdraw it.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you withdraw the motion?

MS HALEY: I withdraw it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anybody else want to participate?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, given the fact that we have before us estimates for the coming years '99-2000, 2000-2001 and that in the accompanying documents nowhere do we find the actual expenditures from previous years . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: For which items?

MRS. SLOAN: For any items. We have forecasts and we have estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's why you have books from previous years. Do you want me to duplicate 18,000 pages of paper?

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm certainly not attempting to engage in a debate or argument with the chair. However, my experience thus far in this committee is that we do not provide transparency around expenditures or thorough reporting as to how some of these orders might be interpreted and applied. I'm all for members being treated equitably, and perhaps the most equitable treatment for members is to not reinstate the policy, then, if we don't want to apply it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you'll have an opportunity to vote on that.

Just to clarify one thing. On the page that was circulated – and there were indications in the *Hansard*, going back – I did indicate that in 1992-1993 28 members utilized 89 trips at a cost of \$22,284 and that in 1993-1994 20 members utilized 49 trips at a cost of \$24,269. I also indicated that April 1, 1994, was when this third-party allowances and expenses amendment order was repealed. Those are the latest figures that we have for those expenditures at that time.

MRS. SLOAN: So, Mr. Chairman, it would be your intent, then, to report on an annual basis the utilization of this order, including the application of family members and guests.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd do it the same way that everything else is reported.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, what is actually reported in the area that you refer to isn't broken down to include family members. It in fact provides reporting for members utilizing that order.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, they are the ones who have to make the claim on behalf of their spouse, in the same way that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview when she participated in a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association thing submitted an expense account on behalf of her accompaniment. It's not the child or the spouse that makes the claim; it's the member.

MRS. SLOAN: With due respect, I think that what the taxpayers would like – they have no problem with MLAs traveling about the province conducting business, whether it be parliamentary or legislative. But I think there is also a desire to know how many accompanying guests – sons, daughters, husbands, et cetera – travel at their expense per year. All I was seeking to clarify for the purposes of the minutes was that that breakdown would be reported in our next year's report.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan, it will be, because you have to disclose now all expenditures made on your behalf. Some members have had the desire to stand up in the Legislative Assembly and table their own or they table on behalf of hon. members. All members now table. This is all public. It will be. It's all part of the expense claim.

MRS. SLOAN: You're not saying that in the context of the report for legislative offices that breakdown will be provided under MLA administration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, of course it will be. The first item we have here before us is a motion. The next thing we're going to have to do as part of the budget is say: well, what budget allocations should be put into it? You may all defeat it. I don't know. We're just going in a procedural manner right now.

What we have now is a motion before the committee. The motion as identified has been moved by Mr. Herard and seconded by Ms Haley. Should I call the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move to amend the motion before us, with your permission. I would like to delete the words from the existing motion starting with "or," which is on the fourth line, to the end of the second-last sentence with the exception of the very last word, "for." So what would be deleted would be "or, providing the trip is related to the Member's public or official business, any part of the Province." These are the words that I would move be deleted. The motion then would read as follows: moved by Mr. Herard that

the wording of the Transportation Order [so and so] be amended by the addition of a provision for reasonable traveling and living expenses of the spouse, family member or guest of a Member who accompanies a Member to or joins a Member in Edmonton for up to four round trips per fiscal year.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. A seconder for the amendment? Mrs. Sloan seconded it.

Discussion on the amendment? We'll call the question, then, on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment put forward by Dr. Pannu, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE CHAIRMAN: The nays carried it. The amendment is defeated. Should I call the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion put forward by Mr. Herard and seconded by Ms Haley, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that was approved.

Now, I take it, then, that when we get down to the Legislative Assembly budget estimates, I'll call for submissions at that point.

Mr. Gibbons, you said that there were several other matters.

MR. GIBBONS: There are a few points that I picked up on to bring forward. There was the gift shop. There was revisiting computers for each member.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. That one will come up.

MR. GIBBONS: The other ones. You suggested that we'd have a prebudget meeting prior to coming in here. With that was the fact that if the documents had been presented earlier, we would have been able to go back to our own caucus instead of coming in in the last couple of days. I mean, you can't draw that many people together in that time.

10:40

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I apologize for that. That was a series of events that did transpire and then getting people together and everything else and the dates of the session. I apologize for that. We'll try and do better next year. If you people want to give me dates six months ahead of time, we'll schedule them all then, no ifs, ands, or buts.

MR. GIBBONS: I think you'd give the dates, and we'd better be there.

THE CHAIRMAN: I do, but it's the result of consultation, Mr. Gibbons.

Old Business, the Year 2000 Update. Is Mr. Gano here? There you are. Mr. Gano, will you give us a one-minute update on the Y2K problems we might experience in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and our related activities?

MR. GANO: Okay. Just to summarize. There was a year 2000 status update sent out a few weeks ago to all members and staff of the Legislative Assembly. It basically indicated that over the past year and a half information systems has been working to meet the challenge of Y2K. Over the past year we have basically touched and upgraded every piece of equipment in all constituency offices and within the Legislative Assembly: the Legislature Building and the Legislature Annex itself.

In terms of what next, we're basically ready for the year 2000. We do not anticipate any significant internal problems. In order for us to address possible external problems, what we will be doing is taking the network down on December 31 at noon, and we'll be bringing the network back up on January 2. This just avoids any

possibility of power failures or anything like that that may occur. Within that status update as well there were some suggestions on what you could be doing on your home computers and those kinds of things to check just to make sure they are Y2K compliant as well.

So the bottom line: we feel that we're ready for it, and we'll see in a couple of weeks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Questions for information that any member would like to raise? Okay.

I'm going to have Dr. McNeil circulate to you a one-pager on the question of recent trends in health care benefits. In the last few days, hon. members, I circulated to all hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly two pamphlets. One, I indicated, I would be working on, and it's called a Summary of Member Benefits and Entitlements, December 1999. This document has been personalized for each and every member, so the numbers contained in it are different for each and every member, although there are certain things in place that are held to be constant. You have in that particular document a breakdown on what you are participating in and what you are not participating in. I did it as a result of a large series of questions from hon. members about what does this mean or what do I have and all the rest of that. So this basically is an update for you.

In addition to that, there was also an update on the Insurance Program Summary for Members of the Legislative Assembly. What really may be of interest to all hon. members is to know that 19 of the 83 Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly do not have an Alberta health care insurance program with the Legislative Assembly. I can only presume that they are associated with their spouse in another kind of program.

Eight do not carry Blue Cross. Now, when you consider some of the ongoing debates that individuals have in our public and our society – I'm only assuming here that these people actually do have Blue Cross and it's just that they've chosen deliberately not to take it. But they actually have it. One of the least costly programs of support for the citizens of Alberta is the Blue Cross program. I'd hate to find out that an hon. Member of the Legislative Assembly has chosen not to accept Blue Cross and something happens, an ambulance is required, and all of a sudden there's an appeal made to the Speaker of the Assembly to provide some dollars to take care of that, because the answer to that will be no, emphatically no.

All members have signed up for the basic dental plan. Seventeen have not signed up for the optional dental plan. All have coverage under the group life insurance plan. Forty-seven of the 83 do not participate in the optional life insurance plan, and 36 do not participate in the plan available for dependants. Under the long-term disability insurance plan which is made available, nobody over the age of 65 is eligible for participation in such a plan. There is nothing in place should something happen.

Bearing that in mind, we've reviewed in essence the initiatives of the public service of the province of Alberta and particularly the commitment of the province of Alberta to move with its 1st Choice plan, that's available to public servants in the province of Alberta. The piece of paper that you have in front of you just looks at some recent trends in terms of health benefit plans.

That 1st Choice plan, that's now available for the public service, basically provides some flexible options for management and nonunion employees. Others, of course, are negotiated. For the most part, in the past we've basically taken the view of piggybacking on most of these public-sector plans.

I really believe that in some aspects there are certain things we might want to take a look at, so I'm drawing this to your attention. One of the commitments I made before was that I'd be taking a review in consort with you and coming back with some suggestions and recommendations to the future Members' Services Committee to basically get in line with what's going on with the public service

or to look at some other things.

As an example, under the 1st Choice plan that's available in the province, vision coverage is provided to members of the public service. No such option is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly. None of our plans cover that.

Secondly, the public service in Alberta has moved into the 21st century with respect to on-line processing of prescription costs. We have not, in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. You pay; you file; we process a lot of paper. Other people go in and it's done. Seems to me that we would want to get with it, but if we want to live in the 19th century, that's okay with me too.

Thirdly, the 1st Choice option made available to members of the public service has differentiation in terms of life insurance coverage and provides a nonsmoking rate. Ours does not. Ours provides only one rate. It would seem to me that we might want to consider that as well.

Fourthly, under the 1st Choice plan there are options to go to three or four times the coverage on optional life insurance. Under our plan we are limited to one or two times only. Now, we might want to consider that as well.

I wanted to bring it up to date for you, and I'm sure that as we go through the discussion the budget people will want to make comments. My intent would be to review this and bring you back some modest recommendations at a soon to be upcoming Members' Services meeting. Now, if there's something else you want me to take a look at, we will as well.

Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to say that I did get the information you sent out that pointed out specifically the benefits and the value of things like the life insurance and that, and I found it to be extremely useful. I thank you for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're welcome.

MR. WICKMAN: I would hope to see that on an annual basis.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the next time we'll update it will probably be in April as a result of whatever modifications there are as a result of the April 1 new fiscal year. If not, it will be December.

MR. WICKMAN: But never send a copy to my wife because I don't want her to know how much I'm worth if I'm no longer here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Wickman, under our public disclosure laws your wife, should she ask me, would be politely told that, no, she would have to seek that information from the member herself.

MR. WICKMAN: We have been married 38 years as of today, and sometimes I wonder how she's stood me that long. [Interjections] Yeah, I know. Poor woman. And I forgot this morning over breakfast.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let me get this straight. You've been married 38 years and you forgot?

So is that okay?

Yes. Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: I just wanted to ask, Mr. Chairman, if, when you're looking at this with a view to bringing it back to Members' Services, you would also look at the concerns that have been expressed over the long-term disability insurance and include that in your review.

THE CHAIRMAN: The long-term disability one is identified in the pamphlets you have. When there was a pension plan, there were

certain provisions associated with it. Of course, that plan was created a number of years ago.

Currently under the long-term disability insurance plan – and this is provided as part of the whole package – the Legislative Assembly has to pay the premium on behalf of it. The disability benefit is 70 percent of the eligible recurring annual salary to a maximum of \$6,500 per month. There is no minimum service requirement for this benefit. However, two things will kick in. Number one, once you reach the age of 65, this no longer is in place; it does not exist anymore. We have five Members of the Legislative Assembly today who are 65 plus.

10:50

Secondly, the LTDI benefit continues until such time as the member is deemed fit to return to gainful employment. That decision is made by a third party. It's not made by anybody in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta or the Speaker; that is made by the insurance carrier. So one may go on long-term disability, but if the carrier determines that after six weeks or three months you're then fit to go back to work, that ceases then. That's an individual case between that individual and the carrier. There is no involvement from anyone in the Legislative Assembly Office.

We'll look at that.

MS HALEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: If we can go on to number 6, Legislative Assembly Budget Estimates. You have another binder, and there should have been some paper updated to yesterday. Would it be appropriate for me to give you an overview?

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, just prior to moving directly into this agenda item, I'd like to make a motion that

final expenditures for the '97-98, '98-99 fiscal years by the LAO be circulated to Members' Services Committee at some point today or first thing tomorrow morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Run that by me again.

MRS. SLOAN: I would like to move that the final expenditures for the '97-98, '98-99 fiscal years be circulated to Members' Services Committee members either during the discussion of this agenda item today or prior to the proceeding of the meeting tomorrow.

THE CHAIRMAN: You already have that. That's all public information. You have that in either Public Accounts or the other documents that we've done. You've got it in terms of the budget documents.

MRS. SLOAN: In our research, Mr. Chairman, I have what I believe is the most current '98 report and also the Public Accounts report that we took off the web site. They only contain the estimates, so what I would be seeking is the actual.

THE CHAIRMAN: The numbers?

MRS. SLOAN: The actual.

THE CHAIRMAN: The bottom-line numbers?

MRS. SLOAN: That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not the whole budget, because they're already there.

MRS. SLOAN: For '97-98, '98-99, please.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've just been advised that it's being finalized by the Auditor General now. It's within .001 percent. We have numbers; that's not a problem. We have all that. In terms of when the budget was before the Legislative Assembly this year, you had about as pure a realistic number as you're ever going to get. It might have been out \$100 – that's it – on \$23 million or \$24 million. Anyway, we'll get you the numbers. Okay? Anything else?

Well, in terms of the overview that you've got before you, the last time we dealt with this, members again looked at requests for a three-year business plan. The first thing in the document basically looks at that. Needless to say, we're talking about the Legislative Assembly Office of Alberta, and of course its fundamental role is to support the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

In terms of the role of the Legislative Assembly Office, our purpose is defined as you see there.

1. Support Members in carrying out their roles as elected representatives of the people of Alberta.
2. Support the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in carrying out the duties of Office.
3. Record the proceedings and maintain and preserve the records of the Legislative Assembly.
4. Inform and educate the public on behalf of Members and the institution of Parliament.
5. Support the Assembly in protecting its institutions and privileges.
6. Support the exchange of ideas/information among Legislatures throughout the world.
7. Provide services to external clients as required.

In looking at the specifics, if you look at the second page, B. The Millennium Planning Environment, for this budget the key focus, of course, is to deal with the time frame April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001. Now, I've had to make some assumptions. One assumption I have made is that the people of Alberta will be invited to participate in an election process during that fiscal year. That's one major assumption. The assumption was that if it would be after March 31, 2001, then some of the numbers contained in this budget would be different. But I've got to make an assumption, and that's why I submit that to you as a principal assumption in there.

Following that and going out three more years, then of course after March 31, 2001, in essence we'll be looking at the time frame 2001 to 2005. In there Alberta will be preparing to basically position itself for the 100th anniversary of the province of Alberta and what all of that entails.

With respect to specifics – the Speaker, the members' support, records management roles, technological development – Mr. Gibbons had indicated that that would be an area he would be looking at. I'll repeat the statement that

while Alberta is recognized as one of the more technologically advanced legislatures in Canada, the continuing pace of change in this area will require ongoing emphasis to ensure that Member and staff needs for comprehensive, timely and accurate information can be met within applicable fiscal constraints.

The issues that have to be addressed through the EDP management committee – and we do have an EDP management committee. We're going to continue with this EDP management committee, which contains representatives from all of the various caucuses working hand in hand with the people we have in the LAO, to continue to improve and advance what we're doing in this particular area. I want all members to be aware of this as well. This is a mind-boggling effort.

I have not, as an example, built into this budget recognition of the fact that in Europe today, as we sit here, they are marketing a cell telephone that has a screen on it that allows all people who have that telephone to access the Internet and use a web site. They are not

marketed yet in North America. One year from now they will be marketed in North America, and all Members of the Legislative Assembly I'm sure will take whatever cell phones they have and say that this is junk and throw it away and say that they now want this new machine for \$1,000 to \$1,500. I have not factored that in this budget. We might want to do it another time, but that kind of mind-boggling change is not factored in here.

Under computer allocations our current policy is that we have 1.25 workstations per member and one printer for four workstations in this particular building. In the constituency offices it is one workstation and printer per constituency. That's our current policy. Hand in hand with that, there's a policy to modify and upgrade the equipment that we have. Bill, what are we using? A three-year window for that? We all know what's happening with technology, but that's our current policy. We're concerned about the constraints in the network capacity and working again in that area quite efficiently, I think.

Future Internet development. You will see marvelous changes occurring on the web site that is associated with the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the services it provides to the people, including *Hansards*, including the Routine, including the bills, including as much updated information as we can get, and it's expanding all the time. In fact, it's being quite heavily used. It's a good tool for members, but if you are not into the electronic mode, of course you're left out of it.

The electronic library services. You'll note in the budget in here they're addressing some more services with respect to that, electronic commerce services for caucus and constituency. Again, we're working on that and continuing with it.

The web broadcasting of the session, audio and/or video. We have extended the contract we had with the carrier for the section of the Assembly that is televised, that goes from the prayer to Orders of the Day. The contract we currently have is with CFRN television, and that contract has been extended to December 31, 2000. Sometime during the next fiscal year decisions have to be made on the whole question of: do we want the coverage that we currently have to be continued? Do we want it to be expanded? Do we want it to be modified? Do we want to go to another carrier? How do we want to provide it? We're okay until, as I said, December 31, 2000. We've had a number of discussions with other carriers about options with respect to this. Towards the early part of the year 2000 I will be back to talk to you about what your thoughts would be with respect to it, but at the moment we're okay.

The assessment of visual records, recording technology, the assessment of voice recognition technology.

11:00

The other thing, of course, is that with our workstations and the computers we currently have available, in addition to the cell phone I talked about, the next wave is going to be the voice-activated computer. As soon as that becomes available for every member, they're going to simply say: "Well, look. This piece of junk that I bought here two years ago that I had to type with I no longer want anymore, because I don't know how to type. I need to have this one. So where am I going to get the money to pay for that?" We're looking at the potential of that.

In the Chamber itself we currently have 45 members who are wired at their Assembly desks. Of course, we can go to 83. That's an ongoing thing.

We're taking a look at videoconferencing technology as well. I think the provision has to be put in place before too long for members to be as modern as they possibly can. If there's need to have a meeting with someone in another part of the province of Alberta, I think the videoconferencing technology aspect is one that certainly should be looked at to maximize cost efficiency and

everything else. So that's an area we're looking at as well.

We are quite concerned about postelection demands. Again, I'm assuming an election in the fiscal year April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001. I'm not guessing when it will be; I'm just assuming that that's when it's going to be. So there will be demands. I can only speak from my personal experience, not only as Speaker but as a former minister of public works, supply, and services who did provide services along with the LAO to constituency offices, of all the mysterious things that seem to happen when an election is called and shortly thereafter. It's amazing how election after election certain goods that are all prescribed for allocation in the constituency offices, when the new member comes in, simply are not there. We have to be prepared for that so there's a minimal amount of downtime. I think Mr. Woloshyn is smiling because he could give some horrible stories about how honourable certain members in the past have been with public property when this happens.

Now, we're going to have a good inventory made during this fiscal year. Your constituency office secretaries, working with the Legislative Assembly Office, will be updating the inventory that we have, and members will be verifying that inventory so that we do not experience the kinds of problems we've experienced in the past with respect to certain things happening. In fact, there was one case that took me nearly 18 months to resolve after the last election with respect to furniture and the like.

The assessment of the digital audio recording and transcription information as well.

Mr. Gibbons, what we have in this budget is ongoing dollars to meet our policy of 1.25 workstations per member, one printer per four workstations, and one workstation and printer per constituency based on a three-year rotation of equipment. So if we have equipment that's coming into the fourth year in this fiscal year, it will be replaced and updated, and we've got the dollars in here for it.

In addition to that, there's recognition of the potential for further expenditure after the next election in setting up constituency offices as well.

MR. GIBBONS: A question on that. Does that mean that after the next election you'd be bringing up the high-speed lines, the DSL and so on?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, all of the above, yes, as it continues to change.

MR. GIBBONS: Maybe Mr. Gano can explain to me then. I think we've got a long ways to go before then. Hopefully, we do keep progressing till we have a good system, and coming with the high-speed line would be one of the first things, I think, that maybe should be budgeted.

THE CHAIRMAN: High-speed line to where?

MR. GIBBONS: So our systems are faster.

THE CHAIRMAN: Depending on where the constituency is, if there's a need or requirement for one or not. That will be worked hand in hand in the whole system. I don't get very many complaints from the members outside of what goes on within their own caucus about this. No constituent has raised a concern in an MLA's constituency office with respect to this that I've had. Now, there may be some.

MR. GIBBONS: These are some of the concerns brought to me from our caucus members.

THE CHAIRMAN: But you only have two members from outside

the city of Edmonton; right?

MR. GIBBONS: Yeah.

MS HALEY: Mr. Chairman, we've had very few complaints from a constituency point of view. I think the only concern has been with getting on the RITE line when you're doing some of the work. If there was a concern or a complaint, it was probably on that side. The remote locations for most MLAs seem to be working fairly well, maybe not perfectly, but it's an evolving system.

THE CHAIRMAN: We can come back to that when we go to the specific allocations, if that's okay. I'll just give you the overview. I'm sorry I'm taking so long.

The second major item, as I said before, is election preparedness, again the assumption that we would be moving from the 24th to the 25th Legislature. One of the key objectives in here will be to make sure that the transition is as smooth as possible. All hon. members know that regardless of what happens to the current Speaker in terms of an election process, the Speaker is still the Speaker until the Assembly elects a new Speaker. So should the current Speaker choose not to run or be defeated, he still remains the Speaker until the Assembly reconvenes to elect a new Speaker. That's one of the responsibilities in here, to make sure that there is a process.

One of the things that we put into this budget is the transition allowance for departing members. It is based on historical data in terms of the number of members who would be leaving, and that amounts to the figure we have in here, \$2.1 million. We discussed this last year. I'd indicated and I requested from previous Members' Services Committees to have an allocation on an ongoing basis for a four-year time frame so it wouldn't be a major hit in one year, but the decision is to go this way. All hon. members of this committee who also serve on the Legislative Offices Committee know that in recent days they've met with the Chief Electoral Officer and have noted the request that's been put from the Chief Electoral Officer in terms of election planning as well. In terms of this particular budget, there's \$2.1 million set aside for that particular allowance, plus there's also another hundred and some-odd thousand dollars throughout the whole department.

Public education remains a high priority. I believe that the members of this Assembly believe it is a high priority. In this last year we've begun some really wonderful things, and we want to continue those wonderful things. Also, again, we move towards the recognition of Alberta. The intent is to carry through with Mr. Speaker's Alberta Youth Parliament again with the support of the Royal Canadian Legion. They are, I guess, our private-sector funder/sponsor, if you wish. They provided \$25,000 last year; they will provide another \$25,000 to bolster the \$16,000, I think, that I'm requesting.

As well, we want to move with a school-at-the-Legislature program. That would be a new program in addition to the ones that are already heavily used. In the Annex building members will note that a room has been renovated and upgraded. In essence, what we would attempt to do – and we've had a series of discussions with a private-sector group to provide dollars to us to in fact hire a person to conduct a school-at-the-Legislature program.

In this particular budget there's a request for that salary, and if the contract goes through with a private-sector firm, we, in essence, would then see it at baseline zero. The dollars from them would come in; the dollars would go out. No heartburn, but if we have a private-sector firm that's actually going to get involved with a program like the school at the Legislature, it seems to me that one of the requests they would make of us is that they'd want some public recognition for their participation, maybe a sign required, and I don't mean on the sides or the top of the Legislature Building but some

recognition. [interjection] Well, we've got to go forward. It won't be R.J. Reynolds or anything like that.

Interparliamentary Relations.

MRS. SLOAN: Just before you move to that section, Mr. Chairman, could I raise an item under public education?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. SLOAN: It isn't really a budget-based thing, but it does relate to this particular area and the public relations role of the LAO.

It would seem to me that one of the areas where I've noted we could be taking a more prominent position is during the Remembrance Day services that occur across the province, particularly in this city as the capital. My past experience has been that government members have laid wreaths on behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly, and I would like to propose that in the future, with your agreement, there be an initiative that LAO or a representation of LAO provide for the laying of wreaths at the city cenotaph and at the Butte Domes on behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly and perhaps the Speaker and members of the public service.

