



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
1:30 p.m.

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC), Deputy Chair

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Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL)**
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
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Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC)****
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* substitution for Steve Young

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1:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 27, 2013

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, it's 1:30 on the dot. I would like to commence this meeting if we have a quorum. Let me just go around and see if we do.

Let me start with Mr. Mason on the right. Please introduce yourself. If you are subbing for someone, please indicate who you are and for whom you are subbing. Let's start with you, sir.

Mr. Mason: Brian Mason, but not on the right.

The Chair: Going around, we're at Mr. Allen.

Mr. Allen: Mike Allen, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I'm here substituting for Mr. Young when he has to leave.

The Chair: Until then you are simply joining us as a visitor?

Mr. Allen: Exactly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Leduc-Beaumont. I'm substituting for the hon. Mr. Quest, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mrs. Jablonski: Good afternoon. Mary Anne Jablonski, Red Deer-North.

The Chair: Thank you.

Let's go to teleconference, starting with Mr. Goudreau. Mr. Goudreau, are you there?

Mr. Goudreau: Hector Goudreau, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

The Chair: You are there. Thank you, Hector.
Danielle Smith, are you there? Not yet. Okay.
Heather Forsyth?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. I'm here, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Just state your name, Heather, for the record.

Mrs. Forsyth: It's Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have others by teleconference or otherwise. Is there a substitute for Mr. Dorward?

Ms Quast: Mr. Khan is substituting.

Ms Calahasen: Here they are.

The Chair: Grab a spot and sign in, please. We are just going through roll call here, and we are at Mr. Dorward. We have not heard from Mr. Dorward, but I understand, Stephen Khan, that you are replacing Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Khan: That is correct.

The Chair: For the record would you state your name and constituency and whom you are subbing for.

Mr. Khan: My name is Stephen Khan. I'm the MLA for St. Albert, and I'm substituting for David Dorward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman, I think you're subbing for Dr. Sherman.

Ms Blakeman: Correct.

The Chair: Just state your name and constituency and whom you're subbing for for the record.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman. I represent the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, to which I welcome each and every one of you. I have been most fortunate to be asked to substitute for Dr. Sherman today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other MLA substitutes for anyone?

Have we now been joined by Danielle Smith? Still no Danielle Smith? Okay. We'll wait. When Danielle joins us, I will just ask her to chime in if she would.

At the table: Mr. Young, do you wish to clarify your presence?

Mr. Young: Yes. Steve Young, MLA for Edmonton-Riverview. To clarify, Mike Allen is going to be my substitute when I have to leave early.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Let's go now to others who are on the teleconference. Dr. McNeil, can you sign in, please.

Dr. McNeil: David McNeil, Clerk of the Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any others, then, who are joining us in an official capacity by teleconference? None?

Let's go to the table, then. We'll start with Ms Breault. Identify who you are and your position, please, quickly.

Ms Breault: Jacqueline Breault, manager of corporate services with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Ellis: Scott Ellis, director of financial management and administrative services, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mrs. Scarlett: Cheryl Scarlett, director of human resources, information technology, and broadcast services, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mrs. Alenius: Bev Alenius, executive assistant to the Speaker.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Law Clerk and director of interparliamentary relations.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services.

Ms Quast: Allison Quast. I'm the committee clerk.

The Chair: I think that's it.

I'm Gene Zwozdesky, chair of the committee, and I want to welcome all of you. Thank you for joining us in whatever capacity you are here, either in person or by teleconference or as a sub or as a visitor until you are subbing.

For those of you who are first-timers, please note that we do not require seconds for our motions. Some of you would know that; others wouldn't.

With that, we're going to get into the agenda in a moment, but two quick housekeeping issues. First of all, with respect to Speaker's visits to MLA constituency offices I've done two more visits since our last meeting of February 7, so that makes it a total of 26 offices that I have personally visited and had meetings with the MLA and/or with the MLA and his or her staff or in a few cases just with the staff but with the knowledge of the MLA.

The second quick update is with respect to members' expense reporting and an update on the MLA expense disclosure issue. You will all recall that we gave unanimous approval to a motion on this matter at our meeting of November 6, 2012 – that's the Members' Services Committee meeting – and at that meeting and pursuant to that motion LAO administration was directed to act upon our committee's resolution.

More specifically, prior to the April 30, 2013, deadline for the first public posting of information LAO admin is to have designed a process and a system to electronically extract specific expense information from our financial system and to insert that information into a newly developed report. Some reportings will be in dollar amounts, other reportings will be by the number of trips, others will be by the number of kilometres, others will be by the number of days, and so on, depending on the type and category of the expense or allowance.

In addition, a parallel process and system is being developed in order to separate out, to accumulate, to scan, to review, and to redact documents such as receipts, invoices, statements, and the like that support specific financial transactions in the report.

