

**Title: Tuesday, November 13, 2007 Members' Services Committee**

Date: 07/11/13

Time: 6:30 p.m.

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I do believe the time says it's 6:30, so we'll convene this meeting of the Standing Committee on Members' Services. We have one member, Mr. Denis Ducharme, who is not here, but he advised, according to the rules, that Mary Anne Jablonski would be representing him. The Hon. Greg Melchin advised that he could not attend tonight, and the substitute for him is Mr. Len Mitzel. We have all other members here save two. Ms Pastoor has still not arrived, and Mr. Shariff has still not arrived. But we do have a quorum, so we will call the meeting to order.

Item 2 is Approval of Agenda. It is there in front of you if there are modifications to this.

**Mr. Oberle:** I so move approval of the agenda.

**The Chair:** Mr. Oberle. A seconder? Mrs. Ady. Any comments? All agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Number 3 is the approval of the minutes of October 24, 2007. They are attached as the next item in the binder that you have. If there is any business arising out of those minutes, we can deal with it. If not, then I'd look forward to a motion to approve. Mr. Martin. A seconder?

**Mr. Oberle:** So moved.

**The Chair:** Mr. Oberle. All agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

Okay. New Business. If you flip through to the red tab that says Overview, essentially this is a replay of the document that you had several weeks ago. Just briefly we'll go through it because there have been a few little updates, and I have to explain that in fairness to you.

The first bullet basically has the same numbers that we talked about before. The second one, the same numbers we talked about before. The third one, the same numbers.

The fourth one is: "for budgeting purposes 85 sessional days were used." I indicated at the last meeting that probably it would be prudent for us to anticipate there may be an election sometime in the fiscal year after April 1, 2008, and for election preparedness and postelection responsibilities, including some work that we will do, we're asking for \$100,000 to put in that account. Needless to say that if there's an election prior to March 31, 2008, these dollars will simply lapse and the budget not be utilized.

We indicated at the last meeting as well that we were going to give you the dollar figure for hosting the 2008 Parliamentary Visitor Services Association Conference and are asking for a budgeted amount of \$35,000 for that.

The next one, dealing with the four policy committees, we went through before.

I do believe at the last meeting we also had a brief discussion about the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee and looking at \$83,000. Much of that is just the cost of newspaper advertising for it.

There was one item that I did not raise at the last meeting because we were in the process of negotiation, and that has to do with the television coverage that we have. Traditionally, we've had this service – and I'll come back to this in a little greater detail. Access provides us with coverage service on the television network, but it was paid for by the department of advanced education. They have modified their budgets, and essentially they say that they're not prepared to do that anymore. They also had opportunity to have programming on that particular channel and the like.

The Clerk and I were involved in discussion and negotiation with the television people in order to ensure that we had time available and some production time available as well, and we've had an offer back and forth with respect to this. For us to continue the daily Routine after April 1 – the current contract will expire on March 31, 2008 – will require a sum of money, \$323,000. In terms of the government itself there are no additional dollars; it's just that it will no longer be paid for by the ministries of Education and Advanced Education. It will now have to be paid for by the source area, and that is the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. That, essentially, is what that is all about.

Under MLA Administration Budget the first bullet remains the same; the second, the same; the third, the same. Although it's in green, we had that information before, so we go all the way down right to, I guess, almost the bottom of the page, where it says, "Election-related expenses." I'm going to ask to put this in the budget because this is one of those little quirks that seems to come in once every four years.

All Members of the Legislative Assembly are eligible for an RRSP allocation. All members since April 1 of this year are eligible for that RRSP contribution. If an election is held prior to March 31 of 2008, there could be new MLAs. Well, the rules that we have say that they're eligible for the RRSP. It comes in the same government calendar year, so it may or may not be required, but we put in there a base of \$350,000 for that and some amount for constituency office moves in there.