11:10

THE CHAIRMAN: The way the procedure works today is that the Legislative Assembly is not involved in that program. That program is done out of the protocol office associated with the government of Alberta and not the Legislative Assembly. I know what you're saying. I'm just saying that I don't know what happened, when that started, or how it started, but we're not involved in it at all. If you're suggesting that it should be the Legislative Assembly, well, that begets another, you know, kind of a question.

MRS. SLOAN: From recent experience this year the wreath said: Members of the Legislative Assembly.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know it does.

MRS. SLOAN: So I would like to see the LAO initiate a discussion with the protocol office of the government. You know, most certainly the Premier's representative can do that on behalf of the government of Alberta, but I think that with respect to all members being equal, there should be a representation made by the Speaker and the Legislature in that area.

THE CHAIRMAN: A valid point. I'll have that reviewed.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, on the public education side and your rather interesting comments on private-sector involvement in the expansion of the school-at-the-Legislature program, who would be making the final decision on whether or not private-sector involvement will in fact become a fact? This committee?

THE CHAIRMAN: We already have it. We already have it with the Legion. We agreed to that.

DR. PANNU: Let me give you an example.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

DR. PANNU: If Imperial Tobacco . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No. I already said that we'd rule that out.

DR. PANNU: That would be rather arbitrary. I'm saying: are there any rules by which you rule this out? The question is: who will rule this out? Would this committee or the Legislature have the authority to rule on it?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let me be brief. First of all, I have to find somebody. I haven't found anybody yet. We're discussing the option with a number of people, and it would be an educational process. And, yes, I'll come back to the committee.

DR. PANNU: You'll be coming back to the committee for approval? Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Careful on that, because the committee doesn't necessarily want to meet when decisions have to be made, and if some nice group, some benefactor group, whoever it is, says: look, we'll allocate \$50,000 to assist you, but we need to know by tomorrow.

DR. PANNU: That's precisely why I raised the issue, Mr. Chairman. It's one thing to say that a nonprofit group is coming forward to sponsor something such as this. It's quite another for Coca-Cola or Imperial Tobacco or someone else to come, and if we slip into the second region . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: This is not the University of Alberta. We're not having a contract with Coca-Cola as they did or as their students' union or anybody else did. Okay? The protection of the integrity, the history of Alberta, the sanctity of this place, the improvement of this place are paramount, absolutely paramount. Should we be successful in having someone assist us in the education program, the greatest degree of dignity will be addressed to it, the greatest degree of preservation of the integrity of this Assembly and its history will be provided, and I will come back to the committee and consult with them.

MS HALEY: And you can do it by phone, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Agreed.

Interparliamentary relations. That remains part and parcel of this. I indicated before that I really believe very strongly that private members should participate and have an option to participate. I indicated in the past that my objective was to allow all private members an opportunity to participate in a parliamentary conference or a parliamentary exchange from a personal development point of view once in the time frame of this particular Legislature.

Actually, we're moving along very, very well, and in the fiscal year 2000 to 2001 there will be a number of activities that we will be involved in. One is that we expect there will be a return visit to Canada under the Partnership of Parliaments of a delegation of German parliamentarians, and in late January, when I'll be meeting with the other presiding officers across the country, one of the items on the agenda will be a discussion of that to see what participation and interest there would be from other jurisdictions in Canada with respect to this.

There's absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the foremost Legislature in Canada, for whatever reason, in terms of parliamentary relations is the province of Quebec. They are coming to the front, and for virtually every delegation that's held coming to Canada, they want to be first on the table. They want to host. They want to have the meetings in Quebec for virtually all of them. Other provinces have different views on that.

We're going to be hosting the annual conference of the Association of Legislative Counsel and the Parliamentary Counsel, who are our table officers. In the year 2001-2002 – not this budget

but now part of the three-year thing – we will host the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Canadian conference, in Alberta. The last time we hosted it was in 1989, and under the rotation that we have among the various jurisdictions in Canada, it will be our turn in the year 2001-2002. There are no dollars requested for it under this budget, but it's an alert for the future. Next year, in the year 2000-2001, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar is in the province of Prince Edward Island.

I have also been alerted to the fact that the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie, which is a universal, international parliamentary conference of the Francophone community, has expressed an interest in being in Alberta in the fiscal year 2001-2002. I think that's very significant; I think that's very important. We've come a long way in this Legislative Assembly in dealing with the Francophone community in the province of Alberta. That they express an interest in coming to our province in that year I think is something that we should really seriously consider, but there's nothing in here in this particular budget with respect to that. We've got some ongoing things as well. We'll come back to it again.

Under the management issues there have been changes that are important. I indicated already that one of the things I want to review is the preparation that we have for constituency offices pending the next election. There also have been changes internally within the system of governance of the province of Alberta. In the past we have had great, great co-operation from the former department of public works, supply, and services with respect to furniture, the distribution and the storage thereof, for constituency offices. This is an area that for the most part has come to the bottom of the list in terms of things we have done. Everybody has a constituency office, but in terms of how we deal with them, it's usually that whatever stuff has been left over has been forwarded to them.

Now there have been changes in that department. They do not have the same kind of surplus materials that they had. One of the reviews that I want to undertake is to look at the standard supply list being provided to all constituency offices in the province of Alberta. I'd like to deal with this in terms of the input from individual members. I'd like to be in a position to consult with your constituency secretaries in this fiscal year. We invited them to seminars in both Edmonton and Calgary in the spring. I think it was very important. We had another seminar for them in the fall, just a couple of weeks ago. Fifty-five out of the 83, I believe, were there. Very useful for us, very useful for them, very useful for the member. We would want to, I think, let them feel a part of it all by asking them in addition to the member: what do you think we should have in our constituency offices. Of course, the final decision will be here in terms of the major list.

Some of you already know that fax machines are not part of our prescribed list for constituency offices. It seems to me that we might want to revisit that but, again, things of that nature.

The ergonomic side of good, healthy sitting is also very important. We've taken care of everybody in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. We've taken care of the people in all the constituency offices, and we'll now start to look at the demands and the needs of the people who work in constituency offices outside of this building. They're going to get a new ergonomic chair, as an example. That was an important concern and consideration for these people who work in constituency offices.

I'm very pleased to report that we have fewer manpower concerns in the LAO than we've had in a great period of time. There was a time, two years ago, when I said we were having real concerns with manpower, particularly in the technological area. The longevity of these people was not very long. Many of the problems we had were on the electronic side. I think we're making great progress there, and I think it's the result of a whole series of things, of course,

including what the government has done in terms of salary adjustments and the like.

In terms of the strategic goals in the year 2000-2001, service to members is number one. Support of the parliamentary process in Alberta is extremely important. We're being pushed in terms of the Routine in the Assembly. We're being pushed in terms of the manpower that we have associated with the running of the Legislative Assembly when we sit. The number of minutes that this Legislative Assembly is sitting – not the number of days; the number of minutes – is very, very high. In fact, this last session, in 1999, was the fourth longest in the history of Alberta going back to 1905 in terms of total minutes; not days but minutes. I've got all the records going back to 1905 based on days, hours, and minutes. That means there are some impacts on the people that we have here. In fact, there are a couple of people that even last year in the spring – David, how much time in overtime was racked up in one session?

11:20

DR. McNEIL: Oh, it was hundreds of hours.

THE CHAIRMAN: And these people will go all the time. They're very select people. When we sit, it's all this background that just makes things happen, including *Hansard* and everything else. As an example, even for the daily Routine in the Assembly, in 1989 it took 1.7 hours per day to do the administrative thing with respect to tablings, motions for returns, all that paperwork. It's now gone to nine hours per day. It's had a fourfold increase, a four and a half times increase. You'll notice as well that even in terms of this sitting we've got two assistant sergeants-at-arms instead of just one Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, no more of a cost but just to make sure that everybody is there and they're working well. You'll note as well that we've added some additional people, that I've already talked about, to the table officers to make sure that fatigue does not become a problem for anybody and wits are paramount.

That's just an overview. The next page that you have, then, is the actual estimate comparison by centre code. If you look at that, it's page 1 of 1, 12/15/1999, 10:31 a.m. In the document that you received on Monday, it was higher than the bottom line that you see today because there was a duplication of one figure, and I'll come back to this. If you're looking at the various codes and the three columns that we have – the 1999-2000 forecast, the 1999-2000 estimate, the 2000-2001 estimate – you'll see that in the first one, financial management and administrative services, basically other than the provision for the manpower costs associated with the decisions we made earlier and the election preparedness, there are no other assumptions involved.

Overall to this whole page, this whole graph, built into it are the following assumptions: a 2 percent market adjustment for manpower. That goes for the Legislative Assembly Office and the caucuses, based on the formula that we had before. So based on the formula that you gave me instruction to deal with last year, in essence built into this is that the allocation per caucus member will move to \$45,382 from \$44,442. That's a 2 percent increase on the caucus formula that we had. That's the major assumption, a 2 percent market adjustment response.

The other assumption in here is that on constituency offices I've applied the formula that this committee said it wanted to have in place, the formula that we agreed to on January 25, January 26. So the allocation for constituency offices under the applied formula would move from \$41,766 to \$43,310.

Those are the major assumptions other than, of course, the election contingency of \$2.1 million, which is essentially the transition allowance. So if you take all of this through, in the first line, financial management and administrative services – David, do we have the sheet that shows the variances? Is it in here?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You should have attached in that same section in there a sheet that has some red numbers on it as well, some red text. If you take a look at the first one, financial management and administrative services, you see the 2000-2001 and the 1999-2000 figures, and then you see the variance of \$21,241. That variance of \$21,241 deals with the merit and anticipated market adjustments that I talked about, the 2 percent essentially. Market adjustments and merit goes within the whole codes that we have. There's nothing in there with respect to an election-related component. There's nothing in there with respect to the operational component, and there are no other comments.

The second one, human resource services. There's a variance there of \$42,833. Of that amount, \$26,783 has to do with manpower, the human resource component, \$15,000 of which is wages with respect to an election during the fiscal year, and \$1,050 – well, it's \$16,000 for that and \$50 for telecommunication increases.

The Speaker's office. It's basically the same other than for the human resource component of \$14,953.

Public information branch. I will come back to this a little later. The variance is \$270,326. There's a variance of \$83,730 for the human resource component, and then there's \$186,546 for operational component, of which: \$16,000 will bolster the \$25,000 we received from the Legion for the Youth Parliament; \$49,500 would deal with the school-at-the-Legislature project that we have, which I hope we will get a public-sector firm to basically deal with it so that it will be a wash; and the last one is the centennial project requests that I had made and this committee had agreed to in the last committee on January 25, 26 pending a return by the chairman to the committee with some further information on this. So in terms of dealing with leading up to 2005 and the history of this building – and all of the allocations in this would be associated with the history of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, the people involved in it, the highlights of it all – in the first year, dealing with April 1, 2000, going to March 31, there's a request there for \$100,000 to deal with the first stage of the centennial projects.

The Library. The next line shows a variance of \$114,233. The human resource component is \$50,463; the election-related component, \$16,500; an operational component of \$47,450, broken down in there, again, in terms of a new microfilm reader and electronic products and the like.

House services. Basically the variance there is \$145,390. The human resource component is \$80,490 under the definitions we've been told to work with. Then you've got an operational component of \$64,900: \$33,000 for the Partnership of Parliaments, \$13,000 because of different venue places for parliamentary conferences – as an example, as I said, in the year 2000-2001 the CPA in Canada will be held in Prince Edward Island, which is more expensive to travel to than where it was held this year – and there's a \$10,000 adjustment with respect to the contract that we have on television costs for the coverage of the small portion that is covered by television.

Information systems services. Again, the lines go across. The human resource component, \$50,996; the election-related component, \$66,900. That basically, Mr. Gibbons, again, is the technological side that I was talking about. In the current budget I think we have \$245,000 for the technological improvements, and this request in this budget will move that to \$300,000 in recognition of the changes that we've got to deal with.

Our committees. Overall, in terms of what we receive back from various chairmen, basically there's a variance of \$2,824. Not very much difference in there.

So you've got the subtotals, basically, in there: the variance in the

budget for the LAO, \$746,596. Of that, \$327,877 is the human resource component, \$98,400 is related to the election component, and the operational component that we've talked about or I'm requesting is \$320,448. I don't know what the \$320,448 is as a percentage of \$6.1 million.

MLA administration – and that's the biggest portion – \$14,066,864 is the request. That is slightly less than the current budget. That includes our salaries; it includes everything. It's slightly less as a result of the fact that there are two fewer private members in the government caucus. They're now in Executive Council. So you see that the variance in there is \$14,000 less, and the human resource component you can see broken down as well.

Caucus. This is something that we've built into your caucus budget, what I'd indicated a little earlier, on the submissions and the percentages that I had, recognizing the percentage that you have and recognizing the formula you instructed us to deal with at the last Members' Services meeting. So all in all, if you take a look at that and you bring it all down to total expenditures, the government members' caucus in fact has a lower budget in the year 2000-2001 than it had in the year 1999-2000. It's a reduction of \$51,000. The Official Opposition caucus is reduced slightly again, by about \$24,000, the New Democratic caucus goes up about \$5,000, and there's recognition as well of the existence of the independent member. So you get those totals.

The revenues that we have will be explained a little later. The net totals and the election contingency, the transitional allowance of 2.1, get us down to the bottom line. I think if you look at basically the net total exempting the election thing, it's not quite 3 percent.

11:30

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, going back to your earlier statement when you talked in terms of all the budgets, including LAO, the caucus budget, and such, being based on a 2 percent market adjustment in the wage component. When you say "market," are you including merit in that 2 percent?

THE CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. WICKMAN: Where does the merit increase show up in the budget for the operations other than in the caucus operations?

THE CHAIRMAN: The merit application has only applied in the past as a result of decisions in here. The merit adjustment is the merit adjustment procedure that we have for the public service of Alberta, and we apply it only to the employees of the Legislative Assembly Office. This committee has said that it is never to be applied to caucus offices. Well, I don't know if it is or if it isn't, because we don't see your caucus budgets.

MR. WICKMAN: But aren't there some inconsistencies when you allow a component for merit increases in some of the budgets but not in all the budgets?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I couldn't agree with you more, but that's the choice of the committee. I have no idea how you pay people in the Liberal caucus. We don't discuss that budget here.

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. I realize that, Mr. Chairman. The point I'm making is that when you show an allocation of an increase of 2 percent overall in the overall budget, I'm not sure where you're anticipating the movement would be to find merit increases in that other 98 percent that isn't part of the 2 percent market increase.

THE CHAIRMAN: The assumption always has been that the 2 percent market adjustment that's built in here is for the LAO,

because they are public employees, servants of the public, and are dealt with that way. We allocated, extrapolated on the basis of our previous discussions and previous direction of this committee, the manpower allocation of the caucuses and took a 2 percent adjustment to basically move your numbers from \$44,442 to \$45,382. That's 2 percent. In the constituency office we applied the formula that you directed me to apply last year to give that number. The merit application is only for the Legislative Assembly Office.

In each of the various caucuses there's a global figure. The government members' caucus request is here; it's for \$1,906,044. How many people are involved in that caucus and what the payroll system is is administered by that caucus. In the Official Opposition caucus, \$1,083,922. If you want to pay your director of communications \$600,000 a year, it is your choice. Whoever's playing with it, it is your choice. If you want to give him a merit increase of 30 percent, it is your choice. That's the way you said you wanted it.

MR. WICKMAN: Is it fair, then, to ask the question: what is the average wage increase, combining the market and the merit, for those departments other than the caucus budgets? We know that the market is based on 2 percent, but we don't know what the average merit increase is.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was allocation provided to all government departments including the LAO. Was it 4 percent, Bill? What was the policy allocation?

MR. GANO: The average is about 5 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. There was an allocation based on the manpower component.

MR. WICKMAN: Of what percentage?

MR. GANO: The average is about 5 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: For merit. It doesn't have to be applied though. Remember that: it doesn't have to be applied.

MR. WICKMAN: I know it doesn't have to be applied, but it's built into that budget, other than the caucus budgets. Well, we can deal with that when we get to the caucus budgets.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Agreed. That's just the overview on this.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I want to make an observation on the same issue. It is true that at last year's committee meeting, at which I made a presentation to the committee, it was agreed that there would be a 2 percent increase to the caucus budgets. There's no doubt about it. But that applied to that year. You have used that as an assumption for this year and, I guess, until such time as the committee changes.

My submission to my colleagues here and to yourself is that for the sake of equity I can certainly report to the committee the manpower situation in my caucus. We have worked with the same number of people for the last three years. We have not increased the number of people who have worked for us. Persons in certain positions have changed for a variety of reasons. There was a time when one of our employees got sick, went on sick leave, so we had to in fact pay that person and not have the funds to replace her services for five or six months. We work within an exceedingly tight budget. We are not lavish and extravagant in what we pay them. As a matter of fact, given the tightening labour market in the province, we'll be lucky if we can hold onto the people that we do

have with the present remuneration that we pay them.

So I would ask the committee to recognize certain principles which should guide our debate on and consideration of the budget, and that is that we should include in our consideration caucus employees when we talk about market and merit components. I think to be equitable towards all people who provide services, whether they are in fact government employees and therefore the employees of the LAO or whether they're employed in our MLA offices and in our caucuses, they all provide valuable and indispensable services. So they are in that sense making a public service contribution, and if that is the case, if my statement on the nature of the service that our caucus employees provide to us makes sense to you, then I think what we need to do is develop an equitable formula based on certain principles which guide us so that we are not arbitrary in making our decisions.

These men and women have, like us, families, mortgages to pay, children to raise, bills to pay. So my request to the committee would be to recognize in principle, first of all, that we should include two principles in developing the budget for our caucuses, the market adjustment and the principle of merit. We want to retain people who have high-level skills. After all, my performance in the House depends on the quality of service that I receive from my colleagues in my caucus office. If I cannot pay them half-decent wages, then the quality of my own service to the public, to my constituents, to Albertans in general is put in jeopardy. So I'm saying: let's develop some guiding principles, which will be available, then, in the Speaker's office or in the LAO, that can be used across the board without reference to whether it's a third party or the Official Opposition or the government caucus and be guided by that. That will result, I think, in equity.

The second point I want to make, of course, Mr. Chairman, is that we certainly have developed a formula for adjusting our own salaries as MLAs, which I think is now linked to and clearly and directly dependent on . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The average weekly earnings index in the province of Alberta.

DR. PANNU: That, I think, is fair, and we should perhaps use that also as a benchmark, as a way of looking at what we will pay our caucus employees. Otherwise, tensions develop, grievances develop with our caucus staff. You know, they look at us and say: you guys are getting this and we are not, and the quality of our service hasn't gone down, so why so? I would say that to make sure that we are equitable both in terms of what we pay ourselves and what we pay our employees and equitable also in terms of the changing labour market pressures and the growing quality of the work these people do, we need to make some adjustments to the proposed budget, giving due consideration to the principles of both market adjustment and merit.

I would hope that we can first agree on general principles and then can go on to look at the numbers.

11:40

MRS. SLOAN: I'm in agreement in regards to the equity of merit and market adjustments. My comment is in relation to another area, of a more general nature, of the estimates summary. I want, though, to suggest that that discussion most likely should come under MLA Administration or caucus budget components. It should be revisited. I'm anticipating that we're going to go through the sections.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. This is just the general overview, and then we'll go through it.

MRS. SLOAN: Right. Now, one of the puzzles I've been faced with

as I prepared for this meeting. I went back to our meetings and attachments of last year, and I pulled out the summary of budget estimates that was provided at that time. It's structured exactly the way the one before us today is: Estimate Comparison by Centre Code. I'll acknowledge for the record that my experience in budgets has been to deal with estimates and actuals. One of the things that I was faced with as I looked at these figures is that the estimates for '99-2000 as were provided in the minutes and attachments from our last discussions, last committee meetings differ from the estimates as they are proposed in the new sheet this morning in nine areas: the Speaker's office, public information branch, House services, legislative committees, government members' services, opposition services, et cetera.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you looking at the final document? Remember, there were several documents. There was a request made; then the committee changed them all. Then we had the final document. Is this the final document you're comparing?

MRS. SLOAN: This is what was provided with our minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: The final document should just be exactly what it is. It should be 1999-2000. There should be no differences. I don't know what document you're looking at.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, we had a new document provided this morning. I guess the question I'm raising is: if the estimates are the estimates, then why do they change? The sheet we have before us that was provided by Mr. Gano this morning differs from the estimate comparison that was provided at the end of the minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's just really clarify this. This one is submitted. If the committee changes this, there will be a new document which will be the decision of the committee. The only document we concluded last year: you had submissions as part of the minutes, because that was the submission, but it was changed. These numbers are exactly what this committee approved last year. These are exactly the numbers that were published in the House. There has been no change.

Now, the problem we're going to have is that if you change any of these numbers, we're going to finish the meeting, these will be adjusted, the final document will be done, and you come back a year from now and talk about the one in front of us, not the one we made changes to. There have been no changes. They're all the same.

MRS. SLOAN: That relates to the fact that at the outset of this discussion I made the motion asking for the actuals, because quite frankly, if we for comparison purposes' sake look at the numbers which the LAO has provided this morning, in fact all areas except for the Official Opposition are logging increases anywhere from 1.6 to 17.8 percent for public information. The Official Opposition is at the bottom of that pile by a minus 2.1 percent budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: You lost two members. That's the reason. It's based on membership.

MRS. SLOAN: However, Mr. Chairman, I would submit that that argument strikes at the fundamental principle surrounding LAO and the existence of Members' Services. There are 83 members in the province. The allocations are made according to who those members represent. But when it comes to funding the services for the Official Opposition, the third party, the independent member, or the offices of the LAO, I would submit that where the members end up falling or where they respectively represent is of no relevance.

We all have legislative responsibilities. The statutes don't

embody that members, depending on whether they're government, opposition, or third party, have any less responsibilities to represent. So, with due respect, I take offence to the fact that as chair you throw out the fact that the opposition has lost two members and therefore is . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No, Mrs. Sloan. Please. Let's just talk fact here. Okay. This budget is based on the decisions and the parameters you gave to the chair to publish a budget. It's based on the allocations that this committee has made as to how to build a budget. We have built this budget on the direction of this committee. That's what's in front of us. If you as a member want to change the parameters, we'll do that later as we get into the specifics. But don't blame the chairman.

The direction given to me by Members' Services is that a budget is based on so much allocation per member. You have two fewer members, and your budget goes down to recognize those two fewer members. That's totally honest, totally transparent, totally aboveboard. If you want to change the allocation later, we can do it if you get the agreement of the members.

All I and the people associated with me can do is take the truth, and that's all we've got. It's not a question of disrespect or anything else. It's a question of fact.

MRS. SLOAN: If I can crystalize the issues, the first issue is that the facts before us are not clear because we do not have the actual expenditures. What we have are estimates and forecasts. So until we receive the final actual expenditures for the last fiscal year, it's a bit of an intellectual argument that we're making.

The second issue is that I'm not proposing that there be a change to the member allocation, but the committee has previously utilized that as a mechanism to dismiss equitably applying provisions for market or merit adjustments or other technological enhancements to caucuses. I am registering on that issue that, in my opinion, regardless of where the 83 members fall, in what caucus, in terms of staff, technology, and other supports there should be an equitable distribution. I respect the fact, Mr. Chairman, that you don't have control over that.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no argument with that either, but if you wanted as the Official Opposition to have a budget discussed here, you could have provided it, and we'd have put your request in this book. I didn't get any request.

MRS. SLOAN: We will be making a submission when we come to our budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. Fair game. It would have been helpful to everybody in here. We'd have built the budget around it.