Ms Smith: Danielle Smith, Highwood.

The Chair: Thank you, Danielle.

The system is to facilitate electronic redaction, which, as we know, is the blacking out of personal or confidential information from the scanned supporting documents to strictly ensure that personal and confidential information is protected.

Now, once all of that has been done, the report and supporting documents will then be merged into one electronic document that will be sent to each member for his or her review prior to posting the reports publicly.

LAO staff are currently testing their newly designed process whereby a preliminary draft of the report has been prepared for January 2013 transactions only, and it has been sent to MS Committee members only for their feedback and comments. Each Members' Services Committee member has now received a unique preliminary draft report that reflects that member's own personal, individual expense information for his or her review as an MLA.

LAO has asked for feedback to this preliminary draft by February 28, tomorrow, and explained that changes may arise based on the feedback that we provide and on LAO's ability to make any suggested changes to the report or to the process.

Finally, the next step will be to send the January, February, and March 2013 reports and accompanying documentation as they become available to all members for their review. The quarterly report, which summarizes the three months of expense information for all members, and redacted supporting documentation will then be posted on the Leg. Assembly public website on April 30, 2013, as required by the resolution made and passed by this committee. Public viewing and scrutiny will follow thereafter.

I'll just close by saying that this is strictly a housekeeping update on where we are at with regard to MLA expense disclosure reporting. It is not up for discussion at this time. However, if you have questions or if you have concerns or if you have some

comments about this developmental stage that the LAO is at, please contact Scott Ellis, who is with us today, or Darren Joy, who works with Scott in the FMAS branch. So that's the update on that issue.

We are now looking for approval of the second revised agenda, so we're on item 2. If I could get a motion? Ms Calahasen has moved. Would you move it for the record, please?

1:40

Ms Calahasen: I move that we accept the second revised agenda for Members' Services.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on that? None?

The question has been called, then. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. If there are any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

We're moving on now to approval of the minutes from February 7, 2013. Could I get a motion, please, to accept those minutes of February 7? Ms Calahasen has moved. For the record would you move it, please?

Ms Calahasen: I move that we accept the minutes of the February 7 meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion?

Neither hearing nor seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. If there are any opposed, please say no. That is carried.

We're on to item 4 now, which is the purported point of privilege. I want to make a few opening comments with respect to this matter, which will outline a little bit about the process and the determination.

With respect to the question of privilege raised by Mr. Mason on February 7 during the meeting of this committee you will recall that some discussion did already occur. As part of that discussion Mr. Mason had offered to provide more information in the form of precedents, or words to that effect, but the chair has not received any. I'm sure Mr. Mason will clarify when he has a chance to speak. But for purposes of the record I have not received anything further.

Members will recall that this matter concerned a quote, tweet, unquote, by the Premier that morning, which referenced an issue that this Members' Services Committee had on its agenda for that day. Although the message in the tweet did not mention this committee, nor did it mention what we as a committee might do or decide with respect to that issue, it did state what members of the PC caucus were going to do on that day, February 7, regarding MLA pay and housing allowances. The tweet in question read as follows: "Proud of my #pcaa team for leading by example: PCs will freeze MLA pay and housing allowances today."

As a result, the matter was raised, a discussion occurred, Mr. Mason raised a point of privilege, and I advised that I would need to review this and come back to the committee with respect to the process that should be followed when a matter of privilege is raised in a committee of the Assembly. That is noted in the *Hansard* transcript from that meeting, MS-203.

As I stated then and will state again, I was not aware of this having occurred in recent memory. In fact, according to our historical records a point of privilege has never arisen in a meeting of a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Therefore, since this has never occurred before in Alberta, this is an opportune time to explain on the record for all members how a

question of privilege is to be addressed in committee and the process that is to be followed.

The parliamentary authorities provide guidance regarding the procedure for handling a question of privilege or contempt in a committee. In particular, I would refer members to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at pages 149 through 152. In fact, this process is also set out at page 47 of the Practical Guide to the Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

At the outset it's important to note that the chair of a committee cannot make a determination as to whether a matter constitutes a prima facie question of privilege. In fact, as noted in *Beauchesne's* at paragraph 107: "Breaches of privilege in committee may be dealt with only by the House itself on report from the committee." I would also like to point out our own Standing Order 65(3), which states:

(3) When a question of privilege arises in a committee [of the Assembly] . . .

(b) if the Assembly is not then sitting, the Chair shall adjourn the matter until the next sitting of the Assembly and shall then report to the Assembly.

However, before the matter reaches that stage, there are a number of other steps that must be followed. First, according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 151, the chair's role is "to determine whether the matter raised does in fact touch on privilege and is not a point of order, a grievance or a matter of debate." If the chair concludes that the matter touches on privilege, then the next step is for the committee to consider a motion as to whether the matter should be reported to the House.