Essentially, in looking at our budget, whatever the budget is that we have, we usually lapse X amount of dollars because we fund everything to the maximum that we would have attached to it. If you were to take a look at the next page as an example, which is the overview, although the current fiscal year budget for 2007-2008 shows a number of \$51,558,000, it's our forecast at this point in time that we'll arrive at \$48,714,000 simply because of utilization factors by members and not utilization factors, the numbers of days sitting. But if we don't have it in the budget – we had that Newt Gingrich thing a couple of years ago when the American Congress came to a halt because they didn't have the budgeting. We have the budgeting, but we usually lapse up to, well, nearly \$3 million, so we carry it.

I suppose one could come back and say: well, if that's the case, then instead of having the bottom-line request for this year at \$55,290,000, just go with \$52,290,000, but that's a risk factor that we don't need to take. We've never had a problem. We've never ever gone to a special warrant or a special allocation. We've always been within the budget and have always returned money, so it's been, I think, quite prudent.

To summarize again, the staff years requested under this Legislative Assembly of Alberta budget estimate is the same as it has been for 10 years, since I've been the Speaker. It's 89.9. That remains again. There's not been one new staff component added to the manpower component in the years that I've had the privilege of being your Speaker.

The budget request this year is \$55,290,000. That includes – and we'll come to it. I think it's under MLA administration. There was a discussion last time about the parameters that we used in building

the budgets for constituency offices. We use an allocation of 5 per cent for the office side and 5 per cent for the manpower side, and then there was some discussion towards the end of the meeting last time to basically consider a figure that Mr. Taylor had brought out in one of the economic data we used that basically said: well, it seems that office rents have gone up 11.5 per cent. We verified that that was the number that was included in there, so I'll take you through to a flow sheet when we come to that section, working in both numbers: the 5 per cent scenario and the 11.5 per cent scenario. It makes a difference for 83 offices of approximately \$120,000 over the whole system to go with the enriched 11.5 per cent item, but there's an overview. I'll stop now if you have questions on the overview. If not, then I would hope that we could proceed on a section-by-section review.

I might add that there are a number of orders that we'll ask you to look at at the conclusion of the meeting, including one that you generally agreed to, I believe, at the last meeting. That one is the item that Mr. Oberle brought up about the size of a large constituency, of a member having to travel within that constituency and having to utilize overnight accommodation. The general consensus seemed to be that the meeting said: yeah, that seemed like a positive idea. So we worked up a Members' Services order to basically say that that would be allowed, providing that the overnight stay was at a location 60 kilometres or more from the member's permanent residence, and that would apply province-wide, but we will come back to that at the end.

Any questions on that first overview? If not, we'll move to financial management and administrative services. Can we proceed, then? Okay.

The next section is the little financial management and administrative services division. There are 10 people involved in that, and you can see that there we're requesting an increase of \$98,000 overall. The human resource increase was \$150,000, but we've had an operational expense decrease of \$52,000 to arrive at \$98,000, and you can see the breakdown on the page that you have on both sides.

Shall I just proceed until you tell me to stop?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Then the next one is the human resource services one. Again, overall it shows an increase of \$119,000; \$109,000 of that is normal market and merit adjustments and an operational increase of \$10,000, and it's on the basis of seven manpower years and a requested budget of \$1.439 million.

The next section is always the one that seems to take up the most amount of time. The Speaker's office: an increase of \$38,000, \$34,000 of which is manpower related and \$4,000 for operational expenses. You have everything broken down, and my whole office staff is here praying. There's your breakdown. Staff composed of three people.

6:40

The next one is the Legislature Library request there for \$250,000, of which \$206,000 is for public service wage increases for them and the temporary people we have in periodically and \$44,000 for the operational side in terms of library materials. There are 16.3 people in that particular branch and a budget request of \$2,599,000.