MRS. SLOAN: With due respect, in the copy I received from the LAO there was no government members' proposal.

THE CHAIRMAN: They never made one. They never made a request.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm sorry, but I don't think it's fair to point out – while the Official Opposition's budget is there and we will make a supplemental proposal relative to that, the government members' budget is not incorporated in the public documents for this committee this morning either.

MS HALEY: Nor are they going to be.

MRS. SLOAN: But why are they not there?

THE CHAIRMAN: The same reason yours aren't. The previous Members' Services Committee said that they don't want to discuss caucus budgets here. You have said that. [interjection] No, no. Listen. I'm going to be very clear about this, because the one last thing in the world I'm going to allow to happen in this committee – this is the Members' Services Committee. Previous members' services committees going on for 20 years – Mr. Wickman knows exactly what I'm talking about because he's been a member just as long as I have. We will never have a discussion on the caucus budgets at this table.

We will have a formula. We will apply it. That's been the tradition. That's been the rule. That's been the position of your caucus for years and years and years and years. I have come forward and used exactly the arguments you're using to me today, and I've been ruled out. So I don't know.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm not asking for a caucus discussion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, what are you asking for?

MRS. SLOAN: One of my questions is: why is government members' services summary of budget estimates not included in the package?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Everything is. I don't know what you're talking about.

MRS. SLOAN: My binder didn't include that. I'm sorry.

11:50

THE CHAIRMAN: Jacqueline, would you please check the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview's binder? Boy, if somebody made a mistake, you and I will have a discussion.

MRS. SLOAN: All right. I'm fine at the break to have a look.

THE CHAIRMAN: Jacqueline, would you please assist the Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are quite general in nature. We've got several discussions going on here.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're in an overview discussion.

MR. HERARD: Right. Essentially that's what my comments are relating to. I think that this is historic today, if my memory serves me correctly, because I think it's the first time in the history of the Legislative Assembly that we have a three-year business plan before us. In the past we were simply dealing year to year, so I want to commend you for beginning the process of bringing three-year business plans with respect to the Legislative Assembly.

As with all first attempts I think there are probably some areas for improvement. I just want to note very generally that while we see your goals on page 5, there are no performance measures. There are no measurement plans. There are no benchmarks. It's very difficult to measure the satisfaction with performance of your goals. My gentle suggestion is that for next year we direct the people in your administration to come up with some performance measures with respect to your goals, and then that will sort of complete the circle with respect to three-year business plans. We need to be able to determine whether or not there is improvement overall in the delivery of your goals.

So those are my general comments, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WICKMAN: Just a couple of quick points. The remarks made by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona are particularly noteworthy. I don't take any objection to what you've said, Mr. Chairman, in terms of what this committee has done in the past. There has been a consistency with the caucus budgets on a per member basis, and I point to the minutes of the previous year's budget, where Mr. Renner at that time stated very clearly that the market adjustment budget was 2 percent and that there had to be consistency with the budget amount allocated to caucuses and the rest of the Legislative Assembly Office. That 2 percent dealt with last year, not this year. But that's important, the consistency.

Mr. Chairman, clearly there is inconsistency when it's pointed out that other than the caucus budgets there is 5 percent built into the budgets for wage increases, with the caucus budgets at 2 percent. This committee, however, can change that, and I hope the government members reflect on this during our break and prior to getting to that. That 2 percent is not carved in stone. With the agreement of the members here, that 2 percent can be adjusted to take into consideration the necessity for merit increases for staff of the caucus offices, including the Tory caucus staff office and the third party and the second party; in other words, all caucus support staff. We can make that amendment at the appropriate time.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's true.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any other overview comments?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, we need to break for lunch; I recognize that. I wonder if we as a committee could conclude this part of the session and the general discussion related to the overview that is represented with a motion recognizing that the budgets for all people working in the capacities related to Legislative Assembly recognize the principle that the increases from now on should be based on the two principles which guide the making of the budget of your office. I'm looking at a sheet here, Human Resources Expenses: the increase in this control group is a result of increased salaries through "normal merit and [anticipated] market adjustments."

I'd be happy to make a motion, Mr. Chairman, that that very set of principles be applied to the making and approval of the budgets for all people working for the Assembly, including caucus staff.

THE CHAIRMAN: A motion is on the table. A seconder? Mrs. Sloan. We can either have a further discussion on it, or we can break for an hour and come back at 1 o'clock. Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: I would suggest that that's probably what we should do, and I'm not sure that we shouldn't really be dealing with it when we deal with the human resources side rather than jumping back and forth to all kinds of different issues. If we could go through it in an orderly way the way it's presented, then I think we could probably be more efficient with our time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fair game. There's a motion before the committee. Why don't we take a break and come back at 1 o'clock.

Mrs. Sloan? Just a second. Mr. Jacques, did you have your hand up first?

MR. JACQUES: Yes, I did. Mr. Herard, I think, requested the same thing I did, and that was to request that we [inaudible].

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just wondering if before we reconvene I can clarify, with the assistance of perhaps the Clerk or yourself, which

estimates are in fact the accurate estimates: what we've been provided here, what is included in the Leg. Assembly annual report. Discrepancies exist, and I'd appreciate actually knowing what the accurate estimate is just before we start moving into the respective branch areas.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll have it at 1 o'clock.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We reconvene at 1 o'clock, and then the first question I'll raise is: when do you want to deal with this motion? Do you want to deal with it at the outset or go with it further?

[The committee adjourned at 11:58 a.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's 1 o'clock according to my watch. We are back.

Mr. Clerk, I indicated that there would be some information with respect to previous budget numbers.

DR. McNEIL: It's just being copied. It's on its way over. It'll be over within five minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Secondly, the committee has before it a motion from Dr. Pannu. It has been moved and it has been seconded. Dr. Pannu, did you want to add something at this point in time?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, just before we broke for lunch, there was a proposal that we postpone any further discussion on this motion until a later time during the day. Therefore, I just want to move that we table the motion at this point.

THE CHAIRMAN: Until a further point.

DR. PANNU: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: So we're still in discussion of the overview, page 1 of 1 dated 12/15/1999. Any further comments to be made on the overview, or should we proceed now?

MR. CLEGG: Let's move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The first one dealing with financial management and administrative services. In essence, I gave you the overview comment. I indicated that they were essentially for human resource components, and you've got the breakdown in there, the same manpower adjustments, allocation.

MRS. SLOAN: I have a couple of questions relative to this area, Mr. Chairman. The first one. In last year's estimates there was a significant expenditure proposed around copiers being replaced, and I'm not sure whether that occurred. The allocation for office equipment this year, as I read the estimates, hasn't changed. So my first question is whether or not the issue of copiers was addressed.

The second issue related to – I'm just trying to find my last year's reference on this. I may be corrected, but I believe one of the new additions in this year's estimates is the incorporation of travel for this branch. Is that correct?

THE CHAIRMAN: It's on what line?

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just wanting to clarify for the record that travel was not an operational expense that was budgeted for last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is a \$1,260 allocation for travel, the same as last year. The answer to the first question is yes.

MRS. SLOAN: All right. Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move the financial management and administration budget.

MR. HERARD: I'll second that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion was by Mr. Wickman, seconded by Mr. Herard. Further discussion? All those who are agreed, say agreed.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, say opposed.

Human resource services. The submission there, as outlined a little earlier, had to do with the human resource allocation and then part of the election-related component, that same manpower component as well.

MR. HERARD: I move the budget as submitted.

MR. GIBBONS: I second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Discussion? All in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay. Thank you.

The third one is the Speaker's office. The variance there has to do with the human resource side. The operational side remains the same. Staff here remains the same.

Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. I'm prepared to move it, but I do have one question. I assume it relates to a portion of your remuneration, but I'll ask the question: "pay to Members of the Legislative Assembly"?

THE CHAIRMAN: C'est moi as Speaker.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The Speaker's allowance, it should say. Right?

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. It's in addition to the MLA base.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to clarify. In the notes to this section it says that there's an increase in the human resource area and no increase in the operational expenses. Based on actual, would it be correct to say that this area is increasing by approximately 5 percent?

THE CHAIRMAN: It shows the increase. My request last year was the figure that I have in this year. My estimate is the forecast estimate. I have to do some things internally in the next couple of months in order to make my budget. Essentially, if that's a percentage, let's see – not quite, but that would be correct for merit and for the 2 percent allocation plus the merit, yes.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. COUTTS: I'll move the Speaker's budget estimates as

presented.

THE CHAIRMAN: A seconder? Dr. Pannu. Further discussion? Thank you.

I just want to make one comment with respect to the little old office of the Speaker. On the operational side there's been absolutely no adjustment. However, some really interesting things have been happening, including the choirs that come here in December. We've had as many as 1,200 people here in this building in the evening. We try to give them hot chocolate. We have to go hustling for dollars for things like hot chocolate, things like that. But I'm not – well, I'll continue to hustle or find a private-sector sponsor. It's really important to make the place alive.

The public information branch, the variance there is . . .

MS HALEY: Did we do the vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, sorry. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay. Thank you. My annual groveling.

For the legislative public information branch you see numbers in there with a variance of \$83,730, the human resource component; basically nothing would be required in terms of election-related components; and \$186,546.

As I indicated before, for Mr. Speaker's annual Youth Parliament we have the Royal Canadian Legion with us for a three-year term. The first year was this year. We topped it up with an additional \$16,000. The overall budget is about \$45,000, \$49,000.

Now, the school-at-the-Legislature program I commented on before, and I give you assurances that we'll be back here to this committee if there's a problem or if you need additional information.

The centennial project: a \$100,000 allocation. As we go out to the three-year plan, I would like to just further the discussion we had last year. I indicated that I think it's really important that we start to focus over a term of years leading up to 2005. Those on this committee who have had a chance to view other parliaments and have seen parliaments know how the history of the parliament and other things are adjudicated and looked at. I outlined a variety of alternatives, programs that I wanted to take a look at, and I also indicated that not everything can be done in one year. I think it's important to start advancing this, and I requested \$100,000 last year. The committee was reluctant about allocating the \$100,000 last year, but basically it approved the idea in principle and said to come back this year with additional information with respect to it.

We have done a lot of work in the last three or four months with respect to one aspect of this project, and that is to deal with the membership of the various Legislatures of Alberta since 1905. We have been dealing with a number of firms here in Alberta with respect to taking – if you look at the pictures on the main floor, going back to the first parliament in Alberta in 1905, you'll note that there is a whole series of pictures along the wall which gives some description about the participation of the members. You'll note, if you've gone to Queen's Park in Ontario, that in other parliaments there is a big, big recognition of the members.

When I begin the first project, what I want to begin with is a series of 24 large plaques, in essence, going back to 1905, bronzed, with pictures of the various members and some information with respect to perhaps an event that may have happened in Alberta during that time frame or the population figures of Alberta during that time frame. It would cost approximately \$4,000 to \$5,000 for each one of these, and they would be built in such a way that they would last for as far as anybody's imagination can go. That would be the first

in a series of steps in recognition of the history of this building.

This is what I'd like to get done in the fiscal year of 2000-2001. Of course, after the next election there will be another one that would have to be done to cover the 2001 to 2005 period, and then going out would be a whole series of things, including part of the historical record. We have a series of books that have been published in the past outlining the various Lieutenant Governors, the leaders of the province of Alberta, small little booklets that have been placed in libraries.

We have a question on the table looking at even the blue book that was called *The Alberta Legislature*, which was a 75th project for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 1980. That's correct; isn't it? Seventy-fifth?

1:10

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, 75th.

THE CHAIRMAN: Going back to 1980, that book has essentially been out of print for some period of time. The question is: well, do we hire an author and get a couple of additional chapters written to that book to make it a comprehensive book and have it published around the year 2005, which means there's lead time to do that? That's one alternative.

Another alternative we're looking at is an interactive CD-ROM that basically is about this building, the history of this building, what goes on in this building. I believe the technology is in place so that, in essence, the CD-ROM could be manufactured in such a way that it could be interactive with an individual member.

That's not what I'm bringing forward to you today. Where we've advanced so far is basically looking at this first series of plaques. I have some schematics in my office, and I could bring such a schematic in if you'd like to take a look to see what it would look like. That's where I'd like to be by April 1 of 2000, in a position to get going with this project and have at least that first phase done in that year. Then I would bring back in the fall of next year a further series of proposals. It would deal with the building, the history of the parliament, the history of the Legislative Assembly, the individuals, the accomplishments of the Legislative Assembly, and it would be done in a very dignified, nonpartisan way.

Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've had the honour over the years to visit absolutely every single Legislature in this land, and I certainly agree with you that the recognition of public service is very much understated in the province of Alberta. So I agree with what you're trying to do.

Just one comment. Chances are, assuming that this is approved and you go ahead, that the processes today for creating those plaques is likely digital in nature, and part of it should probably be put on the web site as well. In other words, once you have the digital photos in place, then you can put them on the web site, and that will also help with respect to the recognition of those members past.

Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Just a question, and I'm prepared to move the budget subject to the question and other questions members may have. Is the wage increase in the management positions fairly consistent throughout the budget at roughly, I figure, 7 and a half percent?

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, no. It's 2 plus the merit allocation.

MR. WICKMAN: But I'm asking the average. What would it average throughout the departments? Like in this particular area it's about 7 and a half, and when I look, it seems to be fairly consistent,

in that neighbourhood.

THE CHAIRMAN: Clerk, you'd better get involved in this one.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. You have to be careful here because it's not all just merit and market adjustments. Some of it is increases because of increased hours and so on. In terms of the average, overall the LAO is about 5 percent, but that could vary from branch to branch depending on where people are in the salary range.

MR. WICKMAN: But the 5 percent would be a fairly safe figure; right?

DR. McNEIL: On average, yeah, combining the market in there.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. That's good. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question. Actually, again just for the record, by my calculations, respecting the fact that the estimates have varied based on their publication, this area is proposed to increase by about 17.8 percent.

One question that I would raise, though, is that it has been a practice of public information to provide for the televising of the provincial budget, and we don't have any dispute with that. We do, however, have a dispute with the fact that the televising does not allow equitable allocation of time for the Leader of the Official Opposition. Primarily the focus is in the Chamber when the Provincial Treasurer delivers the budget. Given the fact that that expenditure comes out of LAO and not the government's public affairs component, we would seek some discussion or consideration of equal time for the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party, if they're so interested, to participate in that process.

THE CHAIRMAN: Your request is that . . .

MRS. SLOAN: There be equitable time provided for.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. There is provision for the opening of the session on opening day, and then under our contract with the carrier is just the budget, the actual time for the budget.

Why? Are you anticipating the Leader of the Opposition would immediately rise then and participate in the budget speech?

MRS. SLOAN: Possibly. Basically our submission is on principle. Given that that coverage is being provided for by LAO, there should be recognition of the two statutory institutions, if you will: the government, which proposes the budget, and the Official Opposition, which has a statutory duty to respond.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Well, I think we have to be careful where we go here. Currently we've got basically two areas of the Legislature that are publicized: Orders of the Day, question period, and then I guess the Speech from the Throne and/or the budget.

What you're asking for is to publicize the debate around the budget. What is being currently televised by popular demand is simply the presentation of the budget, bringing it forward for the people, and that is it. So I think if we go down this path, we'd better be very, very careful of where we're headed, because the intent was not to present a debate or the government's side. It is being done to present the budget per se to the people of the province. It is not a detailed examination of the estimates. It's an overview for the interest of the public of where the government is heading in its financial plan.

I for one, unless there are some very, very compelling arguments to push us to further expand the television costs of the House, would be very much against this because we're heading into televising debates as opposed to bringing forward what would be an item of information for the people.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we're here to approve the sums required. Part of what the sums reflect here is the cost of televising those events. I don't think it's within the purview of this committee to start looking at processes within the Legislative Assembly. I think that is really something that needs to be referred to the Government House Leader as well as the opposition and third party House leaders. If they wish to change the process, then perhaps that's how it can happen, but I don't think it makes any difference whatsoever with respect to the dollars that we're here to approve or not approve whether or not this happens. Therefore, I don't think this argument fits within the purview of this committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: The bottom line is that it would have no impact on the budget if the suggestion made by Mrs. Sloan were to be carried through. I'll just make a comment on the procedural side of the House because it is here before the committee.

The budget speech is moved by the presenter of the speech, and then by tradition – by tradition, not necessarily by a decision of the chair, and it can change – the first person recognized after the presentation of the speech is the Leader of the Official Opposition. It could be somebody else, but by tradition that's the first person recognized. By tradition, again, the Leader of the Official Opposition moves to adjourn the debate. If the Leader of the Official Opposition chose to participate, the television cameras would continue to roll, but by tradition the Leader of the Official Opposition chooses to adjourn the debate.

1:20

We've had one occasion in the history of this Legislature when the Leader of the Official Opposition got up and said that he, in this case, would want to say something before adjourning the debate. The question was called on the motion to adjourn as put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the House voted the adjournment motion down. The Leader of the Official Opposition then was forced to proceed with his participation in the debate, which was televised. Just a matter of history.

It won't make any impact on the cost.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, that's a helpful clarification. You talked about the tradition, I guess, of this House.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

DR. PANNU: Or were you referring more broadly to the tradition followed in other Assemblies as well?

THE CHAIRMAN: It's the same thing.

DR. PANNU: Same thing. Oh, I see.

THE CHAIRMAN: Usually what happens is that when the budget is presented, the other parties in the House want time to digest it. Our tradition is that the first person to speak then is the Leader of the Official Opposition but at a date chosen by the Leader of the Official Opposition. If the person wants to continue going, it's accepted. If the House says no to the Leader of the Official Opposition saying

"move to adjourn the debate," if the House votes it down, well, you're into debate. And if you're not ready, it makes an interesting afternoon from a procedural point of view.

MRS. SLOAN: So procedurally, Mr. Chairman, what you're saying is that the Leader of the Official Opposition could rise and begin to speak, not make the motion and proceed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MRS. SLOAN: The contract would provide for coverage of that at no extra cost.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's right. We don't know how long the speech is. It's a contract with the server to provide coverage of the speech, so it could be 10 minutes or it could be an hour and a half or it could be three hours.

MRS. SLOAN: How long, usually, is the telecast continued after the budget is delivered?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, usually when the motion to adjourn is done, it terminates. We rise.

MRS. SLOAN: But if the motion to adjourn weren't made, then it would continue?

THE CHAIRMAN: Probably. It's not a difficult thing.

MRS. SLOAN: All right. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Of course, whether or not the networks would carry it is quite another thing. They oftentimes will interrupt this broadcast to go back to their regular programs. I mean, this happens.

MR. WOLOSHYN: They're not bound to carry it.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, we might be just about ready to vote on this, but one item there under operational expenses, hosting, is quite dramatically down.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

DR. PANNU: Was it because some conference took place?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, the visitor services conference, which we hosted for the first time ever in Alberta in 1999. We don't have it this year.

A motion? Mr. Jacques. Second? Mr. Gibbons. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Thank you.

The Legislature Library budget overview. Last year, members will recall, I indicated that there was need for attention to the library. I appreciate very much the support of the members last year with respect to the request made by the library. I think we were very, very good about meeting some of their requests. No additional requirement for staff-power things, staff-year items but an additional request to keep the process of improvement going for the library.

MR. WICKMAN: It's been moved, but just one question. Again I look at the wage component. I don't want to dwell on this, but in the earnings, nonmanagement, you say: no additional staff.

THE CHAIRMAN: Full-time.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, additional part-time. Good. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. That's all it is. There's a researcher for the election-year project. Essentially what the library does – and, again, this is all geared to the fact that if this event will occur – is that prior to that, a package of historical information, clinical information with respect to the constituencies of Alberta is usually provided to all members.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons, you had a motion. Is there a seconder? Mr. Coutts. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Thank you.

House services is one of the bigger ones that we've got in our component. I've given you a quick overview on that with respect to the human resource component, then \$64,900 to include the participation in the Partnership of Parliaments, \$13,000 for an adjustment in travel allocation because of the location of some of these ventures, and \$10,000 increased TV production costs, for that variance in the amount of money.

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By my calculations, House services is increasing by 11.3 percent. A question that I have, though, relates to the estimates figures. The figure that we have before us today is \$89,922.

THE CHAIRMAN: For travel?

MRS. SLOAN: For travel. The estimate that was proposed when the estimate was approved last time – and I don't recall; I didn't read that there was any adjustment to that – was \$129,922. I'm just wondering if someone could explain.

THE CHAIRMAN: That was last year?

MRS. SLOAN: That was '99-2000.

THE CHAIRMAN: You didn't approve it. The committee did not approve my request. We reduced travel.

DR. McNEIL: We took \$30,000 out of that.

THE CHAIRMAN: You didn't approve my request last year.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess that's where, in my opinion, it's confusing, because if we approved it at \$30,000 less, then why isn't that the actual, not the estimate?

THE CHAIRMAN: That essentially is. It is \$89,922.

MRS. SLOAN: The actual?

THE CHAIRMAN: That was the approved.

DR. McNEIL: The \$89,922 is the estimate that was approved by this committee.

I'll hand out this green sheet. These sheets were circulated to each member of the committee after the budget meeting so that you had in your binders the estimate that was approved by the committee and

the estimate that went forward to the House. It was presented to you on these green sheets, and these are the numbers that match up with the estimate that's in the budget here.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chairman: for the purposes of clarity, would it be possible to use the term "budget" instead of "estimate"? What we're discussing are the estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, these terms are the consistent ones used in budgetary processes everywhere, Mrs. Sloan. These are the words used.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, in my experience, Mr. Chairman, there has been quite a common application in using budget estimates and actuals. What I've tried to point out this morning is the fact that we use the term "estimate," but the documents don't clarify that those are the nonapproved estimates or the approved estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: They never are. The nonapproved ones are never put in.

MRS. SLOAN: All I'm saying is that for the purposes of someone looking at these, whether it's an interested taxpayer who has an accounting background or me as a member of this committee, there is no documented differentiation between the two, and it's very confusing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Again, remember that the only documents the public will ever see of our budget documents are the ones approved in the Legislature. These are working papers for this committee, and these can change from minute to minute or discussion to discussion. The one document that has the authority is the document that the Members of the Legislative Assembly vote on.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm just looking at the paper provided. This morning what I asked for were the '97-98, '98-99 actual expenditures.

THE CHAIRMAN: We don't have them.

DR. McNEIL: Yes, we have those.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, we have those now? Okay; you've got them. Audited, Mr. Clerk?

DR. McNEIL: No, not audited yet. I'll pass them out here. The one draft is '97-98.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's just back this up here. What are we doing now?

DR. McNEIL: The actuals.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the budgeted figure?

DR. McNEIL: And the actual expenditures.

THE CHAIRMAN: This comes out of the report of the public accounts, public information.

1:30

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. Exactly. Now, we've been in a process since '97-98. Before this point in time Alberta Treasury prepared the public accounts. Now each department, in our case the Legislative Assembly Office, has to prepare consolidated financial statements.

So this is the draft of the consolidated financial statements for the '97-98 fiscal year for the Legislative Assembly Office. As I say, it's a draft. It hasn't been approved by the Speaker, nor has it been approved, audited by the Auditor General as yet.

THE CHAIRMAN: Again, it's just a draft.

DR. McNEIL: That's what I say: it's a draft.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Auditor General gives us the one.

DR. McNEIL: That's '97-98. We haven't developed this same document yet for '98-99, but I have a summary of those expenses for '98-99.

THE CHAIRMAN: So there's a draft unaudited statement to March 31, 1998. Then there's an unaudited statement to March 31, 1999, and then the third one you have is an extrapolation of the document before the Legislative Assembly of Alberta that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta approved for the current year.