At this juncture it is important for me to emphasize that in reviewing this matter, I am doing so in my role as chair of this committee, not in my role as Speaker of the Assembly. As chair it is not my role to decide whether a matter constitutes a prima facie question of privilege. Rather, it is to apply a test with a much lower threshold; namely, whether this is something that touches on privilege or whether it is (a) a point of order or (b) a grievance or (c) a matter of debate.

I would like members to also take note that a question of privilege may involve a matter of contempt. The authors of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* elaborate on this point at page 150, where they state the following: "Committees could report on instances of contempt, such as behaviour showing disrespect for the authority or activities of a committee, the intimidation of members or witnesses, or witnesses refusing to be sworn in."

Therefore, I want to emphasize yet again that I am only determining whether this matter bears some connection to the subject of privilege or contempt as opposed to determining whether this is a prima facie case, which is the test applied by the Speaker when in the Assembly.

In conclusion, here is my determination as chair. It is my view that this matter does meet the basic minimum threshold and that it is an appropriate matter to be decided by this committee as to whether the matter should be reported to the House. I leave it to the committee to determine how you may wish to proceed.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's customary to have the person who's bringing the point of privilege make their arguments as a first step, so I would request that that be the first step.

The Chair: What we need to do is follow the process here, so if you want to get the discussion started, then you'd have to make a motion.

Mr. Mason: A motion saying what?

The Chair: What I just read: to report, to refer this to the Assembly, that the committee consider this matter and report it to the Assembly, or words to that effect.

Mr. Mason: Okay. Then I will do that. I will move that the committee consider the matter of the point of privilege that I raised at the last meeting and refer it to the Assembly.

Mrs. Forsyth: I will second that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Mason: I have a suggested wording if I can just clarify.

The Chair: The gist of what you wanted to say is acceptable. If you wish to tidy the wording up a little bit, I'll give you an opportunity to do that, Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: Okay. I move that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services report to the Assembly the purported question of privilege as raised at the February 7, 2013, meeting of the committee.

The Chair: We have the motion on the floor.

Mr. Rogers: A point of clarification, Mr. Chairman, if I may.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Mr. Chairman, I listened intently as you read the procedure for this matter, but I find it . . .

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chair, people are going to have to identify themselves when they speak.

Mr. Rogers: Sorry. Mr. Chairman, for the members on conference, this is George Rogers, Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

I find it odd. And I'm searching for a better word. Again, based on what you read earlier, with the process that we're going down right now, Mr. Mason's motion, if this committee has a discussion and determines that something should go forward or not, it seems to me that the motion is ahead of the potential discussion. Or is it that we can't have a discussion without the motion?

1:50

The Chair: Let me explain. There are basically four steps involved in this. The first step has already been heard at the February 7 meeting, and that was that a member raised a point of privilege. The second step you just heard from me. That's for me to make a determination. You've heard my determination. The third thing is for the committee to present and discuss a motion, and the fourth step will be a decision on whether you support the motion at this table. That having been said, I hope that clarifies that.

Let's start with Mr. Mason. Let's keep the points short, brief, to the point and allow anyone who wishes to to speak once. We'll do our best, I'm sure, everyone, to avoid redundancy and repetition.

Mr. Mason, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We prepared a submission with all of the arguments and the precedents that we could find, and I have provided a copy to you now. It is somewhat lengthy, about seven pages long, so I beg your indulgence to get through it.

Mr. Speaker, as per our discussion at the February 7, 2013, meeting of the Members' Services Committee please accept the

following as my submission in support of my point of privilege. It was your indication at the time that this matter would be dealt with at the next Members' Services meeting.

I'm raising a point of privilege under Standing Order 15. It is based on the grounds that my ability to participate as a member of the independent Members' Services Committee has been obstructed by actions that have predetermined a decision that was not yet made by the committee. As per our legislative rules the committee in question must be allowed to work independently of undue influence by external bodies such as the Premier's office. Any actions that bring the independence of this committee into question should be seen as impeding the independent work of the committee and impinging on the dignity and respect of its members and the entire Legislature. I'm pursuing a point of privilege against the Member for Calgary-Elbow, Premier Redford.

Please allow me to go over the facts of the case. It will be followed by my arguments concerning how a breach of privilege has occurred. The first fact is that on the morning of February 6 the members of the Members' Services Committee were informed that a PC member would be bringing forward a motion concerning MLA compensation. Two, on the morning of February 7, 2013, prior to the commencement of the Members' Services Committee the Premier published the following on the social media site Twitter. "Proud of my #pcaa team for leading by example: PCs will freeze MLA pay and housing allowances today. #BitumenBubble #ableg." Three, during the aforementioned meeting a PC member put forward a motion to freeze MLA pay and housing allowance. This was the first time that opposition members had seen the content of the motion.