The next one is House services. Essentially, 42.6 people, a budget request of \$1,263,000, an increase of \$565,000 for the human resource side and \$698,000, essentially, for the operational expenses. You'll see on the second page in there is the request. The bulk of that is for the television coverage associated with production of the daily Routine, for gavel-to-gavel coverage, and the increased costs

of the television broadcast of Oral Question Period on Access TV. It used to be covered by Education and Advanced Education. Their contract expires March 31, 2008. We've negotiated with them an annual cost of \$322,000 plus one other thing.

In our discussions with them we also advised them that this is something that we could look at on an interim basis. Not for next year but depending on the will and depending on the mood of the Members of the Legislative Assembly – we're looking at British Columbia and Ontario, and there are other provinces in Canada, as well, that have their own channel and have their own production units associated completely with a Legislative Assembly channel. For those of you who have Star Choice television, you can see this on satellite. So we're looking at that as a possibility, but that was the conclusion of our discussion with them, and that's where we're at for this next fiscal year.

**Mr. Taylor:** Who does the production now? Is it in house, or is it contracted out?

**The Chair:** CTV contracts it out.

**Dr. McNeil:** Yes. It's contracted with CTV, and they subcontract it to three contractors who do the production for us.

**The Chair:** The next section, section 6, is the information technology services section. There are 11 people involved in that area. Looking at a request of \$240,000, of which \$119,000 is human resources and \$121,000 with respect to equipment and infrastructure and the maintenance of it. The data processing services/equipment in that area has a request for \$81,000, which is the bulk of the request. This continues to be a continuously moving area of investment.

**Mr. Taylor:** Otherwise known as a black hole.

**The Chair:** Okay.

The next area is the budget for the legislative committees. There's an overall increase in this area of \$122,000 from last year's approved estimate primarily because of the result of advertising costs for the new policy field committees. It seems that everybody's got to go and advertise, and this is very, very costly. We're spending a lot of money advertising. You'd think that if you had the Internet and a website, everybody would know where to go, but of course that isn't the case. It just adds to it.

You can see the numbers in there. From the budget we had last year – we're truly reflecting the costs over a full year now – you can see that the payment to members is being reduced by \$55,000. That's simply as a result of usage and the experience that we had with these committees. Seventy thousand dollars less for travel.

Advertising: \$236,000. Essentially, that is what the proposal is to operate and let everybody know that these committees are sitting and if people want to make submissions. That's what happens.

**Mr. Martin:** There's still \$25,000 for the Personal Information Protection Act. I thought we were finished.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Which one would that be again, please?

**Mr. Martin:** The Personal Information Protection Act.

The first item in there?

**Mr. Martin:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Well, it shows a reduction.

**Mr. Martin:** No. I see select special committees. Then there's health information and protection of personal information.

**The Chair:** Okay. That shows a decrease.

**Mr. Martin:** Oh. I see. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We're eliminating it. We're finished with it.

**Mr. Martin:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Ady:** We're going to start it again.

**The Chair:** No, we're not.

**Mr. Martin:** My mistake.

**The Chair:** Not a problem at all.

You can see, then, on page 1 of 2 on the summary of budget estimates the budget for each of these standing committees. Of course, those four new committees take up – well, \$144,000 each is what they're budgeted at. That's \$576,000 of the \$889,000.

**Mr. Taylor:** That includes the advertising component, looking down across the four committees?

**The Chair:** The advertising component is blended throughout the whole, yeah. It's broken up into the four.

Tab 8 is MLA administration. The request is for an amount increase of \$1,578,000 and a total budget of \$30,859,000. In terms of payments and benefits to Members of the Legislative Assembly, that budgeted amount – plus that's where we've also put in 35 new MLAs claiming this allowance of 9,000 something dollars a year. So that's the bulk of it. It's \$350,000 that covers them there. Then you can see the members' allowances, the \$175 to \$185, is \$122,000. We moved out the constituency office staff benefit funding, the \$482,000. We've got the experience now of knowing exactly what it was, so we reduce that by \$482,000.