MR. HERARD: Maybe I'm missing something really obvious here, but are we just really talking about terminology? When you look at '99-2000, it ain't over yet, so it's still an estimate.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's true. Yes. That's why it's a forecast.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. The fact of the matter is that the numbers we see there are the ones that we approved last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. HERARD: So in order to have a comparison to what we're doing this year, then we should be looking at what we approved last year. Now, the actuals come after the fact, once the year is in fact over with, and then the Auditor General has a look at them. It seems to me there's no confusion. We've always done it this way. Perhaps I'm confused, but I don't see a problem here.

MRS. SLOAN: I'd just restate my point that the estimates are made in an unapproved form, and then they are in an approved form. So for the purposes of the records of someone sitting at this table, you have estimates that are unapproved, as were attached to the minutes last year, and estimates that have been approved and then form the budget. My proposal was simply: call the approved estimates the budget, and you eliminate the confusion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then, that second category, 1999-2000 estimate: call that the budget. That's what it is. We've referred to it in parliamentary language as the estimate.

MRS. SLOAN: I appreciate the information provided. Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I'll move House services.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wickman. A seconder? Mr. Herard.

All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay. Thank you.

The next item is information systems.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. WICKMAN: Just a question, and Dr. McNeil can possibly answer it. This is one of the areas that we kind of struggled with last year in terms of the budget request and what was finally approved for them. I was one that was sympathetic towards the difficulties they were going through retaining staff and that staff being bought off by higher bidders. Has that stabilized?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. As I indicated in my opening comments this morning, there has been, I think, a really important improvement in the last two years. Two years ago this was a major, major factor. People did not stay very long. There was a tremendous demand out there for people who were skilled in this area, and Mr. Gano was instructed at that time to undertake a review to see how we can improve it. I'm really quite satisfied that we have made pretty good improvement.

Now, again, hand in hand with this is the work that goes on among the three caucuses on the EDP committee, the electronic data processing committee. We've gone along with in this year's budget \$245,000, and the request for the next year is to move it \$55,000, recognizing the election transfer and also going forward with the standards we have.

I also indicated this morning that one of the things that I wanted to review in this next year is the standard of the allocation of equipment, the 1.25 pieces of equipment and the constituency thing, and that's something we'd want to have a review of so that when we come back next year at this time, we'd have some recommendations. I want to work hand in hand with all of the people involved.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. The second question I have, Mr. Chairman: is this the appropriate department to bring forward for discussion the item that was tabled dealing with the laptop computers?

THE CHAIRMAN: The item that was tabled?

MR. WICKMAN: Tabled at the previous meeting. It was to be brought back. It was deferred. There was discussion on laptop computers, and the decision made at that particular time was that the matter was deferred.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Okay. I follow you now. I think that if we look at where we're at in terms of timing – of course the committee can look at this at any time. My strong recommendation is the following, that we spend the time after April 1, 2000, looking at the package that's made available to all members and the package through their caucus and the package in their constituency offices. To this point in time some caucuses provide over and above the standard that the LAO has set, and that's their choice. Many members have gone out and purchased laptop computers under their constituency office allocations. I think it's time to ask the question: should not the LAO provide a standard package to everybody?

My request, then, is that we hold off until after the next election, because my experience with this and the experience of other people is that whoever the new members are, whatever equipment a previous member has purchased is not going to be good enough. So rather than get caught in the bind of making massive expenditures in the year 2000 to March 31 of 2001, I think we should spend our time getting the package so that after the next event here's the package, fair and equal for all members.

MR. WICKMAN: I'd point out, Mr. Chairman, two factors that have to be taken into consideration. The price of that type of equipment has, of course, fallen dramatically in time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

MR. WICKMAN: Secondly, I visit some of the municipal councils, the city of Edmonton, for example. It's par for the course, each of the councillors with their laptop, which they find to be an extremely valuable asset in terms of accessing information and such.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed.
Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Yeah. I have a question, I guess, with regard really more to the operational end of it. The question is with regard to the 83 constituency offices and the ability for remote access, which I'm assuming most offices either are using or have the capability for. Is that correct? That's my first question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Where are we in the 83, Bill?

MR. GANO: All offices have that capability for remote access.

MR. JACQUES: The second question I have. For example, in my constituency office for a hookup to be made, they dial the toll-free number, 1-888 something, I believe it is. How many lines or ports or whatever – I don't know how you measure this – at any given time as a maximum can be on-line or on remote access to your network?

MR. GANO: We have currently 16 lines available for remote offices to dial into. We are increasing that to 24 as we speak, and each increase of eight lines is about \$2,500. That's basically how that works.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. So does the budget reflect a change in these? You indicated at least to 24 as a minimum.

MR. GANO: Yeah. That's correct. That's basically under data processing equipment and under equipment repair and maintenance. That's where those numbers come into play.

MR. JACQUES: As the year proceeds, if you need 16 more lines, for argument's sake, do you have enough in your budget to be able to accommodate that?

MR. GANO: Information systems' budget is fairly flexible, and we tend to move things around, so the short answer is yes. We do have it.

1:40

MR. GIBBONS: Can I ask a question? In the direction of going from the 16 to the 24 or even going another 16, what's the process of timing? I mean, we're almost in a new millennium, and one of the biggest problems we have in our offices is access and the slowness of it.

MR. GANO: It's not only the lines that cause those problems. We are constantly monitoring and measuring how many people are dialed in at one time, and as we get to the point where it looks like things are getting out of hand, then we bump things up. Just to put it into perspective, at this time last year we had four lines.

The other aspect of it. Basically, we have 83 offices that are accessing us in a remote manner. When you compare that to industry standards, we have supposedly more than enough lines. When we get complaints, we deal with them. That's the bottom line.

MS HALEY: I guess two points. First off, I want to thank Bill and

his staff. I know that just even a few short years ago the vast majority of us did not even have a laptop, probably didn't know how to turn one on. It's been an incredible change for all of us. Your staff have been marvelous in helping us learn how to use them and at least get past the "I don't want to turn it on because I know it's going to blow up on me if I do" part. So thank you for that.

The second area I wanted to raise is the printers. I'm sure it's something that can be referred to EDP, but I wanted to mention it here because I want you to know that we will be raising it at EDP with regard to the actual printers that we have. We have network printers, roughly one for every four people, and that's fine, but the next generation of printers is already out. It's not that expensive for me just as an individual to go and purchase a colour printer. It's something that I guess I'm wondering: are we moving in that direction at all? Is 4 to 1 the right ratio, or would it be at some point more practical to have individual printers for each of the assistants and have them be colour toned as well? I just wanted to raise it because I want you to know that that's one of the things I want to pursue.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's what will be studied together, collectively?

MS HALEY: Yes. Exactly. I just want to make sure it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard then Mr. Gibbons.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. Just a question. Your 16 ports today, are they 56K compatible?

MR. GANO: Yes, they are. We have the highest speed on those ones, the 56K.

MR. HERARD: Right. Chances are, though, that the modems that are currently in our constituency offices are probably 28.8 or 33 or something. But for a couple of hundred dollars out of your budget you can in fact move that up to 56K, so if it's a speed issue, that's very easily remedied through our own budgets.

MR. GIBBONS: This is something to bring up. With our printer and the paper we put through it, there's a lot of smudging on the envelopes and all that. I'm not sure of the exact problem, but it was one question that I was asked to bring up here. Maybe it's the paper. We seem to get it through there often. Maybe it's not compatible.

MR. GANO: Yeah. Certainly it could be a cleaning issue; it could be a problem with the printer itself. So if you just let us know that it's happening, then we can get someone out to take a look at it or get the printer in and get it maintained properly.

MR. GIBBONS: I'll let you know who called in.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, thank you. Any additional questions with respect to this matter?

A motion? Mr. Woloshyn to move it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Acceptance.

THE CHAIRMAN: Second? Dr. Pannu.
All in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay. Thank you.
The next one is the committee's branches. This is a request made

of all the committee chairmen to give their suggestions of what happened and will happen. So we bring in the budget, and this has been reviewed by the various chairmen of these committees.

Mr. Woloshyn. Mrs. Sloan, do you have a question, or was that to second?

MRS. SLOAN: A question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Ms Haley, then, seconded.

MRS. SLOAN: A couple of questions. The first is why the Privileges and Elections, Law and Regulations, and Public Affairs standing committees have not been included. I recognize that there were no meetings of those committees and therefore no expenditures, but it seems to me that we should accurately reflect that those standing committees still exist.

THE CHAIRMAN: I agree. Put in zero.

MRS. SLOAN: So I'm wondering if there could be a motion to amend.

THE CHAIRMAN: You don't need a motion. It will be done. That's an administrative thing that should be carried out. That should apply to all committees whether or not there is an expenditure.

MRS. SLOAN: And the other area of the question that I have, Mr. Chairman, is relative to the estimates last year. Actually, again, it's in relation to a difference between the two in terms of payment of members, but I trust I'll have time to look at the other documents provided.

THE CHAIRMAN: Motion to move?

MR. WICKMAN: I have moved it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, you had, Mr. Wickman? Thank you very much. Mr. Clegg seconded. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you.

Well, that covers really the basic subtotals for the first portion, and there's been no modifications made in there. You've given approval for all those items. I don't think there's need for a subtotal motion. That's been done.

So we move on to Legislative Assembly, MLA Administration. The requested number is \$14,000 less than the current budgeted figure, and there is text that goes along with the description for it in terms of the submission. This deals with the MLA remuneration, indemnity of all the other allowances that you see in there, all the allowances to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the leader of the recognized third party, chief government whip, and Deputy Chairman of Committees. They're all listed in there.

In dealing with this matter there had to be, then, a mechanism of saying: what would be the percentage that we'll put in to deal with this budget? This committee governs itself by the average weekly earnings index. The figure last year was 2.44 percent, as I recall. In here, for this budget for those sections the number is a 2.5 percent adjustment. That would be the average weekly earnings index as those numbers become available. We have them now available, I believe, to August of 1999. It covers, according to our motion, from January to December. It's probably not until the latter part of February – I think it was the latter part of February when we got the

actual final number for 1998, and that was the number that was kicked in.

For this budget the number I put in is 2.5 percent. However, we will wait until the very last time to put the actual number in. So if it's less than 2.5 percent, it will be the actual number for the 12 months. If it's 1 percent, what will be put in here is 1 percent. If it's 5 percent, then it will be 5 percent put in there. My understanding is that if you look at the numbers from January through to August – and again you have to remember that there's still September, October, November, December, and then whatever the economists use that comes out of the official source for this stuff to adjust it. It'll be less than 2.5 percent, but all I would be doing is guessing. But that's the factor that goes in there.

1:50

In terms of the other aspects in it, on the first page everything else is the same. On the second page halfway down you've got the members' services allowances as determined in the constituency services order. This allowance is currently comprised of three elements. The constituency office is \$41,766. I indicated this morning that for the purpose of this budget for that allocation we used the formula the last Members' Services Committee instructed us to use, and that \$41,766 per member is increased to \$43,310 per member. Now, if you calculate the percentage, that's 3.7 percent. That follows the formula we were directed to use. That \$41,766 per member moves to \$43,310, and that impacts all members. All 83 get that.

There was no adjustment made to the communications formula. That remains static. There was no adjustment made to the promotional one. That remains static.

So if you take a look, then, at what this budget is, there's a reduction of \$375,000 from this year, because this year we carry the transition allowance of \$375,000 in the event a member would leave, would retire, not die. If they die, the estate doesn't get it. They'd have to leave. To this point in time nobody's done it, but who knows what'll happen in January, February, March?

In building next year's budget, I did not build in \$375,000 because I built in that \$2.1 million, so I didn't have to do a double-dip. Off the top it's \$375,000 less, but then if you look at that basis of the 2.5 percent to the pay for the Members of the Legislative Assembly, for 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly on that 2.5 percent index plus all the other things that went in there for leaders' allowances and what have you, that amounts to \$200,231. That's the manpower/human resources side.

The operational expenses: those numbers are all identified.

The last one is the members' services allowance. I indicated this morning that the index figure for that one would be 3.7 percent by the formula we have, with an increase from \$41,766 to \$43,310. So for our constituency offices there is an overall allocation that amounts to \$128,158. When you recognize the reduction of the \$375,000, the transition allowance, and those other increases, the overall bottom line on that one changes on the MLA administration side.

So that is the explanation of the whole thing, and I'm open to any questions or any suggestions or any thoughts. This is the one section that deals with the constituency offices.

DR. PANNU: What page are we on, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: You can go to the fourth page, which says page 1 of 14, where you've got MLA administration. You can see that in the 1999-2000 estimate that \$375,000 is not carried in the upcoming budget for the reason I just explained. The pay to the Members of the Legislative Assembly: if you look at that formula of 2.5 percent, there's the same number of members, 83 and 83, so it goes up from

\$6.729 million to \$6.929 million. That's the \$200,000. The travel thing is the same. There's a slight adjustment for postage. You can go right down the list.

For the operational expense the increase is \$33,000. The overall budget for total administration to that portion is reduced from \$9,204,699 to \$9,062,954, so it's a reduction.

Then you go to the next line, the constituency allowances. The built-in factor in there is 83 MLAs, and it's made up of three portions. The first one is that the allocation per member goes to \$43,310, so it's 83 times that. Then the same amounts for communications allowance as the current year and the same amount for the promotional allowance as the current year, so the total allowances are adjusted by \$125,000. Then you go down to the bottom line, and you can see that the budget is just slightly reduced next year as compared to this year.

MR. WICKMAN: Just two points. The one is where you talk in terms of the constituency office element increase of 3.7 percent to address the anticipated market adjustment. That's a step in the right direction in comparison to the caucus budgets. I'd just point that out.

Secondly – and I guess this is more for the benefit of the rural members – I still wonder why the \$750 in postage that's allowed for MLA mailings has to be done through the post office here rather than through the constituency office. For me it's not so much of a problem. I can just haul my mail here. But rural MLAs would find it a bit different.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think that's quite correct.

MR. WICKMAN: The \$750 per MLA.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know. I'm a rural MLA, and I just simply request a cheque for \$750 be sent to my constituency office. They mail it out of Barrhead.

MR. WICKMAN: And it doesn't come out of your constituency budget?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. You indicated that they would have to get it sent out of this Legislature Building post office.

MR. WICKMAN: We've always had to bring it right down here and mail it through the post office here.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. There's \$750 allocated for members mailing from their Legislature office.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, that's a different one. So you're talking . . . Okay.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm saying that for the rural members it has to be difficult.

MS HALEY: There's a courier bag, and it's easy.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've never had a complaint from a rural member yet.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I'm just complaining for them.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That was brought in a few years ago on the reverse side. The rural members were complaining that they didn't have the ability to mail from Edmonton when they were here. So then they put the postage allowance in Edmonton so they could mail

from here and maintain their constituency allowance.

MS HALEY: There are no complaints.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Good. If everybody's happy, fine.

MS HALEY: Everybody's happy.

THE CHAIRMAN: Questions? Mrs. Sloan then Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Yes. Just clarification.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I recognized Mrs. Sloan first.

MR. JACQUES: Oh, I'm sorry.

MRS. SLOAN: I have a question in relation to the insurance section of this branch. The estimate that we have for '99-2000 was \$46,000. The estimate for 2000-2001 is \$48,600. This is the last page of the descriptors on the proposed estimates. We say insurance is \$2,600. Now, in the statutory declarations that were made relative to insurance provisions and allocations to the Ethics Commissioner this last year, the submission and the documentation provided under that declaration say that the allocation for '99-2000 was \$24,914. I'm wondering what the discrepancy is between those two figures, if someone could explain that to me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's just break down the \$48,600.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. There are two components there. One is to in effect pay risk management for that coverage based on the assessment of the risk. The other is \$25,000 that the committee voted last year to pay the deductible for members who have losses in their constituency offices, which before last year they had to pay out of their constituency allowance. The committee approved \$25,000 so that the member wouldn't have to pay the deductible under the insurance coverage if somebody stole a computer or something in their office. Those are the two components of it.

So there's the risk management portion, which we pay to Treasury, and then there's the portion that we allocate in the event that there is a loss in the constituency office, and we pay the deductible rather than the individual MLA having to do that.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I'm still a bit confused, because the submission made to the Ethics Commissioner actually covers all of those things. It covers property, automobile, crime, et cetera in the \$24,000.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct, but it doesn't cover the deductible, so we budgeted for the deductible so members would not have to pay that from their constituency allowance.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just wanting to be clear for the record then. The deductible would represent about \$22,000?

DR. McNEIL: About \$20,000.

MRS. SLOAN: And that's deductible on all of the insurance?

2:00

DR. McNEIL: That's on property loss. So there's a \$5,000 deductible on property loss.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let me just straighten this out for the committee. If you had a flood, if you had a fire, if you had some damage in your

constituency office, as several members have, then under the risk management that we have, the first \$5,000 would have to have been taken care of by the member. So how did the member do it in the past? There was no provision for the member. So the \$5,000, if they were replaced, came out of their constituency office allocation. A number of members said, "Gee, that really strikes me hard." The thought was brought to this committee. This committee said, "Well, fine; if there's \$5,000, why don't we just set aside some money," which the committee agreed to do, \$20,000. So up to \$5,000 per event. If there were four major events in your constituency offices, you would no longer have to eat that, so to speak, out of your constituency office allocation. You would come to me, and I would say: "Well, fine. We've got this plan in place, and we will provide the first \$5,000 of coverage for you." This has happened to members.

DR. PANNU: So, Mr. Chairman, four or five claims must have come up last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the past. Yeah. I don't know if we've had any claims this year at all. It's just for covering it.

DR. PANNU: Then these are the moneys paid for the deductible part.

THE CHAIRMAN: We deal with it here.

As an example, I had in my constituency office in Barrhead – three years ago a main waterline outside in the street burst. The water backed up to the adjoining building. It flooded the adjoining building. Nearly 18 inches of water came onto the floor of my constituency office. I had about 300 of those Legislative Assembly books that are now out of print, that I talked about, at – what? – \$30 or \$40 apiece. They all got totally soaked; they all had to be destroyed. So I come in to the Clerk, and I say: "Gee, I got all this damage. There are machines. There's all kinds of stuff." He said: "Well, that's fine. We'll take care of everything other than the first \$5,000 in loss." I say: "Well, who takes care of the first \$5,000?" "Well, you do under the Members' Services order." "So where do I get the money for that?" "Well, you can take it out of your pocket, have a silver collection, have a fund-raising, or take it out of your constituency office allocation." So I had to take care of it in my own way.

I didn't raise it. Other members who had similar kinds of experiences did. We dealt with it in the past in this committee and said: let's set this up in place. That's why we're doing it.

MR. HERARD: I just wanted to ask a question with regards to MLA travel and the fact that we passed a motion this morning for spousal travel. Do we have to increase the estimate with respect to travel in this case, or do you find that travel is fully expended every year? Is this something that could be absorbed within this budget, or do we have to vote an additional amount?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, my response to you is that I have no way of knowing what will be used to March 31, because some hon. members wait till April 2 to submit their claims. They save up for 12 months. Other hon. members come on a monthly basis. So I've got to go to the maximum.

The answer to your question is no. I think it's prudent, prudent financial management to build whatever the number is that you want to request as a result of that motion into this estimate.

MR. HERARD: Well, I would move that we add \$25,000 to the travel estimate for that purpose.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have Dr. Pannu and Mrs. Sloan on the speaking list, but now we have a motion put forward by Mr. Herard.

MR. JACQUES: I second the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconded by Mr. Jacques.

The committee now has before it a motion that is for the spousal allowance. Correct?

MR. HERARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And the figure was?

MR. HERARD: Twenty-five thousand dollars.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll get back to Dr. Pannu, and Mrs. Sloan you're still on the list, but now we have this motion, which is seconded. Any discussion on the motion?

MRS. SLOAN: Can I ask the mover of the motion how he came to that figure?

MR. HERARD: Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe that this morning you reminded us – and I think that if the hon. member wants to go to our transcript, she will recognize that you spoke with respect to amounts that have been spent in the past. I just simply took a median, average figure on the low side.

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's a guess.

MR. HERARD: It's a guess, yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Others on the motion? Do I call the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE CHAIRMAN: It sounded approved to me.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to the insurance coverage deductible. When did this committee make this decision to cover the deductible for members? How far back does it go, and is there information in our little booklets on members' services which suggests that such deductibles will be paid for from this fund?

THE CHAIRMAN: We made the decision last year. Or two years ago? It was all done here in this committee, Dr. Pannu.

DR. McNEIL: Two years ago is Jacqueline's recollection.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. And the risk management one, I'm not sure if there's any paper, but in this recent one that I did take the time to provide to all members, it's clearly identified, consolidated. This is in direct response to what I read in the Ethics Commissioner's report, and it's clearly identified in here.

DR. PANNU: Other members have complimented you, Mr. Chairman, for providing this information to us now, but I presume,

then, that over the last two years since the decision has been in effect, we as members were not formally informed of it. I mean, the members of the committee would be, I guess.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. But, Dr. Pannu, my dilemma here is that I just have to assume that members of the committee talk to members of their caucuses. That's just an assumption. Or, secondly, my door is always open for any question of any member. I just have to assume that you are telling your other caucus members what goes on.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, if I may take just one minute of the committee's time. I would request that you take more formal responsibility in your office or in the LAO to put such decisions that affect our budgets on record for every member.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I just want to remind you that every decision of this committee is circulated to every Member of the Legislative Assembly after the meeting. If there's an adjustment to a Members' Services order, every member gets a copy of it, every member, all the time.

DR. PANNU: I guess I can't make the point more emphatically than to say that these things affect our budgets, and attempts should be made to draw special attention to budget-related items. You know, we get lots of paper, Mr. Chairman, all the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate what you're saying. It's always the shoemaker's kid who's walking around with holes in the bottom of his shoes. The same thing applies to us.

DR. PANNU: I'm asking for this information to be made formally.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah.
Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. To begin, I'd reinforce and support what Dr. Pannu was saying. We can use the liability or deductible issue, or we can use the risk management issue. The *Members' Guide* is not explicitly clear to members. I'm not sure if I heard a commitment that there would be some . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you have it. I've done it. This is the most emphatic bit of information we can have.

MRS. SLOAN: I appreciated receiving that personal information, but I'm asking that in the general *Members' Guide*, which is given to all members when we're sworn in, that outlines what coverage you receive, et cetera . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: That's going to be done.

MRS. SLOAN: That will be done?

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. No ifs, ands, or buts.

MRS. SLOAN: My other question was relative to the insurance and liability. Given the passage of the travel order this morning, will Members' Services be providing insurance coverage liability to spouses, family members, or guests that travel with the member? If something occurred while that person was riding with an MLA on official business, would the coverage exist for them?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if a member goes to a CPA conference, one insurance coverage is for their travel . . .

DR. McNEIL: If they're traveling on Assembly business, it depends if they're in their own vehicle or an Assembly vehicle. You know, there are all sorts of factors that come into it.

MRS. SLOAN: The question I'm asking is in the province. If I'm traveling on MLA business in the province and I have someone with me, whether it's a family member or a guest, as was passed this morning, do the insurance provisions under this area of the budget apply to those people?

2:10

THE CHAIRMAN: In your own car? You would have insurance coverage on your own car.

MRS. SLOAN: In my own car.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, you would have that. You would cover that personal liability on your own car.

MRS. SLOAN: But what if it didn't happen in the car?

THE CHAIRMAN: It happened in what? A common carrier?