With regard to the timeliness of this point of privilege as per Standing Order 15(2) please note that I raised this point of privilege at my first opportunity during the February 7, 2013, meeting. During the meeting you, the chair, recognized that it would stand as a point of privilege, and I agreed to send you a written submission supporting my arguments, which I am doing now.

Erskine May describes privilege as "the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively . . . and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions." That's at page 75.

As you are aware, at the commencement of the First Session of each Legislature a number of committees are established, including the Members' Services Committee as per Standing Order 52(2). This committee is empowered under the Legislative Assembly Act to make on its own important decisions on issues such as the amount MLAs are paid. See in particular sections 33(1), 36, and 39 of the act.

It should be noted that in the past it was the role of this committee to simply make recommendations concerning MLA pay, which would ultimately need to go before the Legislative Assembly to be voted on. As we'll see below, given the power of this committee to make decisions on behalf of all MLAs, it has been established in our Legislature that this is an independent committee made up of private members.

As will be shown below, the tradition of the Alberta Legislature to date is to treat those committees as if they are populated by private members who toil on these committees on behalf of Legislature as a whole. Accordingly, the Members' Services Committee is often described as an independent committee of the Legislative Assembly. You could see the Speaker's ruling on April 17, 2007. As such, it is understood that the members are free to consult with anyone, including their fellow caucus members,

but are also to be free from the partisanship or influence from the Executive Council.

Interestingly, to my knowledge, nowhere in law, the standing orders, or accepted parliamentary authorities used to govern our Legislature does it describe how the independence of these committees is or should be maintained. However, the principle and general understanding that these committees are independent has been established by numerous rulings made by the Speaker of the Alberta Legislature as well as statements to that effect by various Premiers and cabinet ministers, as will be highlighted below, which have not been challenged by the Speaker. It can therefore be argued that this notion of independence has become part of the precedents and therefore the rules of our Legislature.

There are numerous examples whereby the Speaker has ruled that the proceedings of the committee cannot be directed or represented by the government. One example of this was May 14, 1992, when the Speaker ruled out of order a question by member Ray Martin pertaining to whether or not the Premier would agree to direct the proceedings of the Members' Services Committee in a certain direction. In his ruling the Speaker stated: "The government cannot answer on behalf of the whole committee . . . the government certainly cannot direct what happens to all the committee." That is found in *Hansard* of May 14, 1992.

Similarly, on February 19, 2009, MLA Hugh MacDonald had a question ruled out of order by the Speaker. The preamble of the question stated that the government made a decision to fire the Chief Electoral Officer at that time. The Speaker ruled that the question was out of order given that the decision was made by the Legislative Offices Committee and not the government and that questions of committee proceedings are generally not permitted in question period. In his ruling the Speaker stated: "The committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly, not a committee of the government . . . If there's going to be misunderstanding about this, then why have these kinds of committees?" That's found in *Hansard*, February 19, 2009.

Again, on December 1, 2011, a question by Liberal leader Raj Sherman asking the Premier about her decision to appoint Judge Justice Major to evaluate MLA pay was ruled out of order given that it was a committee decision to appoint the judge and therefore could not involve the Premier. In his ruling the Speaker stated: "That question is out of order. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly appointed the panel as per the direction of the Members' Services Committee." That's found in *Hansard*, December 1, 2011.

At the same time the Premier as well as numerous government ministers and MLAs have also maintained that committees of the Legislature are independent of government influence and direction. During the widely publicized choice of ostensibly the Legislative Offices Committee not to renew the contract of former Chief Electoral Officer Gibson, Premier Ed Stelmach was widely reported as saying that it was not his choice to get rid of Mr. Gibson. On February 17, 2009, he stated in the House: "Again, I don't make the decision on the employment of the Chief Electoral Officer . . . He's responsible and answers to the Legislative Offices Committee . . . they make that decision." The *Globe and Mail* quoted him as saying, "The decision was made . . . by the all-party . . . committee, and that's what we live by." That was accessed February 21 of this year.

On April 23, 1992, then Premier Don Getty maintained that the Premier is to have no influence over the Members' Services Committee. He said:

I also can't anticipate what the Members' Services Committee is going to recommend to us. We don't know. They may recommend some solutions, some proposals that none of the

members here are currently contemplating. Those are things that I really appreciate. It's an all-party Members' Services Committee. I'm pleased that they are going to be meeting, and I hope they can help the House with this matter [of MLA pay] that's currently before us.

That's found in *Hansard*, April 23, 1992.