Then, if you go to the following page, because of the travel for these new committees and the increase from 36 cents to 37 cents per kilometre, again, April 1 will show a travel increase of \$182,000. The other big number that cuts in there is the constituency office staff number. That's where the accommodation would come for the office rents plus the staff component. That 5 per cent item and 11.5 per cent item for the office will give us a \$662,000 increase.

You should have in that tab as well a flow chart. You agreed last time for the 5 per cent, so if you take a look at the flow chart and you look at the centre one, the yellow box that says 2008-2009, what we talked about last time was an office operations component at 5 per cent. So underneath that 5 per cent you would see the numbers beginning with Dunvegan-Central Peace at \$127,240. If you wanted to give 11.5 per cent, that number would change to \$128,682, a difference of \$1,442. In fact, it's a difference of \$1,442 for everybody because in the formula everybody had the same office allocation. So that's what it really means. To go from the – sorry, where's Mr. Taylor?

**Mr. Taylor:** Right here.

**The Chair:** To go with the bigger numbers compared to the other number, that's what that is. In fact, I think, Mr. Clerk, that's the number we put in this budget, did we not?

**Dr. McNeil:** Correct. Yes.

**The Chair:** That's the number we've carried in this budget.

**Mr. Oberle:** The larger number?

**The Chair:** The larger number is the one we've carried in the budget. So if you don't agree with what we have in here, then you have to tell me. The difference is, I believe, \$119,686 to give us that figure. Again, it's broken down for every member. It's all in there so you can look at your own. So that is the overview for that one.

Then government members' services, the next tab, tab 9. We put in there the allowance that everybody agreed to at the last time. Currently, Mr. Whip, it's 38 members at \$66,150 under the new apportionment for April 1 of next year. That would bring the government members' budget to \$2,513,700; the committee support, \$756,000; for a total of \$3,270,000. That's \$30,000 more than last year's estimate because you've had a change in one member.

6:50

**Mr. Oberle:** But why is it only 38 members, excuse me, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** That's our conclusion on what you have in private members.

**Mr. Oberle:** Okay.

**The Chair:** That doesn't count executive office members nor myself.

The next one is the Official Opposition services budget. The total there, made up of 16 private members at, again, the same number, gives you \$1,058,400; the leader's office allowance, \$457,800; the Calgary caucus office, \$72,450; a subtotal of \$1,588,650; committee support at \$378,000; to give you the number of \$1,967,000.

Now, Ms Pastoor since the last meeting sent me a memo dated November 9, which I've circulated to everybody. Ms Pastoor, at this point in time if you wish to add something to the memo, please proceed.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you. I assume everyone has it.

**The Chair:** Yes. It's been circulated.

**Ms Pastoor:** As you can clearly see, the rent was substantially changed. I'll be perfectly honest with you. When I sent this letter, I wasn't aware that there actually was probably a separate line budget for the Calgary caucus office in this particular budget. However, if you can look at the rent and you look at the total cost – I guess my argument would be that the Premier's office is in the McDougall Centre, and if you'd like to give us a nice space in McDougall Centre, we'd take it. However, in lieu of that I'm wondering if we could somehow get an increase in that Calgary caucus office because in a way it's a comparable office to the Premier's southern Alberta office, so the opposition would have the comparable office. That, basically, would be my comments on that.

**The Chair:** Others? It's entirely up to the will of the committee.

**Ms Pastoor:** Well, I'll go with number one. I would like a space in the McDougall.

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, Mr. Chairman, if I might. I'm pretty sure that if

I got a fourfold increase in my constituency office rent, I'd be going to either negotiate with the landlord or find new space rather than coming to this committee to top that up. I think we have budgets for a reason. May I assume that that was boosted by 11 per cent, was it?

**The Chair:** It was boosted by 5 per cent.

**Mr. Oberle:** I'd be willing to entertain boosting that by 11 per cent, consistent with our constituency office allowance, but beyond that I think we should be talking about finding new space.