MRS. SLOAN: Let's say that we were on a bus, the Red Arrow or something.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then they should have liability insurance for that, and I did make a very strong statement to all members this year about car rentals and what insurance you should take when renting cars.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just not clear.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll try to get a very definitive answer to that.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm aware privately of what coverage I have, but if I'm on official business and those people accompany me on official business, I'd like it to be explicit in the *Member's Guide*.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I presume that if they're employees of this public service of Alberta, that's one thing, and if they are traveling on official business. Who else would there be other than an employee of the province of Alberta traveling with you on official business? It couldn't be anybody else.

MRS. SLOAN: But it could be people who are not employees also.

THE CHAIRMAN: But then they wouldn't be on official business. How could they be if they're not employees of the government?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I think that's where we can split hairs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you help me then? Give me some examples. If they were not employees of the province, how could they be traveling on official business of the province?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, based on the travel orders that we made this morning, they would be my guests.

THE CHAIRMAN: That was for official business.

MRS. SLOAN: Uh-huh.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, this interests me. I want your advice

on it, your clarity on it. I go to Calgary. I request a member of my caucus staff . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: I presume it's an employee.

MRS. SLOAN: It could be a volunteer, though.

DR. PANNU: When you say public employee, you will then treat these caucus employees as public employees; right?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, they are. They are under contract to somebody. If they're not under contract to you, they're under contract to the Legislative Assembly Office.

DR. PANNU: Yes, indeed. A good clarification.

THE CHAIRMAN: But volunteers are not on official business on behalf of the province of Alberta.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I would suggest that if they were asked by an MLA to accompany them on official business to do whatever the nature of the business was, the case could be made that they are.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll certainly have that evaluated by our legal people. I can't answer that question from a legal point of view. I'm not in a position to answer that, but I'll have it evaluated.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just on the topic that Mrs. Sloan has, I think we're going far beyond what a travel allowance is, paying for an expense that's claimed afterwards. Now, the government has areas of insurance, and private people have areas of insurance. If the Members' Services book comes out at a later date, we might want to make it clear that the travel allowances in no way, shape, or form imply that there's going to be an obligation beyond covering an expense as asked for by the member, not by the person that's being transported.

THE CHAIRMAN: That would part of this whole clarification.

MR. WOLOSHYN: To my mind it would in no way extend liability to the government because of whatever has happened to a member.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any difficulty with the self-funded loss contingency fund originally created in 1998-99 after Members' Services Committee approval. That's all documented very clearly in the document we were given. However, a question I would have of the Clerk: the other component, the risk management and insurance component, when did that premium first appear in the budget? I can't recall an MSC order, and I can't recall the first time it may have appeared in a budget.

DR. McNEIL: It first appeared in the budget in 1996-97, I believe.

MR. WICKMAN: In 1996-97?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. That's when the government moved to cost recovery on those costs.

MR. WICKMAN: So when that risk management insurance was put into place, it was put into place about that particular time?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. Just the cost recovery.

DR. McNEIL: Just the cost recovery was put into place at that time.

MR. WICKMAN: And how was it covered prior?

THE CHAIRMAN: There was no cost to us.

DR. McNEIL: It was paid by Treasury.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Well, my second question would be – and possibly we'll be getting into this item a bit more extensively further down the road – when did the risk management insurance premium first appear, period?

DR. McNEIL: I don't have a definitive answer to that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: But it's been around since the early '80s.

MR. WICKMAN: Since the early '80s?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. It was all covered.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I guess we'll get to that item in more detail further on in the agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fair game.

Dr. Pannu, on this budget.

DR. PANNU: Yes. Mr. Chairman, looking at the members' services allowances section, page 14, the last section, the constituency allowances have been increased, you said, by 3.7 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: That goes up from \$41,766 to \$43,310 as a result of the motions that we passed before on this.

DR. PANNU: So it's 3.7 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's what it amounts to as a percentage.

DR. PANNU: Now, this allowance would include what?

THE CHAIRMAN: That is the formula used for the first portion of your constituency allowance. You have three portions to the allocation that you get.

DR. PANNU: So the first portion will include the salary of the constituency office assistant.

THE CHAIRMAN: Remember now, Dr. Pannu, that in the three allowances we have in there, the constituency allowance is the stationary one, equal for every member in the province. Every member in the province will get \$43,310 under that allocation. Under the communication allowance it's basically the number of electors that you have, so there's a variance in there and under the promotion allowance also. So if you want to use all three of them together to pay your staff, in the case of Dr. Pannu in Edmonton . . .

DR. PANNU: Strathcona.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I'm just trying to find it on the list. On your total budget – do you have a problem if I tell everybody what it is, these three allocations for instance?

DR. PANNU: Well, it's public information, Mr. Chairman. Feel free to tell.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is. Absolutely. We should know it. Edmonton-Strathcona, you get \$60,293. I don't care if you want to

pay your constituency staff \$60,250 or you pay them \$12. That's your choice.

DR. PANNU: That's good news, Mr. Chairman. Since the increase is applied to one of the three portions of it, I wanted to be clear on the rationale for applying that increase just to that part. What is the rationale? I would like to be guided by it in determining how I deal with my employees.

THE CHAIRMAN: The formula you as a member of this committee gave to this committee and to the chairman last January 25 and 26. That's the answer. I just implemented exactly what we've agreed to.

DR. PANNU: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. Just one further point on the liability questions when you're reviewing all of that. It's really interesting. As Members of the Legislative Assembly our employer pays WCB premiums, so if you're in an accident, then you'd better hope that it's not with somebody that is also covered by WCB, because then you lose the ability to recover losses. Just one of the things you might want to look at while you're doing this review is the impact of that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The impact of WCB?

MR. HERARD: Yeah. On the liability.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, hon. members, there's the submission based on the previous inputs.
Do you want to move it?

MS HALEY: I would like to move this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley. Seconded? Mr. Woloshyn.
Mr. Wickman, do you want to make a comment?

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. I'll second it. However, I just want it noted that I have a concern in approving the \$48,600 for the risk management premium at this particular time. Until we've had that full discussion later on in the agenda, I just would like that noted, because I do want to support this budget other than that one particular item.

THE CHAIRMAN: In the bottom line of this budget the request will no longer be \$14,066,364. It now has to read \$14,091,364, an additional \$25,000 because of that previous motion we made.

All in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

2:20

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next item. We now come to the interesting point of our agenda, where the tradition has always been that the chairman describes how this has been arrived at and no discussion occurs, but you can do whatever you want to do.

This is based on the allowances that I said earlier: the 2 percent market adjustment on manpower. Currently in this fiscal year there

is for building into the various caucus budgets simply the allocation we have. In this case this year it's \$44,492. Under the 2 percent adjustment this moves to \$45,382. There are 42 members now in the government caucus, so you simply multiply the two to get the figure. It shows what you see in there.

For the Official Opposition that is done to get 16 times \$45,382. We've adjusted the leader's office allowance for the manpower adjustment of 2 percent and the Calgary caucus office also with a 2 percent adjustment. So you arrive at those figures, recognizing that there's a reduction in the total number of members in the caucus.

The New Democrat one is, again, 2 times \$45,382 plus the leader's office allowance with an adjustment of the 2 percent in it.

Because now we have a private member, then effective April 1 of next year it's one private member times \$45,382.

That is where we are at with respect to that. How would you like to proceed?

DR. PANNU: Is this the time, Mr. Chairman, to put my motion on the table?

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu, yes, certainly it is. Your motion is that

the 2000-2001 Legislative Assembly budget estimates include a provision for salary increases for Legislative Assembly Office and caucus staff to be based on normal merit and anticipated market adjustments.

So far we have a motion. We had it seconded too. Who seconded it? Mrs. Sloan, I believe, seconded it. Is that correct?

MRS. SLOAN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You seconded that.
So we have a motion before us.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I would obviously have to use the example of my own caucus staff to make a point in support of the motion. As I mentioned to the committee before – and the committee is familiar with the situation from my appearance before this committee last year – we have a very limited budget, and that is explained clearly by the very small size of the caucus. I recognize that. However, we are a recognized third party. We have a budget, and we have a staff that is minimally necessary for us to be able to do our job as elected representatives representing our constituents and the party in the Assembly and in the province. We find ourselves continually terribly constrained by the resources.

We have learned to live within these resources, because in the wisdom of the committee that's the resources that we have available to us. Come this time of the year every year, we are confronted with the question of fair and appropriate compensation for people who work for my caucus, who are part of our caucus team. So this year I'm again confronted with that predicament, where I feel very strongly that we are unable, given the 2 percent increase to our overall budget, to fairly compensate our caucus staff.

This inability, this difficulty that we are confronted with of not being able to compensate fairly our staff has consequences at least twofold. One, of course, is that it impacts on the morale of the people who work for us. It's very difficult to keep people working for you if both you admit and they know that they are not being compensated year after year after year in a fair and appropriate manner. Fair and appropriate has to be seen in relative terms. I think it's justified on their part to compare themselves with their counterparts perhaps in other caucuses, certainly in the public service. They find themselves falling further and further behind every year given the nature of the adjustments that are annually provided to our budget.

This perception on their part – and it is a correct perception, in my view – that they are falling behind, that they are not being compensated fairly relative to their counterparts in other parts of the LAO or in other caucuses and public service workers in general, has consequences for their morale, for their ability to provide the services. We all know, those who have had any managerial experience and administrative responsibilities, that these things impact on the ability and the energy and the commitment with which employees return to the office every morning to do their job. So that's the human side of the story from the point of view of the employees.

But there's the political side of it. Those of us who occupy elected office are obliged by the very nature of our work and the fact that voluntarily we offered ourselves for election and got elected – then it's our job to deliver our services as best we can and to the best of our ability. That ability is very much dependent on several factors, including the help that we as elected representatives can get in terms of research, in terms of correspondence, in terms of communications, in terms of advice.

[Ms Haley in the chair]

MRS. SLOAN: Point of order, Madam Chairman. Is it within appropriate parliamentary rules for a government member to assume the chair of this committee?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'm the vice-chair of the committee, Mrs. Sloan, so yes, it is.

MRS. SLOAN: You're not the deputy speaker of the LAO?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: She is vice-chair of Members' Services.

MRS. SLOAN: Yes, I realize that.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, there you go.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm sorry. So your answer is yes; it's within the Standing Orders that you may.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. I didn't make them. They're long standing.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just asking for a response.

DR. McNEIL: The Legislative Assembly approved a motion appointing Ms Haley as the vice-chair of the committee. Therefore, she has the authority to chair the committee when the chair is not in attendance.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Madam Chairman. So my ability to function as an MLA is contingent upon the commitment and the highest quality of service and assistance that I can receive and expect to receive from my caucus staff. Since morale and fair compensation are related, the perception as to whether or not they're being fairly compensated is related to their ability to operate at their best. It certainly has an impact on my ability to discharge my political obligations as an elected representative of my constituents. So these are just two sides of it.

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

The third problem arises, Mr. Chairman, with respect to my relative ability to increase compensation with a little greater ease, I guess, when it comes to considering my constituency office assistant. I don't have similar ability to compensate my caucus staff. So there, again, is another disparity that's sort of built into this. As we were just discussing, we get a 3.7 percent adjustment on part of our constituency allowance, on a substantial part of it. My constituency budget is \$60,000, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, for the public record. Of that, now \$45,000 is subject to increase from \$42,000 by 3.7 percent. That gives me some room within which to manoeuvre when I'm dealing with what I'm going to pay next year to my constituency assistant. I don't have that capability, given the way my caucus budget is presented here today. So in order to enable me to do this, I guess to enable all of us to do this, I bring forward this motion. If we could agree on some basic principles in general, which we'd take into account when making the decisions – and then that would serve as a guidance, I guess, to your office later on – we'd all be better off. Our staff and colleagues would be happier persons because we are giving due consideration both to the market side of the adjustment needed and the meritorious service that we may want to recognize in the form of added remuneration.

So that's my plea, Mr. Chairman. That's my set of reasons why I think this motion deserves the support of members of this committee.

2:30

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are some facts before us this afternoon that I think need magnification. One of the facts is that in all of the branches proposed for consideration under estimates, we have before us increases that range from 1.6 percent in legislative committees to 17.8 percent in public information. The only branch that receives a decrease, minus 2.1 percent, is the Official Opposition.

Now, the argument has been made, historically made, that if a particular caucus loses members, they therefore lose a portion of their budget allocation. I would respectfully submit that the Official Opposition has a statutory obligation regardless of how many members they might have or if it may vary by one or two members. The reality before us this afternoon is that we have this year and previous years seen increases to budgets. I would like to provide some examples. As an example, in '98-99 the standing policy committees that exist in this province, which are comprised completely of government members, have a budget of \$407,000, more than a third of the Official Opposition budget.

We as the Official Opposition are elected to represent approximately 3 million citizens. When we look at the budget that has been allocated this year and underfunded in previous years and we compare that to other public-sector organizations, we see as an example of contrast that the College of Chiropractors, operating under a statutory obligation to register and discipline their members, 600-plus members within that organization, has a budget of \$985,000, almost comparable to the Official Opposition. If we would like to contrast it with the Alberta Medical Association, as an example, with 5,400 members, they have a budget of \$6.5 million. The closest public-sector organization that we could find to compare it to is the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation, with 80,000 registered supporters, not questionably a statutory or legislated group, nonetheless operating with a budget of \$3 million.

Before us this afternoon we have those facts. We also have the fact that, as an example, if we add the ministers' executive assistants' salaries in this province for one year, we come to a figure almost equal to the Official Opposition budget, \$839,604. If we

look at the cabinet ministers' office expenses for 17 ministries, we see a figure five times that of the Official Opposition.

In principle, Mr. Chairman, we would submit on behalf of the Official Opposition that the legislated statutory responsibilities are no different. We have a responsibility, a legal mandate to assume, and the old argument that member allocations are all that the Official Opposition budget should be based on in my opinion is not valid. The reality is that government MLAs have unrestricted access to the bureaucracy in government departments for research. They have communications and correspondence that is done through the Public Affairs Bureau. They have a free flow of information and documents from the government to MLAs with no FOIP fees being sought. Those avenues do not exist for the Official Opposition. I would submit that by the process we take and the argument that has been predominantly put by government that it should be based on a per member allocation, we have proposed an intentional underfunding of the Official Opposition. I raise the question of how that argument can be made and held to by this committee when the legal obligations have not changed.

Now, the contrasting reality, even if you wanted to assume the argument of a per member allocation, is that the third party gets an allocation of approximately \$122,000 per member per year to run their caucus. That is in contrast to the Official Opposition's allocation of \$67,000 per member per year. How, I would submit, in parliamentary terms is that equitable? And how does that ethically fulfill our obligations under the act for this committee, not as members of any caucuses, to allow for an Official Opposition that can operate in a secure capacity? We have many dedicated staff in our caucus as well, and I reinforce the statements made by Dr. Pannu. They put in as many long hours of service and as much overtime – in some cases, I would submit, more overtime – as other executive assistants or other caucus researchers might, yet they are not given the same equitable market and merit increases as have been proposed in other LAO branch offices this afternoon.

With those remarks, Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to support the motion that has been made by the member from the third party, but I would challenge us to examine the principle on which we have made up funding allocations and specifically how those funding allocations impact the Official Opposition's ability to fulfill their statutory obligations.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the motion before us, Ms Haley, Mr. Wickman, and then Mr. Clegg.

MS HALEY: Thank you. I'd just like to make a number of points. With regard to the Official Opposition budget estimates, I'm not exactly sure what it was before 1993, but in 1993 there was an agreement made that the Leader of the Opposition would in fact get the same amount as a cabinet minister for running their office. That's why that amount of \$308,670 appears there. It would appear that in 1997, when a third party was elected to the Legislature, there was an agreement that would see that third party receive half of what the Leader of the Official Opposition had. In addition, there was also an additional \$49,140 to the Official Opposition for their Calgary office.

I guess the parallel I would like to make is that if you'll note on ours, none of those things occur. We have \$45,382 per member. That's a long-held position of this Legislature, that all members of the Legislature be in fact funded equally when it came to their ability to have staff or research or pay for their photocopies or anything else. We lost two members out of our allocation last year as well. We had to make adjustments.

I have to live within my budget, period. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I have to allocate where we're going to spend that

money, whether it's on research or whether it's on secretarial staff or on a photocopier or supplies. Whatever the issues that come up, I have to deal with them.

I know that it's probably at times very frustrating for you, Dr. Pannu, but it is in fact a reality of this system. I'm sorry, but at this point I won't be able to support your motion.

2:40

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, to me really when we look at it, it's a matter of fairness. It's a matter of recognition of employees that are generally lower paid than executive members and such. Let me point out a few things.

The motion before us of course deals with the principle of merit and such, but to me basically what the motion attempts to do is to build into this budget and future budgets a component dealing with the wage component that is fair and is comparable. Again I could refer to the comments made by Mr. Renner last year about fairness and equity amongst the various legislative departments and caucuses and so on.

Let me point out that I think it's safe to say that we've determined in our discussions so far this morning that management will receive roughly a 5 percent salary increase, that staff will receive on the average a 5 percent increase, other than the caucus staff. The constituency staff – and I'm thankful for it – will have some flexibility in at least being ensured of roughly 3.7 percent more, possibly even being able to do a bit better than that because of the rental component in that particular basic budget. Even the MLAs themselves, 2.5 percent, and for us our salaries of course are much higher than in comparison to the average staff person working for one of the three caucuses.

It has to be recognized that right now in particular the market has changed. The economy is a lot different than it was a few years ago, and there's competition out there for valued employees. It's to the benefit of taxpayers, it's to the benefit of Albertans, and it's to the benefit of the three caucuses to have skillful and talented employees rather than to have that turnover, the problem that information services was having for example. That's one of the problems that caucuses can get into if the proper resources aren't there.

Government caucus of course does have some advantages, and I accept that. That's the system. If we were government, then of course we would have those advantages as well, and those advantages do speak for themselves. If I'm an employee working for a caucus, my chances of advancing myself into a more normal type of position would probably be enhanced working in that government caucus in comparison to working for an opposition caucus in that contacts are being made with people in, generally speaking, more influential positions or closer to those that sort of make those types of decisions.

The chairman made mention of the hundreds of hours of overtime that some staff members put in during the sessions that go on. Yes, they do put in hundreds of hours of overtime, but they're paid for those hundreds of hours of overtime. Our staff also put in countless hours of overtime, but the dollars are not there to compensate them or to reward them for those additional hours of work. I hear that comment year after year, that, well, you have a budget, and it's up to you to decide how to spend it. I accept that in principle. However, when that increase is 2 percent and each year it doesn't reflect what's happening in the other components within the legislative services, it becomes that much more difficult, the squeeze becomes that much tighter, and it becomes impossible to take from the other areas to compensate for the merit, for the hard work of many employees. So I have to kind of throw that argument out the door.

I recognize that we have a formula in place that we've all agreed to in the past, and I can stick by that formula, that what is good for

our caucus is good for the government caucus, is good for the New Democrat caucus. I'll accept that. However, what I would like to see us achieve is a recognition that what is built into the budget in terms of an increase is not sufficient. This particular motion is a step in the right direction, although I would take it a step further and have a fixed amount in terms of the increase in this particular year's budget, because we're dealing with the budget right now.

I would like to see in the caucus budgets, all three caucuses' budgets, the per member allowance increased by 5 percent, not 2 percent but 5 percent, and the other components of the caucus budget, such as the leaders' allowances, increased at a corresponding rate. If we can achieve that through a series of one or two motions, I think that would resolve the dilemma I'm in, and I think that would be fair to employees of the three caucuses. I think it would speak highly of all members of this committee in recognizing the valued contributions that our employees make.

I plead with government members to recognize that we're not here speaking for ourselves. We're speaking on behalf of people that can't speak for themselves. If they were at this very table, I'm sure they'd be saying the same thing that I'm saying right now. So just keep that in mind when we have to vote on this particular motion and a subsequent motion that I expect will follow.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, do I take it that you have made an amendment to the motion?

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. I'm just saying that I foresee a subsequent motion coming.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then Mr. Clegg and Mrs. Sloan.

MR. CLEGG: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few notes. I listened very well to Dr. Pannu and to Linda and to Percy. I personally think that we have a very generous budget: government, opposition, and the third party. I represent a constituency that has taken approximately a 30 percent reduction in their income. When I met with many groups, I said: well, 2 percent to me is very generous in my constituency because 70 percent of the people have taken a 30 percent reduction.

I understand certainly that people that do work hard should be rewarded, but I use the philosophy that maybe you owe something to your community, to your party to maybe do some, I call it, volunteerism. I couldn't possibly sit here and vote for more than the 2 percent plus the formula that would give us another increase in our caucus budget or members' budget. I feel very strongly about this, knowing the conditions that the people in my constituency face. We all have to have a budget, and we all have to live within a budget. People say to me: give me more money; I'll do more work. I haven't seen that happen yet. I want to see the work done, and then we increase the budget.

I personally believe that we have very generous budgets. Maybe the chairman could tell me: how do we compare with other provinces? I haven't got those figures in front of me, but I personally think that we have very, very good budgets for all parties.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, just a couple of points I neglected to make earlier. One is that the facts are that we have in this province an allocation for vehicles for cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats that is equal to the Official Opposition budget, \$1.1 million. Now, I would ask how that is fair. If we can say that we can make an allocation of taxpayers' dollars to bring forward vehicles for cabinet and senior bureaucrats to drive about the province to do their business, how is it fair that the Official Opposition is expected to not be given the same equitable increases for market and merit

adjustments? Really, to me that signifies the value that exists about an institution that, in my opinion, Mr. Chairman, underpins a functioning democracy. If you do not have a functioning opposition, you in essence have a dictatorship or something close to it.

2:50

Now, we have in Edmonton, according to Alberta Economic Development, November '99, a consumer price index that reflects an increase since September of '98 of 4 percent. The budget allocations that have been provided this afternoon do not at 2 percent address that reality, nor do they address the reality that a certain caucus in this province has been underfunded consecutively. I recognize that it's not something that all members around this table hold in value or lend any importance to, but surely if we're alive to the reason that this committee exists, there should be an equitable application of increases and allocations. That has not occurred, and some of the examples I've provided this afternoon magnify that. I would most welcome a provincial comparison, because we have conducted those comparisons, and they reinforce the fact that the Official Opposition in this province is significantly underfunded.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard, followed by Mr. Gibbons and Dr. Pannu.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we've heard some figures here that the government private members' budget is based on \$45,382 per member. The Liberal budget is based on \$67,744 per member, and the NDs' on \$122,549. Then I hear arguments for equal and equity. That would mean that everybody should be down to \$45,300.

MR. WOLOSHYN: We're at \$30,000.

MR. HERARD: I'm sorry?

MR. WOLOSHYN: We're at \$30,000 actually.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard has the floor.

MR. HERARD: Well, I took the total budget amount and then divided by the number of members.

I don't understand why it is that one would consider a particular caucus underfunded. I seem to recall, for example, a red-and-white brochure that was distributed throughout the province, to every household in this province. I don't question where that money came from.

MRS. SLOAN: Let's talk about the health brochure, the most recent one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard has the floor.

MR. HERARD: The fact of the matter is that you have within the entire global nature of this budget the ability to decide precisely how it is that you're going to spend those dollars. If you want that to be, you know, primarily merit and so on, so be it. You're free to do what you like. I don't see any reason at all why I would have to support this motion, because you have all the flexibility that you need right now to spend the money in the way you choose. Now, if you choose to spend it on other things, well, you live with those consequences.

Thank you.