On October 23, 2012, Premier Alison Redford described in detail how she understands that it is not her place to direct the proceedings of the Members' Services Committee. With reference to the committee's work with regard to Government Motion 11, to examine alternatives to the pension plan for members in the Major report from the 28th Legislature, First Session, she said:

This is a committee of the Legislative Assembly. Members who sit on that committee are fully able to explore the work that they do, as I understand it. My understanding is that the work of that committee was to review the recommendations of the Major report. I understand that that's what they did, and I don't understand that it's my role to direct the members of the committee to do anything.

That is *Hansard*, October 23, 2012.

She went on to say:

Mr. Speaker, as you have so rightly said . . . this is not a committee of the government. This is a committee of the Legislature that at some point will make a decision that we as MLAs will consider.

. . . That's why we have a Members' Services Committee. It is the job of MLAs, not the government.

2:00

Premier Redford has also gone to great lengths to describe how the Members' Services Committee should not be influenced by partisan politics. In reaction to information that the Wildrose caucus was going to publicly announce that they would be bringing forward a motion to the Members' Services Committee, the Premier stated during question period that "it is important for that committee to do its work without a partisan perspective." That is from *Hansard* of October 30, 2012. Following this statement, she went on to describe how she looks forward to the decision of the committee.

There are also countless instances where PC MLAs and government ministers have claimed that the work of the Members' Services Committee is entirely independent. One of the most recent is from October 31, 2012, when Human Services Minister Hancock, while speaking to the issue of MLA pay, said: "There is not a government policy with respect to MLA pay. That's the purview of the members, and that's a debate that's held at the Members' Services Committee." That's from *Hansard*, October 31, 2012.

Similarly, in 1983 future Speaker the hon. Ken Kowalski went to great lengths to describe in the Legislature how the Members' Services Committee is free from influence by the Executive Council. On one occasion he stated:

We don't have any cabinet members present on the Members' Services Committee, and I'm glad we don't . . . I believe that basically what we're looking at here are concerns that are brought forward to the Legislature by private members. They are not members of Executive Council. For the love of me, I have to repeat that.

That's from *Hansard* of May 19, 1983. He was a member of the Members' Services Committee at that time.

As described in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, parliamentary privilege can be extended to both individuals and to the House as a whole. With regard to individual rights this includes, for example, freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation. At the same time privileges

extended to the rights and powers of the House include the ability to regulate its own internal affairs.

As seen above, the Legislature of Alberta has seen fit to establish that special and standing committees of the Legislature work in a way that is independent. This concept of independence is especially held to in the case of the Members' Services Committee given its power to make policy decisions on behalf of all MLAs. It could be said that the notion of the independence of this committee, whereby the MLAs on the committee are expected to act as private members, is generally accepted as a rule. As such, it could be argued that the dignity and respect of the House is on occasion hinged upon the idea that these committees make certain decisions on behalf of all MLAs and not in the interests of the government. This is particularly relevant to the issue of MLA pay. It can therefore be argued that parliamentary privilege must extend to the ability of all members of the committee to have their individual right respected and that the right of the committee to be independent is a matter of respect for the House.

It should be noted that in my assessment this respect for the independence of committees is a peculiar attribute of the Alberta Legislature when compared to the federal Parliament. As described in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, committees in the House of Commons have delegated to them only the powers of inquiry and the authority to compel witnesses, not to make important policy decisions on behalf of all members. In general, these committees are there only to make recommendations to the House as the Members' Services Committee used to do with regard to MLA pay. They are generally seen as a benefit to the work of the Parliament. "It is more efficient to perform in small groups work that would otherwise be difficult to accomplish in an assembly of more than 300 members." That's at page 949.

When compared to the Parliament, the Members' Services Committee is most closely related to the Board of Internal Economy. The board contains both government ministers and an overall equality of government and opposition representatives regardless of the composition of the House of Commons. See *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 295. Given the composition of this committee its independence is never in question.

As a result of the committee process in the House of Commons the relevant parliamentary authorities which we use to govern the rules of our Legislature do not speak in particular to how the independence of committees must or can be protected. In other words, they do not expect these committees to work independently in the sense that we do in Alberta. Indeed, of the Speakers' rulings mentioned above, the most often quoted reference used by the Speaker was related to page 506 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. The section in particular reads:

Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees. Questions to the Ministry or to a committee Chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee, including its order of reference, may not be raised. Thus, for example, a question would be disallowed if it dealt with a vote in committee, with the attendance or testimony of Members at a committee meeting, or with the content of a committee report. When a question has been asked about a committee's proceedings, Speakers have encouraged Members to rephrase their questions.

That's at page 506.

On February 19, 2009, the Speaker also injected the following statement in between the above passages.