**The Chair:** That component for the Calgary caucus office is made up of two aspects, again. When this was created, the history that goes behind it, essentially some was for the rent and some was for the manpower. So if you follow – well, no; I'll stop here.

Mr. Taylor, do you want to add something, or does somebody else want to add something?

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, just for the record. My understanding is that what you're seeing here is the result, in part, of moving to new space and that with the proposed rent increase – and I don't know what the amount was for the existing space for the caucus office – it was thought to be unacceptable. In fact, it's referred to internally as an eviction. I don't know, you know, that that's factual necessarily, but that certainly supports the notion that there was a rent increase proposed for the existing space that, exactly as my colleague said, forced them to look for new space. Interestingly, they found the space in the same building. It is a larger space than before, so there's a bit of win for the caucus office in that sense in that it's a little bit more versatile and usable. But as you can see, the rent has gone up substantially as well. So we've already looked for the new space. We've found it at a substantial increase but, certainly, I think, the feeling of more value for the money in terms of the new space.

And I'll stop there for now.

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, I guess I'm wondering where this space is. I haven't seen an increase in Calgary like this. So I don't know – I have no idea – but where are we located?

**Mr. Taylor:** The same building, close in to downtown, on 11th Avenue S.W. on the corner of 5th Street S.W., I believe it is. This space now is on the ground floor. It was on the third floor before, in a three- or four-storey office building.

**Mr. Shariff:** I just was wondering that, you know, when you already have a space and you look for another space for legitimate reasons, and you come to a conclusion that you're willing to increase your rent from \$1,100 to \$4,200, I presume you would have considered that within the existing budget that you have. So I am a little surprised that you come into the committee at this stage, after having signed the agreement. This should have been done beforehand, to try and undertake a commitment, and we have no idea how long a lease you would have signed. From a procedural point of view I find it difficult, but I can understand that Calgary markets have gone up significantly. However, I don't know if they've gone up this much in my area.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, I imagine that – and again I don't know for sure – this would certainly constitute an increase in square footage as well. As for why no one from the caucus came before this committee or the Liberal members on this committee to ask for consideration before the lease was signed, I can't speak to that. I simply don't know, although I'll suggest that this committee does not meet

on as regular a basis as, say, some committees, like Public Accounts, and there would have been some need to sign this lease in a timely manner, I would imagine.

**The Chair:** Well, with due respect, the Speaker's office is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, so if somebody had an issue – and members come to my office all the time with issues.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Chairman, I cannot speak to that. I can only speak to what is, not what could have been or should have been.

**The Chair:** Fair game. So, look, there is a component in this caucus office. The base last year was \$69,000. We added the 5 per cent, so that's an inclusion of 5 per cent for manpower and 5 per cent for the budgeting thing. So the monthly rent, if it's \$1,130, as Ms Pastoor says, the 5 per cent added to that brought it to \$1,186.50. That's included in that figure of \$72,450. If, as Mr. Oberle says, you might want to consider going to 11.5 per cent, then that \$1,130 at 11.5 per cent equates to \$1,259.95. There's a difference of \$73.45 per month, and 12 times that comes to a total annual difference of \$881.40, if that's what Mr. Oberle is saying.

**Mr. Oberle:** I'll move that. That's consistent with what we've done with the constituency offices.

**The Chair:** Well, you're going to make a motion. I can't make a motion.

**Mr. Oberle:** I am making that motion. In consideration of that, to preempt the next question, I think we should probably apply that to the other office components in here, which would be the leader's office and . . .

**The Chair:** No. There aren't any other office components.

**Mr. Oberle:** No? Okay.

**The Chair:** This is the only one with an office component.

**Mr. Oberle:** Good. Well, I'll make that motion.

**The Chair:** Okay. We have a motion on the floor that, in essence, \$881.40 be added to \$72,450. Is there a seconder? Discussion?

**Mr. Taylor:** Did we have a seconder?

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Good. All in favour?

**Mr. Taylor:** I was just going to say that although it's not a significant amount of money, it's an improvement over what was before, and I would be prepared to support this.