MR. GIBBONS: Entering this debate, all the way through I think we

have a budget being presented that actually is very generous, but generous in one way isn't saying that they don't deserve it. We've talked about merit and talked about market adjustment all the way through. With management we've seen anywhere from a 4 to 7.4 percent increase. In the overall budget we've seen, you know, an average of 5 percent, so we're not wrong there.

I think what we're pressing for here is the recognition within our two caucuses, the NDs and the Liberals, of the stress level, that we're not recognizing at 2 percent the market adjustment that's happening out there, and that's 4 percent of figures presented right here, that the hon. member presented a few minutes ago. In general, listening to Mr. Clegg, I understand the plight in his area, but I do think that maybe we should be recognizing the fact that our employment movement isn't great right now, and we want to keep it that way.

We do not have the support, like the government side, of phoning up and getting departments falling onside with us right away. I'll give you examples. We do not have like the SPC the support and the fact that that money does not come directly out of the government's caucus. It comes out of another budget. The fact is that we're only trying to present some of the things that affect us. FOIP costs are tremendous right now. I did hear the minister over to my left, hon. member, say that he hasn't stopped any FOIP on our side, but the fact is that it has cost us a lot of money to be the opposition, and I really want to stress that in this argument.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I will make my concluding remarks. There may be members that still want to speak, but I was going to conclude on my side. I have a certain sense of trepidation here. We seem to be polarizing along our party lines, while in fact we are dealing with an issue which affects people who are not partisans, who are working providing services. We are paying them for the work that they do for us, and they are like anyone else, you know, who works for the government or works for our caucuses. We need to keep this in mind. I appeal to my colleagues on all sides of the party lines in the House to keep that in mind. We're dealing with human beings whose services we use, and in this province I think we need to reinforce the notion of fair compensation for a fair day's work.

Two substantive points have been made, one by Ms Haley and one by Mr. Clegg, and I just want to briefly refer to those. Volunteerism certainly is an idea that we all are familiar with and know a lot about and that we ourselves have accepted as part of our work. We do benefit from the commitment to volunteerism by our office staff. They work far beyond the eight hours a day that's normal, I guess, in our world. They never expect or get or ask for any overtime payment, and there's not a single member of my caucus staff who doesn't work overtime every day by several hours a day, three to five hours a day. I want to draw your attention to this session in particular. The amount of overtime work that they do is absolutely enormous, and we are unable to recognize it. We are unable to do anything about it. We don't compensate them for it. LAO staff have the benefit of that payment. I don't know what happens in other caucuses, but certainly volunteerism is alive and well in our staff, and we can only recognize it by thanking them with warm words and expression of friendship for the work that they do.

The other argument that was made by Ms Haley had to do with the system as a reality. I just want to say to this committee that when I appeared before you last year, you did willingly tinker with the system and made some changes, which, I must say, pleased my caucus staff to no end, that I was able to successfully persuade you to increase the allocation to our caucus budget and you did that.

The system is not coming from elsewhere. You and I make the system. In fact, that's what is so different about elected

representatives, MLAs. We have that power and capacity so long as we are willing to be guided by certain considerations, which all of us as, I guess, reasonable persons always entertain: a question of equity, a question of fair compensation, a question of dealing with other human beings, our colleagues with a degree of sensitivity to their due expectations. I think the system is not unbending. It does bend; it does change. In fact, it's our job as elected politicians to make it flexible, make it in fact responsive to our needs, to our own values and principles.

3:00

The last point, Mr. Chairman. I just want to, I guess, remind ourselves, and put myself first in that category, that government has offered 3 percent to all AUPE members, you know, who are public employees. So it's recognized that the fair compensation notion means a minimum of a 3 per cent adjustment to existing levels of remuneration to public employees. We as MLAs get 2.5 percent if this proposal that's before us is accepted by us.

I also want to remind us that the one-third of the portion of our salaries which is tax-exempt also gets increased by 2.5 percent, so the impact of that 2.5 percent is more than what you might like to think. It's more like 3.5 percent. Our salaries, as you would agree, if we didn't enjoy the tax exemption, would be close to \$70,000, and calculating on that, you know, 2.5 percent is a fairly large amount.

Given this context – a booming economy, the growing revenues of the province, compensation that we're willing to receive ourselves, compensation that the government is willing to give to AUPE members, compensation that other parts of the LAO may be receiving – I ask you to consider why it is that the caucus staff, and I only speak in terms of my own, should be deprived of similar fair treatment. So I appeal to you to perhaps reconsider your position and vote for this motion and hopefully for the next one, which will deal with a concrete amount of increase that we can agree on that will help us give fair compensation to our caucus staff.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, I just wanted to make an observation. It was stated earlier that when we come to caucus budgets, the caucuses themselves make the decision as to the number of people they hire and what amounts they pay them.

Secondly, I'd just like to point out without getting into the debate as to what percentage of a particular caucus budget is represented by salaries that if I did look at the Official Opposition strictly on a per member basis, if I made the assumption that 80 percent of their dollars went to salaries or wages and that 20 percent was, quote, in other categories, if I made the assumption on that per member basis that there was a 1 percent increase in the other component and if I back that away from the per member component that is before us today, I find that the salary increase on a per member, 80 percent salary component represents a 4.8 percent increase from the '99-2000 estimate that was approved by this committee vis-a-vis the per member amount that would be before us today.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any other participation from members with respect to this motion? Well, we have a motion, then, moved by Dr. Pannu and seconded by Mrs. Sloan, that

the 2000-2001 Legislative Assembly budget estimates include a provision for salary increases for Legislative Assembly Office and caucus staff to be based on normal merit and anticipated market adjustments.

All in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. WICKMAN: Recorded vote, please.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then those who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hands. The record should show Dr. Pannu, Mr. Gibbons, Mrs. Sloan, and Mr. Wickman.

Those opposed to the motion, please raise your hands. The record will show Hon. Stan Woloshyn, Mr. Jacques, Mr. Coutts, Mr. Herard, Ms Haley, and Mr. Clegg.

Okay. So we've got these allocations in the binder for government members' services, Official Opposition services, New Democrat opposition services, and the independent member's services. How would you like to proceed with the government members' services allocation request of \$1,906,044?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I move that we accept that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Woloshyn moves. Mr. Coutts seconds. Discussion? Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: For the record, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to move that the private member allowances be increased by 5 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, okay. We've got a second motion then. We've got a first motion that we've got on the table moved by Mr. Woloshyn and seconded by Mr. Coutts that is to deal with the government members' allocation, and Mr. Wickman . . .

MR. WICKMAN: It's an amendment I'm making to the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: You meant an amendment.

MS HALEY: Do we have to deal with these one at a time?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a choice, I suppose.

MS HALEY: I'm just asking.

THE CHAIRMAN: We can deal with it. I can call the first one. It's on a line by itself.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll just speak very briefly to it.

THE CHAIRMAN: We've got another motion ahead of you, though.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, mine was an amendment to the main motion, though. Don't you deal with the amendment first?

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So you want to amend the government private members' allowance by . . .

MR. WICKMAN: By 5 percent.

THE CHAIRMAN: By 5 percent. Well, let's just make sure we get this down: 5 percent.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm trying to be fair. [interjections]

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, hang on. Just hang on.

MR. WICKMAN: I would hope you guys wouldn't vote yes to that and no to ours.

THE CHAIRMAN: But I think, Mr. Wickman, that what you want to do is to basically say that this year's base be amended by 5 percent.

MR. WICKMAN: Exactly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's the amendment before the committee, moved by Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Speaking to it very briefly, I'm not going to repeat everything that's been said, because some very, very good remarks have been made, some very valid remarks have been made. I simply want it on the record at this point that we did in this particular caucus at least recognize the need to go that further step and attempt to ensure fairness in comparison to other components and, being fair, to just move it to our own particular caucus would not be correct. Of course, the government members' caucus comes up first, so I make the amendment there. If the amendment were to carry, then I would make a similar amendment to the other two caucuses as well. In fact, for purposes of the record, I will make the amendment to our caucus as well, and the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona can deal with his caucus.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu, on the amendment.

DR. PANNU: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I would want to say a few words on the amendment and again call on the committee to give consideration. Obviously, we cannot deal with the budget of one caucus and one caucus only and say we will increase this. It wouldn't be equitable. It wouldn't be acceptable, even as an attempt.

The only way left before us now is to go caucus budget by caucus budget and seek change in it that is the same across the three caucus budgets. In view of the fact that this is perhaps the only means available to us to make changes, I support Mr. Wickman's motion for an increase of 5 percent to the government caucus proposed budget, and I do it in full anticipation of the fact that we'll have identical motions coming up to make similar alterations in the Official Opposition and third party budgets as well.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. On the amendment put forward by Mr. Wickman that

the private members' allowance be increased over the 1999-2000 base of \$45,382 by 5 percent,

would all members in favour please raise their hands? All member opposed, please raise their hands. So that amendment is defeated.

Now we have the motion by Dr. Pannu, seconded by Mrs. Sloan. Would all those . . . [interjection] Pardon? No. We've done that already.

We're back to Ms Haley's motion. You're moving the estimates of the government members?

MS HALEY: I think, Mr. Chairman, that it should be one line, but I'm happy to move it one at a time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, there's been a lot of tradition in the past

that members of the various caucuses would move caucus budgets.

MS HALEY: Well, that's fine. It's just that it's one line on the budget. That's why I was wondering why you were breaking it down.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you'll move the government members' budget?

MS HALEY: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconded? Mr. Woloshyn. All those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

MRS. SLOAN: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's approved. Who would like to make the motion for the Official Opposition services budget? Mr. Wickman?

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move it but amended to reflect a 5 percent increase in the total: \$1,083,922 plus the 5 percent additional amount.

3:10

THE CHAIRMAN: You're amending? Okay. Just so I know this. You're amending the estimates to read not \$1,083,922 but plus 5 percent.

MR. WICKMAN: Right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's the amendment.

MR. GIBBONS: I'll second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons will second it. Discussion? Then all in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm afraid it's defeated.

We still need to deal with the budget for the Official Opposition. We don't have a motion yet.

MR. WICKMAN: No. My motion . . . Oh, I'm sorry.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was an amendment.

MR. WICKMAN: You're right. One of you guys move it.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. I'll move our budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Gibbons, you'll move the Official Opposition budget of \$1,083,922. Seconded? Nobody is going to second it?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. Seconded.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. A motion by Mr. Gibbons seconded by Mr. Wickman. Any discussion? All in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it's approved.

The New Democrat opposition caucus budget. A motion.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I move that the proposed budget of \$245,099 not be read as is but be changed to add 5 percent to it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. It's a similar kind of motion that was provided a little earlier. Mr. Gibbons, you'll second it. Any discussion on this? So the motion is that the New Democrat caucus services budget be \$245,099 plus 5 percent. Would all members in favour please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm afraid it's defeated, which means we need to have a motion for the budget.

DR. PANNU: I so move, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The figure of \$245,099? Seconded? Ms Haley. Discussion? All in favour of the motion put forward by Dr. Pannu and seconded by Ms Haley that the New Democrat caucus service's budget be \$245,099, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

I would ask one of the members to move the independent member's caucus services.

MS HALEY: I'll move it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconded? Mr. Woloshyn. Discussion? All in favour of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Okay. Thank you very much. That's approved as well.

Hon. members, if you look at the totals sheet that we had, we're just working right down it on that page 1 of 1 again. We've arrived at total expenditures so far of \$24,629,376 plus an additional \$25,000 in there, if I recall correctly. There's revenue in here, and we'd be happy to explain what the revenue is. Dr. McNeil.

DR. McNEIL: That sort of fits in each of the areas, revenue in

relation to the public information branch, House services, the library. The primary revenue there relates to the gift shop operation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any additional information requested.

I'm sorry. I made a mistake. I was looking at my previous document. The number that we are arriving at so far in time is \$24,096,776 after the revenue.

Now we're coming to what's on there as an election contingency of \$2.1 million. There's no history associated with this because there hasn't been anything before. We have a policy of this committee – we have a Members' Services order on this thing – that in the event of members leaving, there's a transition allowance. We had a big discussion about this last year. We had a big discussion about this the year before. The conclusion was that we should hold it to this year. I started off this morning by indicating that it would be premised on such an event occurring in the fiscal year before March 31, 2001.

So then there's a request in here for \$2.1 million. The question is: how was it arrived at? We looked at approximately one-third of the members not returning. In this case we used the number of 30 and said: well, what would be the amount allocated per member? On those sheets that I sent you, which were personalized sheets, we looked at the so-called traveling costs associated with all of this and selected, not arbitrarily but with some degree of concern and care, a number of \$70,000. So 30 times \$70,000, and we arrived at \$2.1 million. That's how the number got in there.

MS HALEY: Do you need a motion to move this?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MS HALEY: I would like to place that motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley moved. Seconded? Mr. Coutts. Discussion? All in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say nay. Thank you. Okay; that's approved.

So if you run the whole way down these numbers, the grand total was \$26,171,776. I do believe the only addition made to all of this was the \$25,000 as a result of the spousal allocation, so the bottom-line figure would be \$26,196,776. That would be it. That's the number.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Hon. members, can I just say something? I'm going to say it anyway with or without your permission, talking as chairman, unless you rule me out. The purpose of Members' Services committee is basically to work towards the benefit of members, and I would really encourage you – I really, really would encourage you – to meet informally outside of this venue. Go out for a coffee. If you want, I'll invite you all into the Speaker's suite, and we'll have a little cup of coffee or a sandwich or even a dinner with the members of Members' Services.

Please come in here with the attitude that we're here to help the members, not to defend the caucus. I would really like you to take a look in your own minds and your hearts before we come back here next year as to how you really want some of those caucus allocation numbers. A plea for some understanding. It was quite good today, but I think just a bridge to build some more bridges, please. Thank

you very much.

Having said that, now, Mr. Clerk, what have we missed with respect to the budget?

DR. McNEIL: Just a couple of issues. One, Mr. Herard's motion with respect to the spousal and guest travel.

THE CHAIRMAN: April 1. That's the intent, Mr. Herard?

DR. McNEIL: April 1. That would be the intent.

MS HALEY: Yes, it would be.

DR. McNEIL: The other thing is that it will be written under the third party allowances order as opposed to the transportation order, which is where it was before. The principle is there. It's just that it will be in a different part of the Members' Services order. Just so everybody's aware of that, but the same motion would apply.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Under the next item, New Business, is (a), Singing of *O Canada* in the Chamber. This matter is on this agenda because one of the members of the Assembly took up the offer to submit a request or a conclusion to the chairman. I then wrote to the three House leaders, Mr. Hancock, Mr. Dickson, and Dr. Pannu, on November 22, 1999, about a note from the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, Mr. Magnus.

It is the honourable member's request that I place this item on the agenda . . . and it will be my intent to do so.

It may be your decision to have your Caucus review this request so your representative . . . might [want] to deliver the resolution at the upcoming meeting.

Basically what Mr. Magnus is saying is that he is addressing this to me as the Speaker.

Now, in order for us to do this, we can do it in a formal, arbitrary way, or the way I would prefer having it done is that basically whatever advice – advice: let me make this very, very clear – this committee would want to have provided to the three House leaders would come out of this committee, because it should be part of the Routine and identified as part of the Standing Orders. So whatever transpires today with respect to this request, I would simply convey that information to the three House leaders and encourage them to review it as they're reviewing all the Standing Orders. Hopefully they are before we return. If there's agreement, if all of the Members' Services Committee would say, "Yeah, we want to do this," I'm sure that will guide the three House leaders, and then they will make sure that this is done. If there's an order required in the Standing Orders, then they would simply have it added.

So at this point in time the request being made by one hon. member is identified in the letter for you. There's no motion; there's no formal thing. This is simply a matter for discussion and a matter for advice. If somebody wants to turn it into a motion, I have no difficulty with that either.

Ms Haley, you caught my attention first. Then Mr. Gibbons.

3:20

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess all I wanted to say on this is that our caucus has had an opportunity to have a discussion. We actually got to the point where we agreed that if this were to go forward, we would be more than pleased to have the singing of *O Canada* at the beginning of every week, so that would be once a week. From our perspective, it would maybe add a very nice touch to the ceremony in our Assembly. If you want to take that back as a recommendation from our side to the government House leaders, I'm very happy with them having a further discussion on it, but that's our position.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons, do you want to speak on behalf of your caucus?

MR. GIBBONS: No. I'm just going to commend what Ms Haley said, but I would suggest it be referred totally back to the House leaders.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, that's a very sound suggestion, that House leaders look at it together. The proposal that Ms Haley has made for consideration by the three House leaders certainly would be one of the ones that should receive serious attention. The question is: what do we do with the prayer? You know, we have certain routines, things like that, so we need to sort these things out. It's not a matter of debate, I guess, if we can find some mutual way of dealing with it.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. That would be the responsibility of the Speaker, then, at that point.

DR. PANNU: Yes, that's right. So certainly I think that's the way to go.

THE CHAIRMAN: So are you supportive of what Ms Haley is saying or just to move it? She said that her group agreed to the singing of *O Canada* at the beginning of each week.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I seek your guidance on it. I don't think this is presented in the form of a motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: It isn't.

DR. PANNU: Right. I agree with the suggestion that the House leaders address this question. This would be one of the things that they will address, you know, as a suggestion coming from Ms Haley.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons, is that your point, or have you already made your point?

MR. GIBBONS: Yeah, that's my point.

THE CHAIRMAN: General agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, can I ask: are we going to continue going, take a 10-minute break, or exactly what?

THE CHAIRMAN: You want a break? We can have a five-minute break.

MS HALEY: We've just got two items left.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm just asking. Do other caucus members want to push forward?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; one at a time. Mr. Wickman first. Do you require a break, Mr. Wickman?

MR. WICKMAN: No, I don't require one; I can slip out. But I'm just saying . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: How about if we take a 10-minute break? Then we'd come back at 25 to 4. Is that okay?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 3:24 p.m. to 3:34 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: If we could reconvene now. The item before us is the Risk Management Fund. This is placed on the agenda as the result of a request first conveyed to me by Dr. Pannu and then a follow-up request from Mr. Dickson with respect to this matter.

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that Dr. Pannu has some comments in this area, but what I'm prepared to proceed with this afternoon is that I'd like to make a motion that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services request that the chair of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, being a prospective witness during the course of any investigation into the application and appropriateness of general liability coverage for Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta under the Alberta risk management fund, surrender the chair to the deputy chair of the committee in order to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

I have copies, Mr. Chairman, for circulation to the committee.

MR. GIBBONS: I second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons is going to second this motion.

Well, that's an interesting motion. It could be viewed, prior to discussion, as nonconfidence in the office of the chairperson.

MRS. SLOAN: Let me clarify, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the motion is there.

MRS. SLOAN: That the motion is made not to question the confidence of the chair but rather to afford an opportunity for the discussion to be completely transparent and to permit the chair the ability to exempt himself from the discussions and the debate.

I think primarily in principle this afternoon what we are proposing is to find a process whereby Albertans can receive full answers to a number of unanswered questions about this area, I would submit questions that MLAs also have. We don't know who knew what when. We don't know if the coverage is legal. We don't know why Members of the Legislative Assembly were not informed that coverage existed. These questions can only be answered fully through a complete investigation by the Members' Services Committee with the ability to call witnesses under oath and subpoena relevant documents.

Motions to follow address the ability to call witnesses and subpoena individuals. I think our objective is to achieve transparency and a clarification of the public record surrounding the entitlements under the risk management fund. In absolutely no uncertain terms is it to question the competence or integrity of the chair.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: There were three members that had raised their hands here. Now, it was Mr. Herard, Mr. Woloshyn, and Ms Haley, I believe. Is that correct?

Just before I call on the three of them, I'll just point out to you, Dr. Pannu, that when the meeting reconvened, I called on you. Okay? So then the first speaker was recognized. That's why we're where we're at.

DR. PANNU: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I thought that we were going to resume at 20 to, so I missed coming in.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. There's a motion before the committee. Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I was a bit concerned with regards to the time that we reconvened and the fact that Dr. Pannu was not here at the time, because my watch didn't agree with yours, I guess. I guess what I would say with respect to this motion is that we voted this morning to approve an agenda, and the agenda that was approved was to deal with Dr. Pannu's item. We're now, without having heard from Dr. Pannu, into a motion.

So I would suggest as a matter of procedure, Mr. Chairman, that this motion be temporarily tabled until we have heard from Dr. Pannu so that we can get back into the order of things that we approved this morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: The difficulty I have, Mr. Herard, is that what we talked about this morning is that we would deal with a matter called risk management. The meeting was reconvened. I called on the first gentleman, and I recognized, then, the first person who was present. So from a procedural point of view I see no other alternative.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I would disagree with Mr. Herard, and I would like us to vote on this motion. It's an extremely inappropriate motion. It attributes motives to the chair before any discussion has transpired. It's prejudicial on outcomes. If ever – if ever – I've seen any group that indicates that there's an appearance of conflict of interest . . . If you represent a caucus, you represent their point of view. You obviously have some motivation other than the integrity of the chair. If we are asking the chair of this committee to do various projects along – we've asked for information; we'll be asking for more.

I've read Dr. Pannu's letter, and he had a very straightforward request to put an issue of interest to himself and his caucus on this agenda to be discussed. I would suspect that after that discussion probably what would happen, Dr. Pannu, since we don't have it here, is that it would be set aside for further research or whatever have you. I don't know. So on the basis of that, I think we as a committee have an obligation to show that unless our chair has indicated to us some sort of behaviour which would warrant the questioning of the chair, we would defeat this motion as it's presented and proceed with the agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS HALEY: I'd like to reaffirm, I guess, what Stan has just indicated but I guess also to go maybe one step further and indicate that the Ethics Commissioner has also done a complete investigation. He felt nothing inappropriate had transpired. He has gone back and done a lot of research from the originating *Hansards* going back to 1985. This was all published in his Ethics Commissioner report. Well, I'm just stunned by the tone and the quality of this motion, and I fail to understand it.

MRS. SLOAN: I'd like the proceedings to be clear that in fact Gary Dickson, the House leader for the Official Opposition, communicated to the chair yesterday. I would cite it for the record. He indicated:

I have seen the agenda and note that risk management appears as item 7(b). My intention is to suggest that a couple of procedural matters with respect to the Risk Management Fund be severed from the substantive issues and dealt with at the beginning of the agenda. I intend to raise this when item 2 is addressed. I wanted to give you prior notice of my intention. A copy of the three procedural motions, including the one that I have just made,

is attached for your reference.

Now, that correspondence was sent yesterday. Mr. Dickson was here this morning, asked for the opportunity to speak to the agenda and provide these motions, and he was denied that opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, it wasn't denied; it was referred. I correct myself.

He was referred that he could bring these items forward under 7(b). So the item this afternoon is not strictly one that was brought forward by Dr. Pannu. Let the record be clear on that. The fact of the matter is that the provisions and communication had occurred to try and bring this forward at the first possible opportunity. Mr. Dickson was not able to stay until this afternoon. So because the ability was not afforded for him to bring this forward this morning, then we are in a position this afternoon of bringing the motions forward.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just for the record, I received no attachments from Mr. Dickson yesterday.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, first of all, I want to apologize for being late. I knew I would be the first one to be called. My apologies on that to all members of the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak in very general terms about the issues involved here in this motion, and that's all I can speak to at this moment. This motion before us arises from real and perceived problems with the risk management fund and its coverage of MLAs in their normal duties as MLAs. It's a serious matter. It's a matter that concerns all of us in the performance of our duties. You know, as MLAs we do have to stand up and speak our mind, and we try to do that in a way that we are convinced will serve the public interest and, at the same time, will not offend any particular party in a personal or defamatory way. Yet there are times when it's very difficult to draw that very, very sensitive line between our duties.