Questions to the Ministry on legislation or on a subject matter that is before a committee, when appropriately cast, are normally permitted as long as the questioning does not interfere with the committee's work or anticipate its report.

That is from *Hansard*.

These procedures are in place to protect the work of the committees and to maintain order in the House but have not been crafted in order to maintain the idea that committees work without the influence of the Executive Council or partisan politics. However, they have been used in our Assembly to find questions that allege interference of the Executive Council in committee work out of order.

This raises an important question. While interference by the Executive Council in the affairs of the Members' Services Committee can be seen as an important issue, the rules contained in the parliamentary tradition detailed in the parliamentary authorities prevent us from asking questions along these lines in the Legislature. How, then, do we maintain the independence of the committee? We may need to conclude that resorting to the parliamentary authorities in answering this question may be of limited use.

While the authorities may be limited in their ability to define and take measures to protect the independence of the committee, they do of course offer insight into the matter of parliamentary privilege and contempt. For example, *Erskine May* states that generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

That's at page 128.

However, *Maingot*, in the 2nd edition, notes that "as a working rule it can be said that when an offence is not identifiable as a breach of known and enumerated rights and immunities, then the offence is a contempt of Parliament." That's at page 224.

He goes on to describe how

3. Contempt is more aptly described as an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.
4. While privilege may be codified, contempt may not, because new forms of [contempt] are constantly being devised and Parliament must be able to invoke its penal jurisdiction to protect itself against these new forms.

That's at page 225.

Maingot also states that

disobedience to rules or orders [of the House or of a committee] represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated. Without proper respect, the House of Commons could not function. Thus, disobedience may well be considered contempt, bearing in mind that the House will, in mitigation of any punishment that may be imposed, be mindful of the surrounding circumstances.

That is at page 239.

When the Premier tweeted, "Proud of my #pcaa team for leading by example: PCs will freeze MLA pay and housing allowances today. #BitumenBubble #ableg," it is my contention that the Premier was acting in contempt of both the privileges of the Legislature and the individual privileges of all members of the Members' Services Committee. With concern to the privilege of the Legislature, by suggesting that the decision had already been made by an independent committee before it had a chance to put forward, let alone debate, the motion and make a decision, the tweet brought into question the independence of the committee itself and therefore acted as an affront to the dignity and respect that should be afforded to it.

While it has been said that the agendas of political parties rule the day inside committees, as shown above, it has always been maintained by the government and by the Speaker that decisions of the Members' Services Committee are not government decisions but those of independent MLAs. The fact that the Premier could announce the decision beforehand opens speculation that she was involved in the decision. Moreover, it suggests that PC members are working as part of a partisan team as opposed to acting as private members. The fact that the Premier would know the decision of an independent committee beforehand brings the entire idea of independence into ridicule.

As you know, only the Members' Services Committee can make decisions with regard to MLA pay and housing allowances. When the Premier stated that her team would be freezing allowances, this suggested that the power of the committee rests with the Progressive Conservative Association or with the government and not with the individual members of the committee. This statement is likely to cause confusion in the public as to the role of the committee, which should be viewed as an affront to the dignity and respect of the House.

Moreover, *Beauchesne's* notes that

to amount to contempt, representations or statements about our proceedings or of the participation of members should not only be erroneous or incorrect, but, rather, should be purposely untrue and improper and import a ring of deceit.

That is in section 62. Not only was the Premier's statement untrue given that only the committee can change MLA pay; it is my belief that the Premier was trying to deceive the public. The motivation for this is that by suggesting her party could make a decision to lower MLA pay, she as the leader of the government would receive the political credit for the decision when, in fact, the credit, if there is to be any, should only be held by the committee itself.

2:10

Maingot notes that "one of those matters of privilege is the right of the legislative body to control its internal affairs and proceedings free of interference from the Crown or executive, the courts or the public." That's at page 293. As stated above, it was through a decision of the Assembly that the Members' Services Committee was given its status of independence due mainly to the fact that it was to make important decisions on behalf of all MLAs concerning, among other things, MLA pay. This represents a significant amount of delegated authority. As such, the Premier's interference with the proceedings of the committee should be viewed as a case of the executive interfering in the internal affairs of the Assembly.

With concern to the individual privileges of members, the Premier can be seen to have interfered and obstructed the work of every member of this committee. As an independent committee its work should be seen to involve honest and full debate before decisions are made on important matters. For honest and full debate to occur, members must weigh all of the evidence before making the decision. Given that no debate on the motion in question had yet occurred, it should be impossible for the Premier to conclude that any member had made a decision on the topic.

By making public that a decision had been made, the Premier put the PC members of the committee in the most difficult of circumstances whereby if they were to vote against the wishes of the Premier, they would be subjecting the leader of their party to contempt and ridicule. This is not a situation in which honest debate can occur, robbing all members of the committee of their duty to engage in honest debate and properly considered decisions.