**The Chair:** All in favour, please. Opposed? Okay. So we have to add \$881.40 to this line in the budget, the Calgary caucus office, and it has to go right back to the bottom line again, Mr. Clerk. You got that?

**Dr. McNeil:** And it'll be round in these budgets.

**The Chair:** Yeah. It'll be round, so it's going to go up.

**Dr. McNeil:** We'll sort that out. Then the ND . . .

**The Chair:** We haven't got there yet.

**Dr. McNeil:** It's okay. There's no problem. It only relates to . . .

**The Chair:** This is the only caucus. But we round off down to the nearest 5, do we not? Do we not round off down to the nearest 5?

7:00

**Dr. McNeil:** We round to the nearest thousandth.

**The Chair:** What do you mean thousandth? It's \$881.40 that the committee agreed to.

**Dr. McNeil:** Yeah. We'll do it in the bottom line here.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. The bottom line. I'd hate to lose this number someplace in the discussion. Okay. Generally in agreement with that?

Then the next one is the ND opposition services, made up of private members, four times that for \$264,600. The leader's office allowance: there are no dollars allocated for a third party office anywhere in the province of Alberta. The leader's office is in the building here. So our subtotal of \$493,500 plus the committee support, to arrive at a figure of \$683,000. That's what we're looking at. Okay?

The next one. The Alberta Alliance opposition, one member, \$66,150 plus committee support agreed to. That's the 5 per cent based on \$161,000.

Special funding requirements. We have one independent member, and it's the same number. Official party status is four members. There is nothing further added to this budget.

Hon. members, the request, then, would be made – if you look at the budget on the estimate summary, in essence we're looking at \$55,290,000. Mr. Clerk, plus?

**Dr. McNeil:** One thousand dollars.

**The Chair:** One thousand dollars. We're rounding up because of a policy, so it becomes \$55,291,000. That is the request being made of this committee. If we had a motion to that effect, that would be really helpful.

**Mr. Oberle:** I'm pleased to do that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Oberle moves. Mrs. Ady seconds. Discussion? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Chair:** Opposed, please say no. It's carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Now, if for some administrative purpose you tell me we have to go and vote on each one of these individually, I don't understand why. This is the Legislative Assembly budget, and that's what was carried. Okay. Everything else is included in that.

Now, we said we had some papers. Mr. Clerk, where are these papers? Is there a copy for everybody? Okay. Allison, please circulate.

If you look at the upper right-hand corner on the first sheet, it says: Draft, Option 1, 11.5 per cent increase. That's the one we're dealing with. The second one says: Option 2, 5 per cent increase. Just scribble all over that one. Okay? What we've got in here is an order, and you'll have a number for it. Pursuant to section 39 of the

Legislative Assembly Act the constituency services order is amended by the following:

2 Section 1(3) is amended

(a) in clause (a)

(i) in subclause (i) by striking out "\$22,192" and substituting "\$24,744",

which is the office component,

(ii) in subclause (ii) by striking out "\$61,539" and substituting "\$66,955";

which is the manpower component,

(b) in clause (c) by striking out "\$2,625" and substituting "\$2,756";

That's another one of those components we have.

(c) in clause (c.1) by

(i) striking out "\$5,434" and substituting "\$5,706",

(ii) striking out "\$10,868" and substituting "\$11,411",

(iii) striking out "\$16,301" and substituting "\$17,116",

(iv) striking out "\$21,735" and substituting "\$22,822".

3 This Order comes into force on April 1, 2008.

As per the new budget.

If there was a motion to approve that, that would really be helpful. Mr. Martin. Mr. Taylor seconded. Any discussion on this? Then we agreed to it unanimously. Thank you very much. We'll date that one the 13th day of November 2007, and that will be done. That other little piece of paper you'll just shred.