My concern is about the Legislative Assembly and this committee of the Assembly working towards assuring that our right to speak out as elected representatives is protected, that the risks that are involved in our work as elected representatives of the people of Alberta are duly covered.

3:44

THE CHAIRMAN: But the motion before us has to do with the appropriateness of the chairman being in the chair.

DR. PANNU: Given the seriousness of the issues that we should be addressing, I find it difficult to support this motion. It looks to the past; it is an attempt to somehow go back and look at the history. I want to look forward. I want to find positive solutions to the problem that is before us, which has been revealed to us by circumstances over the last five or six months. I think that we as responsible MLAs, Members of the Legislative Assembly, have the obligation to address the issue of how to fix the problem and draw attention to how we do it, and this motion doesn't.

MR. GIBBONS: Just to speak to this motion, Mr. Chairman. I was privy with Mr. Dickson to putting it together. The main thing is that it is not a slight towards the chairman, but it's referring to a November 16 letter that the chairman's name is involved in that witnesses may be called forward and so on. If you want to bring in excerpts from what the Ethics Commissioner says, we've got them all here. One of the things was: "I have concerns – and I expect the public would share these concerns – about the appropriateness of government employees making decisions on politicians' legal

claims.” That excerpt was from the Ethics Commissioner on November 15.

He’s referred it back to this committee. This is the only reason this motion has gone forward.

MS HALEY: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Jacques had his hand up.

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Chairman, there are two issues that I would like to speak to with regard to the motion. Number one is that it appears to be a conditional type of motion, because really what it’s saying is: “being a prospective witness during the course of.” There are two things in that element “during the course of.” In other words, there would have to be a decision, first of all, that indeed there would be an investigation of some form or sort by the Members’ Services Committee. So the logic of putting that forward I find somewhat confusing if not unacceptable.

The other thing is the very last words: “in order to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.” All of us being members of this Legislature have a responsibility incumbent upon us to remove ourselves whenever we feel it appropriate with regard to conflict of interest. We do not say to a member of this Legislature that you cannot do that. I mean, it’s simply not acceptable. What this effectively tries to do is to almost put a chain around another member on the basis that in somebody’s assumption there might be an appearance of conflict of interest. That can only be determined by the member. It can’t be determined by anybody else unless it’s as to the state of legality or there is some precedent within the House that is being violated or some standing procedure with regard to the member’s participation.

So I guess, in summary, I would find the motion repugnant. I find it speculative at best, and I find it insulting at worst. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question to be called?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MRS. SLOAN: I’d like the opportunity to close debate, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, go ahead.

MRS. SLOAN: Committee members may be aware – they may not be aware – that there have been a number of correspondences and proceedings that have occurred relative to attempting to define how risk management was defined and applied since the late ’80s. I have before me this afternoon a variety of copies: the statement of claim that has been filed against the Provincial Treasurer, submitted by Lorne Goddard; the correspondence that was directed to the Speaker of this Assembly by past Parliamentary Counsel Michael Ritter pointing out a number of concerns and issues that he had relative to how this matter was proceeding.

There are different interpretations as to what existed and what was previously applied, and the series of motions proposed this afternoon that were prepared by Gary Dickson are simply to achieve clarity around how decisions were made, how they were applied, and why there was inconsistency.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, point of order, please. Are we debating some other issue, or are we on this motion?

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. It’s a very clear, specific motion. We should be on the motion.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I’d like that to be addressed. If there are other heartburns, they perhaps could come up in another motion or another discussion. This is a motion that says to chuck him out of the chair. Let’s get with the program and either chuck him out or leave him there. I’m for leaving him there.

MRS. SLOAN: With due respect, this is not a personal . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Please. I’m in the chair. Please speak through me, the chair, Mrs. Sloan. You have the floor. There’s a motion before us. I really hope that we would speak to the motion.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is not a personal issue. It is a procedural issue, and the motions are attempting to seek clarification surrounding this area. The fact of the matter is that risk management as it is currently defined is being provided and afforded to a Provincial Treasurer to an extent that I certainly as a member did not know existed when I was elected.

The fact of the matter is that historically we have had two members of the Official Opposition charged, and those provisions were not pointed out. Now, some of us around the committee have held previous roles and previous responsibilities to a variety of different degrees. The motions proposed are procedural and to achieve final clarification as to how this occurred.

The fact of the matter is that the Ethics Commissioner’s review was only conducted to answer certain questions. There were many other questions. I could go on to some extent this afternoon . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: But would you kindly get to the motion at hand?

MRS. SLOAN: Yes. So the motion is the first, as I’ve said, of three, to set up a committee . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: We only have one motion here. We have one that’s been moved by you, seconded by Mr. Gibbons.

MRS. SLOAN: If you’d like, we could make them consecutive.

THE CHAIRMAN: We’re dealing with one. We’ve got a debate on it. There’s already been a call for the question. You’ve asked to sum up. You’ve been given the floor. Would you get to the motion?

MRS. SLOAN: So we are proposing the establishment of a process to investigate this thoroughly and clarify the record as to the application of the risk management fund. This is the first motion of three.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does everybody know what the motion is?

MS HALEY: Got it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is defeated.

Before recognizing you, Dr. Pannu, I just want to make a statement into the record with respect to this matter. It’s a repeat of what I said in the Alberta Legislative Assembly on November 16,

1998, and I want to quote it.

Reflections have been made about the role of the Speaker in presiding over proceedings or questions that may come before this Assembly. These statements have been of great concern as this Speaker's foremost priority since being elected to this position on April 14, 1997, has been to promote and maintain the dignity and respect of this office in order to serve members and the people of Alberta.

It is a basic tenet that the Speaker is to be impartial in carrying out the duties of the office. This principle is so fundamental to the office of the Speaker in the operation of an Assembly that persons inside or outside the House who directly or indirectly question the actions or impartiality of the Speaker may be the subject of a question of privilege. Members may refer to *Beauchesne's* 6th edition at paragraph 168; *Erskine May*, 21st edition, pages 180 to 181; and Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, page 253.

3:54

Speaker King of the British House of Commons went so far as to state on December 10, 1970:

The bedrock of this House is allegiance not so much to the individual in the Chair as the sound wisdom, the procedure, customs and courtesies of which he is the guardian and the exponent.

The time-honoured conventions surrounding the office mandate the neutrality of the Speaker. For instance, the Speaker may not participate in debates in the House or be asked a question. Questions are directed to ministers of the government in their current portfolios and cannot be asked of a member who is no longer a minister relating to that person's term of office. The Speaker only votes when there is a tie, and then only in accordance with well-established precedents which preclude an expression of opinion about the merits of a question.

It should be pointed out that when this Speaker was elected by this House on April 14, 1997, it was known that he had served as a member of Executive Council from May 8, 1986, until October 20, 1994. It is hardly unusual to have a former cabinet minister as Speaker. Members may recall that Speakers Jeanne Sauvé and John Fraser, the first Speaker in the federal House of Commons to be elected by free vote, both became Speaker after they had been cabinet ministers. In the United Kingdom Parliament several Speakers were former cabinet ministers, such as Speaker Selwyn Lloyd, who became Speaker in 1971 and who had been Foreign Secretary during the Suez Crisis and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Chair has scoured the authorities in Canada and abroad for rulings by Speakers on when and if they should absent themselves from the chair. The research has found that there is no established parliamentary rule that requires a Speaker, even a former cabinet minister, to absent himself or herself from presiding over the business of the House. Speakers in other jurisdictions have even presided over motions directly relating to their conduct in the chair.

It is the chair's role to apply the rules that have been established by members themselves in the Standing Orders, by the practices of the Assembly, and in the last resort, by an authority such as *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May*.

Dr. Pannu.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me. I wrote to you on the issue of the risk management fund for the first time on September 10 of this year. I outlined the reasons why I was requesting an urgent meeting of the Members' Services Committee to address issues arising subsequent to the information becoming public that Mr. Stockwell Day, the Provincial Treasurer, had requested coverage under the risk management fund.

Then I had another letter that I wrote to you on September 27, 1999, in which I indicated that a meeting between you and myself was productive but that several questions remained that would require the attention of this committee. Only this committee is

qualified to address those questions, so again I asked for an opportunity for me to present my concerns to the committee and through this committee to the Legislature. The matter of the risk management fund and the issue of classification of MLAs as participants in it, which resulted from a regulatory change made two or three or four years ago, raises lots of questions. So that was the reason I requested the meeting.

I do notice here that you also received a letter on November 18 from Mr. Gary Dickson. It's a fairly long letter, and your reply is here as well for my information and for everyone else's information.

Mr. Chairman, I and my caucus have thought long and hard about the issues involved here. The issues are of gravity. They can only be addressed by either the Legislature itself or by this committee under the Legislature's authority, and to that effect I first thought I would bring a motion before this committee today for debate. But since the matters, as I said, are of gravity, we all need time to study this matter. I would be prepared to circulate today a draft motion that I have. It's a last-minute change I made in due recognition of the fact that all of us have been through a very busy session. We need time. We need to consult the public, our constituents, on these issues.

It's a question of the confidence of our constituents, the confidence of Albertans in the manner in which we operate in the Assembly. It's also an issue of the relative powers that we as the Legislative Assembly and members of the Legislature have vis-a-vis the executive and other branches of the government. It's a question of transparency of the processes and procedures that we use in order to protect ourselves. The protection, in my view, is absolutely necessary if we are not to be gagged by powerful forces in the world in which we live who would much rather see us be gagged and silenced rather than speaking out on matters of public concern and public interest.

So there are all of these questions that need serious and thorough consideration by all of us. They also, I think, merit public consultation and attention and advice. In light of that, I have a draft motion, Mr. Chairman, that with your permission I would like to circulate to members of the committee for their consideration at a later meeting. In the meantime I would very much appreciate hearing from every member of the committee on this as to the contents of this motion, plus I will be releasing this draft motion for public advice as of tomorrow. I have copies here for distribution, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: So are you moving a motion?

DR. PANNU: No, Mr. Chairman, I'm not. I'm tabling this material before this committee for future consideration.

Dr. Pannu:

Be it resolved that the Members' Group Plans Order (RMSC 1992, c. M-4) be amended as follows:

1. By striking out section 9 and substituting the following:

9(1) The Legislative Assembly Office shall participate in a plan administered by the Risk Management Fund or offered by another insurer to provide general liability coverage to the Office of the Speaker and the Legislative Assembly Office, to the same extent and on the same basis that the Crown insures the risks of Government Departments generally.

(2) Members, employees of the Speaker's Office and employees of the Legislative Assembly Office shall be provided general liability coverage related to the administrative performance of their duties to the same extent and on the same basis that the Crown insures the

risks of Government employees generally.

- (3) The Members Services Committee may by resolution extend general liability coverage for legal costs incurred by a Member related to the performance of their public duties, on such terms or with such limitations as it sees fit where:
 - (a) the Member is named as a defendant in a proposed, filed or served civil legal action seeking damages against the Member for something alleged to have been done or said by the Member inside the Chamber or in any other circumstance where the Member's privileges would apply, or
 - (b) the Member is named as a defendant in a proposed, filed or served civil legal action seeking damages against the Member for something alleged to have been done or said by the Member where the Member is not protected by privilege and the Speaker, in consultation with and on the advice of the Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, recommends coverage to the Members' Services Committee after having been satisfied on the facts that
 - (i) the Member did not maliciously or deliberately intend to cause damage to the plaintiff(s), and
 - (ii) the Member's alleged conduct was reasonably connected to the Member's official duties as a public representative of that Member's constituents, and was not connected with the Member in their capacity as a private citizen, or as a representative of a political party or Government department.
- (4) The Speaker shall not, when considering coverage for a Member under subsection (3)(b), determine any matter of law, and where some question exists on the facts of each case, shall give the benefit of the doubt in the Member's favour.
- (5) Coverage for civil legal costs provided for in subsection (3) shall apply to a Member's own costs on a solicitor-client basis including the cost of appeals, unless a court of competent jurisdiction rules that a Member acted in a private capacity, or as a representative of a political party or government department. The extent of coverage for damages shall be determined by the Members' Services Committee on the recommendation of the Speaker.
- (6) Where the Member is a co-defendant with other parties in a civil legal action described in subsection (3), or where the civil action reaches a negotiated settlement without trial, the extent of coverage for damages or costs shall be as determined by the Members' Services Committee on the recommendation of the Speaker.
- (7) Costs incurred pursuant to coverage provided in section 9 shall be paid by the Legislative Assembly on behalf of Members.

THE CHAIRMAN: With a request for distribution. Okay.
Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Clegg, Mr. Wickman then Ms Haley.

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a motion I'd like to move, and I've got copies here to be circulated. Would you like me to speak to it before I circulate it?

MS HALEY: I'm sorry; did I miss anything? We've moved past Dr. Pannu, and we're on to another issue?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I asked Dr. Pannu if he wanted to deal with the motion. He said he was just tabling this, so I recognized the next speaker, and the next speaker was Mr. Gibbons.

DR. PANNU: At 4 o'clock, Mr. Chairman, is that the end of the meeting?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. A very good point. Four o'clock is that. I basically was advised that the meeting would go to 4 o'clock. This morning it was indicated that we would try and work as hard as we could. So what is the wish of the committee with respect to this?

MRS. SLOAN: There's a motion on the floor.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Chairman, can I read the motion into the record?

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's deal with this 4 o'clock thing first.

MS HALEY: I would like to sit until we're done. We've only just got a couple of things left, so is there a way to do that?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Let's continue past 4 o'clock.

THE CHAIRMAN: General agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Okay.
Mr. Gibbons.

MR. GIBBONS: I have my submission as a motion, Mr. Chairman. Would you like me to read it before it's handed around?

THE CHAIRMAN: If it's a motion, we'd better have it in the record.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services conduct an investigation to clarify the application of general liability coverage available to Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, MLAs, under the Alberta risk management fund, what types of liability the general liability clause is intended to cover, and whether the payment of legal expenses for MLAs involved in alleged liable, slander, or defamation of character actions is appropriate.

MRS. SLOAN: I'll second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconded by Mrs. Sloan.
Would you like to speak to your motion?

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think what we have to present here is that Albertans deserve to have a full answer to a number of unanswered questions. Just who knew what and when about this coverage? Is the coverage even legal? Why were Members of the Legislative Assembly not informed that the coverage existed? These questions can only be answered fully for Albertans through a complete investigation by this Members' Services with the ability to call witnesses under oath on subpoena relevant to the documents.

Now, like I mentioned before, the Ethics Commissioner has ruled on a certain part of this, but the following excerpt is from the Ethics Commissioner's news release: reports into allegations involving Stockwell Day should be utilized by the Official Opposition to justify the need for Members' Services to review the legality and the appropriateness of an MLA receiving taxpayer-backed general liability coverage from the Alberta risk management fund.

4:04

Now, reading excerpts from the Ethics Commissioner from September 27, 1999, "The issue of the indemnity and what it is intended to cover and how it operates is a matter for the Members' Services Committee."

This is why we have brought this forward here.

Another excerpt:

I have concerns – and I expect the public would share those concerns – about the appropriateness of government employees making decisions on politicians' legal claims. I believe the public may perceive that public servants are subject to influence – real or perceived – and that no politician's claim would ever be denied. It may be that some structure needs to be put in place to ensure the independence and transparency when a Member seeks coverage under the program.

There, again, an excerpt from November 15, 1999.

We have a number of questions on this, and it's actually around the liability, risk management. It originated in March 19, 1985, and it's come to further information we had when we became new members after March 11, 1997, on how we speak out and when we speak out and so on. With that, I would leave it for discussion. I believe this is a very serious issue that Albertans are looking at, and we have to present them with the answers on what liability coverage for MLAs is involved in cases like this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. On this motion, Mrs. Sloan then Mr. Herard and Mr. Wickman.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The motion proposes that the standing committee conduct an investigation into the application of liability coverage for MLAs, and I would support the motion with the accompanying comments. If general liability coverage for MLAs involved in alleged defamation actions was intended to be explicit, why did the March 1985 chart entitled Crown Insurance Coverage Summary refer to the purported coverage as being an "addendum or endorsement" to the insurance policy? If liability coverage for MLAs involved in alleged defamation actions that existed before '89, why wasn't it incorporated in the members' group plans order 3/83 of July 27, 1983? Why was the March 19, '85, Crown Insurance Coverage Summary Chart purportedly providing general liability coverage for MLAs involved in defamation not incorporated in the December '86 or February '89 amendments to the members' group plans order?

Given the statement by Parliamentary Counsel Michael Clegg at the March 20, '85, meeting of Members' Services that the insurance policy should be rewritten so as to clearly include Members of the Legislative Assembly, why did it take over four years to seek the approval of the Members' Services Committee to pass an order?

Further, we have the fact that two members who were served notice of a statement of claim during the period prior to the statement of claim filed against the Hon. Stockwell Day were not informed of their liability coverage under these orders. That in my opinion is a serious breach of the Legislative Assembly Act, because all members should be afforded the same type of information and defence. That occurred. I'll let the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud speak to that, but he was not informed about liability coverage when he asked for clarification of legal costs at the Members' Service meeting on August 21, 22, or 28, '89. There was no documentation ever prepared by risk management and insurance or the Leg. Assembly Office setting out an explanation of the risk management fund as it pertained to lawsuits being filed against MLAs when the LAO pays premiums for insurance coverage on behalf of members.

There is also a question of why Parliamentary Counsel did not refer to the purported general liability coverage for MLAs involved in defamation actions as being under the scope of Members'

Services Order 7/89 when he prepared for members the December 19, '89, briefing document entitled Legal Assistance for MLAs. Why would we not want to transparently inform members of the coverage that they are afforded? Further, in the 1985 Crown insurance coverage summary chart, which proposed to outline liability coverage for MLAs, this was not mentioned in the legal opinion provided by Parliamentary Counsel Michael Clegg to the Members' Services Committee on December 21, '89. We have researched the records of the Members' Services Committee, and there are serious questions, even to the extent of what information was perhaps available but not provided to participants of this committee during the period of time in which this liability coverage was supposed to apply.

When we looked at the \$50 million in schedule 1 of the Treasury Board regulation in 1993, why was the coverage for general liability established at \$50 million? Was the deductible established at \$1 million per occurrence under the Treasury Board regulation? Why was "participant" defined in schedule 1 of the Treasury Board regulation to include current and former named participants and also any current or former member, employee, or volunteer whether receiving compensation or not while acting within the scope of his or her duties? Why was the meaning of "participant" in the schedule of the Treasury Board regulation narrowed to include any current or former member while acting within the scope of his or her duties as a member?

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, why has there been no formal memorandum of understanding between the Leg. Assembly Office and risk management to deal with the issue of insurance coverage for MLAs since this discussion was initiated in 1996? Why didn't risk management provide LAO a copy of the schedule of Alberta regulation 1/96 until January 8, '98, when schedule 1 set out the terms and conditions of general liability coverage for MLAs?

Those are some of the questions that remain unanswered this afternoon, and I think that if the motion proposed to have an investigation is approved by this committee, it would be my hope, Mr. Chairman, that some of those questions would be answered.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard then Mr. Wickman then Mr. Coutts.

MR. HERARD: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know why this is getting to be so complicated, because it seems to me that there are premiums being paid for insurance. That means there must be an insurance policy somewhere that defines what it covers. So what is there to investigate? I mean, that should be pretty straightforward, in my view. You know, you pay a premium for a policy that covers you for something.

I guess I'm not really surprised by this, because it wasn't that many days ago that we had to deal with a point of privilege in the House with respect to how some people view officers of the Legislature. I don't know if this is a continuation of that, but I'm really starting to get upset by this, because to me it's a very simple issue. There are premiums, and there's a policy. That should be open and available, and that should answer all their questions.

4:14

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, some members may be perceiving this whole thing the wrong way. There is a need to clear up exactly the whole question of general liability and risk management. Let me just make a few comments.

There's a great deal of confusion. I admit that I'm even more confused this afternoon than I was this morning when I came to this meeting in dealing with this particular issue. When I made reference to it earlier, as to when it first appeared in the budget, you stated in '95, roughly. Well, how long as it been in place? Since the early

80s. Yet somewhere along the line there's an attempt to spin it back to me in a 1989 meeting. So I really don't know when this whole question of this type of coverage was put into place.

When the issue first arose, I would venture to say that the vast majority of all MLAs, including government MLAs, were not even aware that there was such coverage. When I go back to that meeting in 1989 – and at that particular time of all the members that are here now there were only two that were at that particular meeting: myself and yourself, Mr. Chairman.

At that particular meeting I raised the matter, and I raised the matter because then member Sheldon Chumir was engaged in a legal battle, if I recall correctly, with Elaine McCoy, and the questions were raised. The Ethics Commissioner makes reference to it in his report as well, that the question was raised, and I asked questions. I attempted to set some guidelines in that, but I was repeatedly shot down – repeatedly shot down – at that meeting. I remember Dianne Mirosh specifically asking: you mean that the coverage only is in case somebody slips in front of my constituency office, breaks a leg, and sues me? The response was yes. That's the only coverage there was.

When I specifically pursued the matter of the general liability, I was told – and if I had the minutes here, I could point it out – that there wasn't any. In fact, the Provincial Treasurer himself was the loudest opponent, if you recall correctly, Mr. Chairman, to even consider the request I was making on behalf of Sheldon.

Even when our Member for Edmonton-Glenora raised the question himself as to whether he would be covered when he was threatened with a lawsuit, he wasn't informed at that time that there was risk management and general liability insurance coverage. He wasn't told at that particular time.

Now, the whole question of how we resolve this issue – and it has to be resolved. I see that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has brought forward a motion for consideration further down the road. But the question remains, first of all: should there be general liability? In my opinion, yes, there should be, because if in the course of our duties as elected representatives we make a statement in good faith and somebody chooses to sue us, possibly even without sufficient grounds but just to make life difficult for a member, how do we protect ourselves? But to just give blanket approval and to say that no matter what a Member of the Legislative Assembly may say, they're going to be protected by this coverage takes away any responsibility on the part of the individual MLA to refrain from making statements that are totally out of the ballpark.

So there has to be, first of all, a system in place where there is liability coverage, but secondly, there has to be a process that establishes the guidelines and approves each individual threat or lawsuit or action that may be there. I would suggest the appropriate body to do that would be this particular body here. That's why we have the motion that's in front of us right now, so that we can look at the current situation and so this committee in public can make a decision in wisdom as to whether the general liability should cover those legal costs and lawsuit damages, because the taxpayer is on the hook for up to \$1 million, and that has to be kept in mind. It's the taxpayer that pays the price when a statement is made that is totally inappropriate. I'm not saying that in this case it's inappropriate. I'm just saying that in cases a statement could be made that is inappropriate and thus this motion.

Once this motion is dealt with, I have a motion naming specifically what persons we think should come in front of this committee that would be in positions to offer further documentation or evidence to try and clear this matter up, witnesses like myself, yourself, Mr. Chairman, the former Parliamentary Counsel, and such, people that were here in 1989 that heard the discussion. Members may not be fully aware of just how much confusion there has been in the whole issue, and it has to be resolved. Somewhere

along the line this whole question of general liability has to be resolved so that myself as a member, yourselves as members know exactly what coverage there is. The taxpayer at the same time has to be protected from statements made by an MLA that are totally out of context, period.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Coutts.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have before us a motion that I'm wondering whether or not our Special Standing Committee on Members' Services really can do anything about. The motion here is to conduct an investigation, and our Members' Services Committee acts on behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly. I see this particular committee as one that reviews the information that's before us, particularly in the case of risk management. We might be able to review information on risk management at a subsequent meeting of this committee, but to go out and get the information ourselves and to conduct an investigation, I don't know if that's really our mandate. One of the things that I could see us doing – and I could have clarification on this. We might have to go to an outside agency to get information about risk management, if ordered by this committee, so that it can take it under consideration for future deliberations, but I personally can't vote for this motion because I don't think it's the mandate of this committee to conduct an investigation.