Maingot states:

As in the case of a Superior Court, when by some act or word a person disobeys or is openly disrespectful of the authority of the House of Commons or Senate or of their lawful commands, that person is subject to being held in contempt of the House of Commons or the Senate as the case may be; therefore it will be seen that the Senate and House of Commons have the power or right to punish actions that, while not appearing to be breaches of any specific privilege, are offences against their authority or dignity.

That's at page 14.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to find that in this case the Premier's undue influence over the independence of the committee should be viewed as disobedience of the rules of the Legislature and as an affront to the dignity of the committee and the Legislature itself, not just those on the Members' Services Committee. I therefore ask that you send this issue to the floor of the Legislature so that it might be examined as an issue of breach of parliamentary privilege and a remedy can be sought.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mason.

Just with respect to that last part, to clarify it for those who have joined us just recently, including, I think, Ms Smith – you joined us and left and you're back now, are you?

Ms Smith: Sorry. I'm just telling you that I've got a little background noise here, so I don't want to interrupt on the call.

The Chair: That's okay. All right. Thank you.

It's not up to me to make that determination, Brian. It's up to the committee, just to be clear.

A couple of other things really quickly, just to repeat very briefly. I'm going to ask each member who wants to speak once and to avoid as best they can repetition and redundancy in so doing.

Mr. Mason, you'll be allowed to conclude the debate at the end, so you'll be the exception, to speak twice.

Mrs. Forsyth: If you could put me on the speakers list, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mr. Young, followed by Mrs. Forsyth.

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I don't want to presume the decision of this committee on this motion, so I'll just try and make comments here. First of all, my compliments to the NDP caucus researcher. That was a very well-done submission and very well orated by Mr. Mason there, yet the conclusions are simply without logic and unfounded.

On several previous occasions we have allowed and acknowledged and accommodated members of this committee to consult with their caucus regarding issues. As the mover of the motion in question I don't apologize for consulting with my caucus colleagues, which I did. I consulted with my caucus on this issue, including the Member for Calgary-Elbow and, including myself, the 59 other members that I consulted with. I – and I shall repeat I – made this motion with the knowledge, not the direction of my colleagues. Speaking for myself, I not only was the mover of the motion; I voted in favour of the motion.

It has been a requirement of this committee to advise the chair of agenda items, which I had done and complied with in advance. I consulted, I discussed, I considered, and I moved the motion. I listened to the considerations of members from the opposition caucuses regarding this prior to our decision. I made my decision, and I voted the way I did based on my decision.

Specific to this committee I find it interesting that during the discussion we're having, all of a sudden members who are reviewing Twitter feel like they were influenced by Twitter. I mean, this is a new technological era. We've afforded members the ability to review Twitter and blogs and every other form of media while in this committee. I respect the independence of everybody here, and we all review all of those things as well as the input and submissions from everybody on this committee. At the end of the day, when the vote is cast, I cast that vote because of the input I hear and the decision I made and not because I was directed to.

Those are my comments. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth.

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm going to read into the record a letter that we sent to you on February 22, that I don't see included in any of the material that is before the committee members. That's what I want to start off with. It's dated February 22, and it's to you. It says:

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We are writing you today in advance of the next meeting of the Members' Services Committee to support the point of privilege raised in our February 7, 2013 meeting by Mr. Mason.

It seems very clear that, by making a public statement about what the government members on the Committee were going to pass before the meeting had even started, that the Member for Calgary-Elbow committed a contempt, if not a breach of privilege, by bringing this esteemed committee into ridicule and impeding the ability of [our committee] to do their duty.

We were completely taken aback, when, just minutes before walking into our meeting, we heard that the Premier had announced that "PCs will freeze MLA pay and housing allowances today," not only because it was so brazenly partisan, but because it completely undermined the role and status of this important committee.

As you know, committees are not officially partisan; for the most part they pride themselves on their non-partisanship. While the accusation is often made that the government majority predetermines the outcomes of our deliberations, and additionally that it is not even the members of the committee who make the decisions but rather the government leadership, until this instance these have been only accusations and the Members' Services committee has maintained an appearance of independence.

The House of Commons Procedure and Practice (2009) defines a breach of privilege as "any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members" (82). By publicly proclaiming the outcome before the committee had even seen a motion, disregard for the Committee's rights and powers would be an understatement. As a member who does not sit with the government caucus, we can tell you that we perceive it as a brazen attack on our rights as a member. We would also argue that it even put government members in an embarrassing position of having to follow through on a single course committed to publicly by their leader regardless of the arguments and alternatives that might be presented in the course of debate.