The next one is the item that we talked about that will allow section 3 to be amended by adding the following after clause (d) of our administrative clauses that we use for the constituency services amendment. It would read: "reasonable living expenses incurred by the Member in connection with travel within the Member's electoral division requiring an overnight stay at a location 60 kilometres or more from the Member's permanent residence." This order could come into force now, if you wish, because it would essentially come out of a member's constituency allocation. I don't think there's a major cost requirement. It would be passed, if you agreed, on this day in November 2007.

If we had a motion to that effect, that would be helpful. Mrs. Jablonski. A seconder. Okay, Ms Pastoor, we'll have you second that one to make sure there's no conflict of interest here, Mr. Oberle.

**Mr. Oberle:** Of course.

**The Chair:** Any discussion?

**Mr. Shariff:** Mr. Chairman, I just want to kind of put this on record. While I understand that we have come up with the 60 kilometres as a result of discussion at the last meeting, I can foresee events whereby hon. members may be travelling 50 kilometres, let's say, attending a Christmas social and maybe having a glass of wine, and I don't want to be responsible for them driving back and getting into an accident. I'd much rather they spend that money and stay in a hotel in a situation like that. But we haven't come to that conclusion, so I'm just putting it on record.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mitzel.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Chair. I'm just curious as to how a person would claim that. Do you claim it through your constituency?

**The Chair:** We'll come up with a special form.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Okay. All right. Yeah.

**The Chair:** It's not a problem.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, I hadn't thought of the concern that Mr. Shariff raised. It's just a simple matter of how you go about doing your business in a large constituency. To tell you the honest truth, I would have been quite happy with a 300-kilometre limit in there in that it's a 900-kilometre round trip for me to go to Rainbow Lake or La Crête in my constituency, and that's the concern. It's actually more in mileage charge if I drive home and then drive back than it is if I just stay there in a hotel. It's silliness.

That's the concern. I'm really tired of driving those kind of miles at 3 o'clock in the morning, I'll tell you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Oberle is not alone. The constituency I represent is smack in the centre of Alberta, but from the extreme southeast corner to the extreme northwest corner is a greater distance than it is from Edmonton to Calgary. That's just within the constituency, and it's right here in the centre of the province.

Anyway, we had a motion. We have a mover and a seconder. All agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried unanimously. We've got to sign that one too, Allison.

Okay. The next one is the Members' Services order. This next one would come into effect April 1, 2008, on the budget to move the daily reference number from \$175 a day to \$185 a day and, just a continuance of that, from \$1,750 a month to \$1,850 a month.

A mover for that, please. Mr. Oberle. Secunder? Ms Pastoor. Discussion? All agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried unanimously again. That would come into effect April 1.

The next one, section 9. What is this one, Mr. Clerk? I missed something.

**Dr. McNeil:** This relates to the transition allowance.

**The Chair:** Please explain.

**Dr. McNeil:** Yes. Up until about three years ago the federal tax rules stated that the transition allowance could be paid out over four years, and that was put in the order. They changed the federal tax rules so that there's not a definite period now over which the allowance can be paid out. So what we're doing here is just amending that, taking that four years out, so that it just says that it's consistent with the existing tax rules. There was an inconsistency.

**Mr. Martin:** What is the existing tax rule?

**The Chair:** Any time.

**Dr. McNeil:** Well, it can be paid out over the number of years that you choose to have it paid out as opposed to just the maximum of four.

**The Chair:** It's true. We've spent a lot of time trying to get this thing sorted out. The order currently reads in section (7) that a member "who is eligible to receive a transition allowance may elect to be paid the amount of that allowance over a period of up to 4 years." We're eliminating that. You can take it out over whatever

time you want in the clarification we have from the Canadian revenue and taxation authority.

Ms Pastoor.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. In the case of a death would that, then, revert to the estate?