Now, if we have a communications problem on risk management, then that's fine. We can settle that here and with yourself as chair, but is it really our mandate to go out and do a thorough investigation on that?

THE CHAIRMAN: We have Mr. Herard and then Mr. Woloshyn. Mr. Gibbons, you'll be called on to conclude when we get there.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I am getting more confused as the day goes on as well, because I don't think there's an insurer in the world that in consideration of the premiums they receive would provide blanket coverage that would take away the responsibility of an individual to act responsibly. In other words, I think it will be, at the end of the day, really the responsibility of the courts to deal with the issue as to whether or not there is any culpability with respect to a member abusing the privilege when speaking as an MLA or speaking as a private citizen. I think the insurers themselves would not automatically accept liability unless that was determined by the courts. So I really don't know how this can impose a burden on the taxpayers of Alberta if there's an insurance policy for which premiums are paid and then an action arises that the courts have to decide. What do we pay insurance for, you know, if it, in fact, is not going to protect the citizens of this province?

THE CHAIRMAN: It would really be helpful for the chair if we got back to what the motion is.

Mr. Woloshyn, Dr. Pannu then Ms Haley.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you. I'd like to make a side comment to Dr. Pannu. You've identified a problem, and I commend you for coming forward with a proposal. I don't know whether I would concur with it or not, but you have taken the trouble to think of how to correct a problem that you perceive.

This motion does nothing more than convolute an issue. We're not here as Members' Services Committee people to go back and investigate what happened since 1985 through 1998-99. The issue is relevant but not in the context of the motion. The relevancy of the issue is: should we have risk management insurance and, if so, what kind? That may be a discussion for a future meeting. It may

emanate from what Dr. Pannu submitted. This motion as stated here is nothing but a thinly veiled witch-hunt. Mr. Chairman, I can say that without any question we should unanimously reject this motion and move on with the business of the day.

4:24

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The motion before us is very general and broad. To conduct an investigation, one needs to have a more specific and focused language that should direct an investigating entity to address specific questions. I just want to draw your attention to what I consider the rather vague language of the motion:

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services conduct an investigation to clarify the application of general liability coverage available to Members.

What's meant by clarification? Is it an attempt to sort out the language and make it clear?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. In the motion I'm looking at I do not see the word clarification. What motion are you looking at? Where's the clarification? I'm sorry; I don't mean to interrupt, but I just want to make sure we're on the right motion.

DR. PANNU: It says, "Conduct an investigation to clarify the application."

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. Sorry.

DR. PANNU: I really would like to understand what it is. Is it clarity of language? Is it an investigation into the manner in which this coverage might have been used in the past? Exactly what is meant by this seeking of clarification?

We know that a certain arrangement has been in place. It has been in place without the formal knowledge of the members of this committee. It wasn't a decision made by this committee. We know that the arrangement that's in place was the result of a regulation change made in 1992. We know all of that. I have serious questions about both the status of the regulatory change and its legality and its use or abuse. All of us have those concerns. Would the motion in any way help us get at the real issues? Would that involve you? We have an arrangement in place that may have been used rightly or wrongly by a Member or Members of the Legislative Assembly, including a member of the executive.

I'd like to know exactly what we are seeking by way of asking this committee "to clarify the application" of that arrangement. Is it just a matter of clarity, or is it a matter of fundamental difference in view as to whether or not that arrangement is legal, whether or not that arrangement in fact should not have been in place without the authority of this body called the Members' Services Committee, duly authorized by the Legislative Assembly?

Those in my view are the real issues, and the draft motion that has been circulated today for information and future discussion gets precisely at those questions. If this motion were to be changed to bring those kinds of questions into focus, then I think our discussion would be productive, and I'd be willing to seriously consider the motion. The motion in its present form really is far too vague to lead us anywhere. Even if we sit down as a committee, we'll have 12 different definitions of what the motion is about. That's a wrong point to start from. So I'm seeking clarification of the intention "to clarify the application of general liability coverage."

THE CHAIRMAN: I will recognize the mover of the motion and give him an opportunity to sum up. In the meantime there are

several other individual members who have said that they wanted to speak. Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Speaking to this motion, I need to be able to say that clearly in the last 14 or 15 years, since the 1985 originating comments about group insurance or risk insurance for MLAs was brought up, there have been so few issues involved in it. I think we should all be relatively happy about that. As MLAs working with your communities, you tend not to find yourself in situations like this.

Clearly in 1989 Members' Services decided that something needed to be done. It was moved from Treasury over to LAO, and a premium was agreed to be paid at some point along the way. I think just by the very nature that the majority of MLAs here since 1993 and 1997 have been basically unaware of this speaks to the fact that very few of us have had reason to find out about it, and I think that's a real plus. We're not the only Legislature in the whole country or, indeed, in the world. I'm willing to guess or even bet that a large number of MLAs, Members of Parliaments, or MNAs from Quebec would all find themselves in similar positions.

The correct thing to do here, rather than trying to have, as Stan said, this thinly veiled attempt to probably delve into Stockwell – I'm not the least bit interested in the Stockwell Day situation. The Ethics Commissioner has already ruled on that, and I'm satisfied with his ruling. I am curious to know where we are in comparison to other parts of Canada or, indeed, the world, and if we can move on past these at some point, I guess I would be hoping that the chairman would in fact be able to gather some information for us and bring it back to Members' Services at a future date so that we could know what we have in comparison to other places. Is it the right thing versus what other provinces or the federal government has?

You know, I'm just simply not prepared to keep going back. We need to move forward. The fact that we have risk insurance is a very good thing. I don't think anybody should be implying that it isn't. But is it the right policy? Is it done in the right way? Those are things that we could determine better if we had information that summarized for us what other places have and we can actually do a comparative analysis of it, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

We have a motion before us, and now we're starting a second round of speakers, and those have already participated. I always tend to be rather informal in this committee. Mrs. Sloan then Dr. Pannu.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, let's be clear. The liability coverage for members, as it is currently applied in the Provincial Treasurer's case, was not determined by this committee. The fact of the matter is that we have the standing responsibility to determine the entitlements for members.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora some years ago was served with a defamation suit by Hotel de Health. At no time was he given complete clarification as to what his liability coverage was under the Members' Services orders. Now, in 1998-99, when the shoe is on the foot of the Provincial Treasurer, all of a sudden we have liability coverage that out of some closet or drawer in Treasury has appeared. The point I am making is that it is this committee's responsibility to define that. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke at length about his participation in this committee raising these issues, being told unequivocally that there was no coverage.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry. Which member was that?

MRS. SLOAN: Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Back then it was called Edmonton-Whitemud.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MRS. SLOAN: I'd like to also speak to comments made previously by Mr. Clegg and Mr. Herard about: is this appropriate for members of this committee to investigate? Well, I would submit, who is more appropriate? We're the legislative committee that defines members' entitlements. We have members in this province who are being given the legal authority to investigate WCB. We have other members who sit on the Social Care Facilities Review Committee and the Health Facilities Review Committee that have a statutory obligation to investigate. Granted; all of those committees are government members, but as I read the Legislative Assembly Act, all members have equal authority, powers, and entitlements.

I would submit this afternoon that we're in a position where we most certainly do have the ability to investigate. To suggest that we should go to an outside agency, the insurer, or the courts is, in my opinion, a direct affront to the legislative purpose of this committee.

There will be a precedent set, no doubt, with the case that is before the courts involving the Provincial Treasurer. Regrettably, that is going to set the legal precedent, when this committee has the power and authority to have defined those parameters, the liability coverage for members, and for whatever reasons did not choose to activate that authority previously or is not in the position this afternoon to assume that responsibility.

4:34

Now, I would like, in conclusion, just to state for the record that the motion circulated by Dr. Panu is almost an exact duplication of a motion proposed by Mr. Dickson, the House leader for the Official Opposition. As members may or may not be aware, he has had numerous correspondence with the chair of this committee and others relative to the application of risk management. The draft motion for consideration is really a duplication of a proposal that he had outlined as to how Members' Services orders could be amended to clarify and address the discrepancies.

With those comments I will conclude.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, my draft motion was released today. I haven't yet had the opportunity to see Mr. Dickson's motion. We'll see to what extent they are similar, and if they are, I think that shows that there's a convergence of views on the direction in which we need to go in terms of changing existing regulations. I'll welcome the opportunity to look at the substance of that motion.

In response to Ms Haley's comments, I want to say that this motion that I have tabled today is based on a thorough investigation of what goes on in other Legislatures.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that, but we're on the motion put forward by the hon. member Mr. Gibbons, so we should deal with that.

DR. PANNU: I take your point, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to make that clarification, the idea that one of the ways in which you can clarify this whole thing is by looking at what other Legislatures do and what the Parliament of Canada does. The only other province which may have arrangements similar to what we have is the province of Manitoba. We have done a thorough investigation. Every other province's policies are reflected in here, as are some of the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner as to the direction that this committee and this Legislature need to take. I wanted to clarify that.

There is the word "clarify" there, and I think clarification justifiably will require us to look at how others do this business and then learn from it, pool that experience and come up with a model that's better than any that we are dealing with it at this point. That's why I think that what I said about our survey of other places is relevant to the motion, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I've been asked: why wait? My answer is as before. I think we do need to give it serious consideration, and we need to get some public input into it. Why are we afraid of consulting our constituents and the public on this? It is a matter of wide public concern. When the matter of the risk management fund and its existence and its use or abuse came up a few months ago, my office was filled with calls from my constituents and others: "How come you guys are so privileged? You know, if we defame someone, if we maliciously attack someone else, as ordinary citizens of the province we are not covered. How come you are?" My answer was: sure, that's a fair question. We should only be covered for legitimate activities that we as MLAs, as elected representatives are entitled to as an integral part of our duties.

We need to show the public that we're willing to listen, that we're here to consult with them before we proceed. That's the reason why I say that we should wait and not proceed with this today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gibbons, to sum up.

MR. GIBBONS: Just to clarify, Mr. Chairman, some of the different statements being made here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's focus on the motion.

MR. GIBBONS: Well, the fact is that it was around clarification too: why can't we bring it up? Part of the study is that we go out to other provinces in a study of this.

Some of the things here. Yes, we need premiums, and yes, we need coverage, but we also need openness and accountability in our system, and that is the fact of insurance. This one, since it was brought in in 1985 and what we referred to earlier on about what happened in 1989 with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, then Edmonton-Whitemud – Mr. Herard makes light of this. This isn't a small item. This is a big item if you travel Alberta right now. In small coffee shops this was talked about at the time. It might still be the buzzword out there, and it might still be the item that might show that people in Alberta want openness and accountability on something like this.

I'm suggesting that while we're sitting here in Members' Services, maybe it should have been brought up for open debate in the Leg. so that everybody has a part in it instead of the members here. We're talking 10 members versus 83, and 83 people should have had something to do with it.

I really believe that the motion being put forward isn't put forward as a witch-hunt but to cover and clarify where we've come from, and if we have to take into account other motions, where we're going to go into the future, then I'd suggest that that's all part of it. This motion is to find out why we as MLAs did not know we had coverage for this and why we've got to be very, very careful how we speak out in our own constituencies, how we speak out on any items like this. Ms Haley mentioned that fortunately this hasn't happened before, but it is happening right now, and it's going to cost Albertans a lot in this particular case.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the motion before us, would all members in favour of the motion put forward by Mr. Gibbons and seconded by Mrs. Sloan please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is defeated.

Now, Mr. Clegg then Mr. Wickman. There is a speaking order we had. Mr. Clegg, you were on my list.

MR. CLEGG: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to table a motion which basically becomes redundant because it deals with the people we were going to propose would be in a position to benefit this committee if the motion by Mr. Gibbons had been passed. However, I do want to table it for the record and move it as circulated.

MS HALEY: This is just being tabled?

THE CHAIRMAN: I haven't heard anything else.

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. I moved it as circulated.

THE CHAIRMAN: You moved it as circulated.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. I need a seconder.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan has seconded it.

Mr. Wickman moved:

That those witnesses described in schedule A shall be summoned to attend before the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services together with all relevant documents in their possession or under their control and to be examined under oath as part of the investigation into the application and appropriateness of general liability coverage under the Alberta risk management fund for Members of the Legislative Assembly, MLAs, involved in alleged libel, slander, or defamation of character actions.

Schedule A

- (1) Hon. Stockwell Day, MLA, Provincial Treasurer: applicant to Alberta risk management fund, 1999; Members' Services Committee, 1989; minister responsible for Alberta risk management fund, 1999.
- (2) Hon. David Hancock, QC, Minister of Justice: minister responsible for Stockwell Day's claim to the Alberta risk management fund, 1999.
- (3) Richard W. Whitehouse: director, Alberta risk management and insurance, Alberta Treasury, 1999; manager, risk management operations, Alberta Treasury, 1985 and 1989.
- (4) R.L. (Dick) Ewert: senior manager, risk analysis and insurance section, Alberta risk management and insurance, Alberta Treasury, 1999.
- (5) D. Murray: director, risk management and insurance, Alberta Treasury, 1985.
- (6) Dr. David Carter, former MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: chair, Members' Services Committee, 1989.
- (7) Gerard Amerongen, former MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: chair, Members' Services Committee, 1985.
- (8) Bob Bogle, former MLA: Members' Services Committee, 1989.

- (9) Hon. Ken Kowalski, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: Members' Services Committee, 1985 and 1989.
- (10) Pam Barrett, MLA: Members' Services Committee, 1989.
- (11) John McInnis, former MLA: Members' Services Committee, 1989.
- (12) Percy Wickman, MLA: Members' Services Committee, 1989.
- (13) James Gurnett, former MLA: Members' Services Committee, 1985.
- (14) Dr. David McNeil: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 1989 and 1999.
- (15) Michael Ritter: Parliamentary Counsel, 1989.
- (16) Michael Clegg: Parliamentary Counsel, 1985 and 1989.
- (17) Lou Hyndman, former MLA: Provincial Treasurer, 1985; minister responsible for the Alberta risk management fund, 1985.
- (18) Dick Johnston, former MLA: Provincial Treasurer, 1989; minister responsible for the Alberta risk management fund, 1989.

MR. WICKMAN: Just speaking to it very briefly, we had hoped that in the three motions that had been presented, there would be an opportunity to clear up this specific matter in front of this committee. These are people that were involved in the issue from years back that could have been in a position to provide vital information that I feel would have cleared the issue up. In view of the fact that the previous motion was defeated, obviously it is redundant, but it is there for the record. So I have moved it accordingly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion on the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question's called. All in favour of the motion as put forward by Mr. Wickman, seconded by Mrs. Sloan, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Defeated.

Ms Haley, I have you next on my list.

MS HALEY: That was from a long time ago.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, it was. We've dealt with that one?

MS HALEY: It is redundant at this point, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The matter before us was one called risk management. Are there further comments from individual members with respect to this? Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm wondering, Mr. Chairman, are we in a position where really now we do have to await the precedent that the court sets relative to how this is defined, or will there be amendments made to the *Members' Guide* on this?

4:44

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, are we finished with all the participation

of members with respect to this matter before I make some comments on it? I want to make sure that all members have an opportunity to be heard. Dr. Pannu?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, now that we have concluded today's . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: We haven't concluded yet.

MRS. SLOAN: No, we haven't concluded. We're on your list.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, you are.

DR. PANNU: Okay. Are we still on the risk management issue?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we are on the risk management issue.

DR. PANNU: I just want to go on record as indicating that I will be requesting a meeting of this committee to consider what today is a draft motion. It may appear before us in a changed form depending upon the input we receive from others. I'll be certainly requesting as we move into the new year a meeting of this committee to consider it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that's well understood, that you'd tabled some information today and you basically said that you wanted it to come back to an upcoming meeting of the Members' Services Committee.

DR. PANNU: I request that the contents of this motion be part of the record of today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you. With regard to the discussion we've had in the last couple of hours on this issue and the fact that we know that we have another motion coming back at a follow-up meeting to this one, I would most sincerely request, Mr. Chairman, that you help us gather some information – do I need a motion to have this done? – so that we have a better idea prior to making a decision on something this important, that we have a better understanding of what, in fact, occurs and exists in other provinces in Canada, that we have something to look at and compare ourselves to and say: "Well, we have this; we don't have that. Or should we be looking at it in a whole new way?"

I don't want to sit and have another meeting where we're guessing: well, we think this might be right. I think we're all capable of making a decision if we have the right information.

THE CHAIRMAN: You want an inventory evaluation as to what happens in the various jurisdictions of Canada.

MS HALEY: Correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: You don't want any recommendations from the chair. You just want a clinical statement of what exists.

MS HALEY: Mr. Chairman, I have great faith that you will present things in such a way that will make it obvious as to what should be done. If you want to make recommendations, that's just fine by me.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to also table a document under today's date released by the Official Opposition under my name with respect to motions.

There are three and I would just like to . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Haven't we already got them?

MRS. SLOAN: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're three new ones?

MRS. SLOAN: Yes. I am prepared to move them.

MS HALEY: I thought we had an agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're still on the risk management. I thought we had concluded it too, but please bear with me with some patience here.

Mrs. Sloan, please proceed.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm prepared to move them sequentially if that is agreeable.

That the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services request the Premier of Alberta to invoke section 27(1) of the Judicature Act and refer Treasury Board regulations 01/93 and 01/96, relating to the purported coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly, MLAs, under the Alberta risk management fund, to the Alberta Court of Appeal for the determination of their legality.

If the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services determines that coverage of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, MLAs, for alleged liable, slander, and defamation of character under the general liability provisions for the Alberta risk management fund is appropriate, that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta debate a formal amendment to the Financial Administration Act to include MLAs as participants under the Alberta risk management fund for the purposes of the act.

And finally that the members' group plans order, RMSC 1992, c. M-4, be amended as follows. By striking out section 9 and substituting the following:

9(1) Members of the Legislative Assembly shall participate in a plan administered by Alberta Treasury Risk Management and Insurance Division or offered by another insurer to provide general liability coverage to the same extent and on the same basis that the Crown insures the risks of government ministries.

(2) Members of the Legislative Assembly shall be provided general liability coverage related to the administrative performance of their duties to the same extent and on the same basis that the Crown insures the risks of government employees generally.

(3) The Special Standing Committee on Members' Services may by unanimous resolution extend general liability coverage for legal costs incurred by a Member on a case-by-case basis, on such terms and conditions as it sees fit where:

- (a) the Member is named as a defendant in a proposed or filed civil action seeking damages against the Member for an action alleged to have been done or said by the Member inside the Legislative Assembly of Alberta or in any other circumstance where the Member's privileges would apply; or
- (b) the Member is named as a defendant in a proposed or filed civil action seeking damages against the Member for some action by the Member where the Member is not protected by privilege if the Committee is satisfied that:
 - (i) the Member was not malicious or likely intended to cause damage against the plaintiff(s); and
 - (ii) the Member's alleged action was connected with the Member's official duties on behalf of the Member's constituents and was not connected with the Member's individual responsibilities, or as a representative of a political party or government department.
- (4) The Special Standing Committee on Members' Services shall not, when considering coverage under subsection 3(b), determine any matter of law.
- (5) Coverage for civil legal costs provided for in subsection (3)

shall apply to the Member's own costs on a solicitor-client basis including the costs of appeals, but where a court of competent jurisdiction rules against a Member after finding the Member liable for damages to the plaintiff(s), coverage shall not include:

- (a) the costs of damages awarded; or
 - (b) the legal costs of the plaintiff(s).
- (6) Where the Member is a co-defendant with other parties in a civil action described in subsection (3), or where the civil action reaches a negotiated settlement without trial, the extent of any coverage for damages or costs shall be determined by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.
- (7) Costs incurred pursuant to coverage provided in section 9 shall be paid by the Legislative Assembly on behalf of Members.

That concludes the three motions, Mr. Chairman, that are intended to clarify the liability protection of members. I'm happy to submit copies for the record.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: It would be nice if you could submit copies for the members of the committee if we want to have this thing discussed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question has been called.

All in favour of the motion as put forth . . .

MR. WICKMAN: I have a referral motion. A referral motion takes precedence over a general motion; does it not?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you know, Mr. Wickman, we've actually followed this in a kind of low-key approach. I mean, if I were to apply all the rules of the Assembly, we'd probably still be back there at 10:30 getting our coffee.

We have three motions that were provided here by Mrs. Sloan. I'm pretty flexible.

MR. WICKMAN: I just thought it could be referred to the same time as Dr. Pannu's is dealt with, because it's very similar, and we deal with them all at one time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there further discussion on this?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. I'd like to refer these three motions until such time as Dr. Pannu's motion comes forward.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have a motion before the committee to refer these motions to a later date. Would all members in favour of the referral motion please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan, you have the floor.

MRS. SLOAN: Just for the record, copies of the motions that were just made have been circulated for all members. I apologize that I didn't have them ready to make available before the motions were passed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion on these motions? All members in favour of the motions put forward by Mrs. Sloan, please

say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Defeated.

Any further comments to be made with respect to this matter, item 7(b)?

Well, hon. members, I simply would want to repeat and to refer to the attention of all hon. members from a very, very clinical point of view the consolidated Members' Services Committee orders, the booklet which covers the entitlements and the benefits which members have, and refer them to sections (9)(1) and (2), dealing with general liability coverage, dated March 1, 1993.

As well, hon. members, as part of your own review of this whole subject matter, I would certainly draw to your attention a document that a great deal of attention was provided to called Insurance Program Summary for Members of the Legislative Assembly. It's green coloured. There are sections dealing with property insurance coverage, general liability coverage, automobile insurance coverage, a general insurance program summary, and the telephone numbers with respect to contacts.

We will take the requests made by members with respect to dealing with this matter at a further date again as a result of a tabled motion, I guess, from Dr. Pannu and a request for further information from Ms Haley.

Under item 7(c), Other New Business.

4:54

MRS. SLOAN: Just a point of clarification, Mr. Chairman. By the committee just defeating my motion, they have in fact defeated the motion proposed by Dr. Pannu because they are the same motion in essence.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll deal with the motions in a separate way.

Under 7(c), Other New Business, is there additional new business?

Number 8, Date of Next Meeting. My intent would be to basically proceed with a further review of the matters we talked about this morning arising from the recent trends in health, to basically update and get the information requested by Ms Haley, and to have on an upcoming agenda those matters and other matters. My intent would be to try and find a date prior to, as the best guess, February, so perhaps you might want to take a look at the last week of January, perhaps Thursday of that week. I'm not sure what day on the calendar it is. It would be helpful if you sort of gave me an indication right now if you might be available on that date, the last Thursday of January. I think it's about the 27th. If we basically look at the 27th, that might be helpful. Is that generally okay?

Mr. Clerk, what else is there?

DR. McNEIL: Just making official the decision with respect to increasing the constituency allowances, the first portion of the constituency allowances, from \$41,766 to \$43,310.

THE CHAIRMAN: We've already passed that, but there's this requirement, the duplication of paper, and I don't know why. Anyway, we've already done this.

All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very, very much. I very

much appreciate your attentiveness to this.

To those of you who have to travel, please be very careful on the roads. To all of you, the very, very best for a most happy and fruitful and enjoyable and peaceful holiday season. Really, love one another in a great feeling of harmony; okay? Hug a media representative on the way out.

[The committee adjourned at 4:57 p.m.]