7:10

**The Chair:** Yes. There's a quirk in all of this, you know. If you take it out as a living member, you pay tax on it.

**Ms Pastoor:** If I'm dead, I don't.

**The Chair:** That's true.

**Ms Pastoor:** Oh, okay. Don't tell my kids that.

**The Chair:** No. We deal with it as an insurance policy then.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. It's morbid. I hate to say it.

**Ms Pastoor:** No, no, that's fine. Just don't tell my kids that I'm worth more dead than alive.

**Mr. Oberle:** I'm sure my wife will be far too happy to hear that.

**The Chair:** No, please. We don't need those comments.

**Mr. Taylor:** It's taxed at a flat 30 per cent?

**The Chair:** Thirty-nine.

**Mr. Taylor:** At 39 per cent regardless of how you take it?

**The Chair:** Yes, that's right. Well, no, if you took it over 20 years, divide 20 into \$200,000. There's \$10,000 a year. Chances are you're not paying much tax at all if you have no other income.

**Mr. Taylor:** Sure.

**Mr. Oberle:** It depends on your other taxable income during the year that you take it.

**The Chair:** Agreed.

**Mr. Mar:** But there's no interest-bearing provision if you keep it in.

**The Chair:** There is not.

**Mr. Mar:** There's no advantage to keeping it in.

**The Chair:** There is none. That's right.

**Mrs. Ady:** Then could future Members' Services change the rules on you if you left it in there for 20 years? No, maybe not.

**The Chair:** This committee is mistress and master of its own fate. It may do as it chooses to do on behalf of the hon. members.

We need a vote on this matter. We do have a mover, do we not? We don't have a mover. We need a mover. Mrs. Ady. Seconded by Mr. Graydon. Discussion? All in those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried unanimously.

The last one basically deals with the transportation order moving the kilometre benefit from 36 cents to 37 cents effective April 1, 2008. Mrs. Jablonski has moved. Secunder, Mr. Mitzel.

**Mr. Taylor:** A quick question.

**The Chair:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Taylor:** I should know the answer to this, but please refresh my memory. The mileage rate paid to staff is higher than 36.

**The Chair:** Forty-four.

**Mr. Taylor:** It's 44 cents. That does not appear under Members' Services. Where does that come in the budget? That would be under human resources.

**The Chair:** Staff travel?

**Mr. Taylor:** Yeah. Exactly.

**The Chair:** Cheryl, Scott, where do you put it?

**Mr. Ellis:** If you're paying constituency . . .

**The Chair:** If we have to pay mileage, where do we find it in here?

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, it would be in the travel component of each individual branch and within the travel component on the constituency side of things as well.

**Mr. Taylor:** I guess what I'm really getting at is that there's no need for a Members' Services order.

**The Chair:** No, there isn't.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay.

**The Chair:** In the Legislative Assembly we follow the government. If the government after negotiations with the AUPE goes to 44 cents, we'll stay within 7 cents. That's why.

**Mr. Taylor:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** It's already been had.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** We have a mover. We have a seconder, Allison?

**Mrs. Quast:** Yes.

**The Chair:** All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That was carried unanimously again.

Is there any additional business arising out of our discussion? I think we've covered everything. I don't think we missed anything.

Thank you very, very much. The processing now and the paperwork for this will be done. I really do not envisage anything dropping out of the blue in the next couple of months with respect to this. Unless you insist on my calling a next meeting and scheduling it tonight, can we just leave it, then, as per the interest of the members to hold such meeting?

**Mr. Taylor:** Until the next big threatened rent increase, perhaps?

**The Chair:** I guess so.

Thank you very much, Clerk. Have we got everything we need from an administrative point of view?

Chief Parliamentary Counsel and other chief Parliamentary Counsel, have we got it all?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes. Sure.

**The Chair:** We haven't missed anything?

**Mr. Reynolds:** No.

**The Chair:** You're not coming back to me tomorrow to say that we missed anything. No?

**Mr. Reynolds:** No. I'm not prejudging that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Motion to adjourn? Mr. Taylor. That's good enough. We will adjourn. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 7:14 p.m.]