Another Parliamentary authority defines the broader category of "contempt" as:

"Other acts besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly by bringing such

House into odium, contempt or ridicule by lowering its authority, may constitute contempts." (Erskine May, p. 142)

While we would argue that the member for Calgary-Elbow met the standard above for a breach of privilege, there can be little doubt about whether she met this standard for a general contempt. The independence of our committees and the rights of the members on them to a full and fair debate are a core foundation of our parliamentary system.

It goes on to say:

By publicly prejudicing the outcome of our meeting on February 7, 2013, the member for Calgary-Elbow brought the whole assembly into . . . contempt and ridicule.

Accordingly, we hope you will grant Mr. Mason leave at our next meeting to propose a motion that the Committee produce a report to present to the Assembly on this disturbing matter.

It was signed by myself and the leader, Danielle Smith.

2:20

You know, I find it interesting. I listened intently to Mr. Mason, and I have to say the same as Mr. Young. He has done a very, very, very good job, a very in-depth job of presenting his argument on why we have to take this further.

What I found interesting are some of the comments that you have made, that this is the first time a committee has ever had to deal with this, that a point of privilege has never been raised. It's interesting where you have to start going in regard to how we should deal with this. You talked about that there are three – a point of privilege, a grievance, or a matter of debate – to determine what your next step is. You have obviously made the determination that we're at the next step of deciding as a committee whether this goes before the Legislature. So I'm looking forward to hearing from some of my colleagues that are around the table and on a conference call on their arguments on why it shouldn't.

What I find more interesting are Mr. Young's comments, when he said he was consulting with his caucus previously and that he doesn't want to apologize. I don't think anyone is asking for him to apologize about consulting with his caucus. Our leader has indicated on other occasions when we've sat on Members' Services that she would like the opportunity for her or myself to consult with our colleagues, and we do not have a problem with that.

What we do have a problem with, Mr. Speaker, is when a deliberate tweet goes out minutes before, congratulating their caucus in regard to decisions that have not even been discussed or debated. What is even more alarming to me is that the Member for Calgary-Elbow, our Premier, tweeted that she was pleased about the salaries, and she went on to talk about the temporary residence allowance, which is still under old business, under a discussion that we're going to go to today.

So while I appreciate what Mr. Young has said, I think we need to really focus on the tweet that went out prior and, in my mind, took the independence of the committee away and needs to be sent to the House so that the House can debate this. Quite frankly, what's happening now – and people, I know, are listening. Let Albertans absorb what's happening, let them come back to all of us, and let them decide about this.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I don't have any other speakers. Are there any others who wish to join in the debate?

Ms Blakeman: I regret that I don't have a large number of citations to give you, but you have a goodly number of them on the table already. I wasn't aware of this particular issue until last night, when I was subbed into the committee.

The question that we see before us is the publishing of a particular statement as it was published in an interactive mechanism on Twitter by the leader of the government, which was not – grammar becomes incredibly important here – a statement that was made in the context of, "I hope a certain action will happen," or "I wish that the outcome of this meeting will be such and such." It was a statement that was using a tense that indicated this was a done deal.

I appreciate that while the Member for Edmonton-Riverview didn't feel directed, particularly, when he entered the meeting, I think it strains credibility to believe that members of the government caucus are regularly in the habit of denying direction that is given from the Premier, and there's no doubt that that was a direction that was being given. It was a statement that it was done. One assumes that members came with that into this committee and made it so.

So the statement itself is important, the tense is important, the grammar is important, and the way it was portrayed is important. As I said, it wasn't wishful thinking. It wasn't given in a way that would lead anyone to believe that it was anything but done.

I think the other question at the heart of this is: are these committees independent? I'll tell you that having sat here now – I think as of the weekend I will be in my 17th year in this illustrious place. [some applause] I wouldn't be applauding if I were you.

It's long been a discussion point whether or not government members come into these independent committees with instructions on how to vote, and I will note that there are a number of documented instances where scripts were provided complete with people's names and what they were supposed to say. That's certainly happened. I've seen it. It certainly has been the practice of the government. This is the same government here today as was here five years ago, 10 years ago, and 41 years ago. I see no compelling evidence to tell me differently. Once I saw the proof of direction and scripts being provided, nobody has managed to convince me that that isn't still happening, so I tend to believe that it probably is happening.

I've also seen instances where people come into committees with questions written out for them and one particularly alarming case where a member of a legislative office's staff had a script provided for them, and they followed along with it. It was not a high point of our lives here in the Legislature.

This is a question of a rock and a hard place, suck and blow. If the independent members that are on this committee that also belong to the government caucus wish to try and convince us that they do not come in here with direction given to them on how to do it – well, you can go ahead and try and tell me that, but I've certainly seen the proof otherwise. The point is that this committee cannot pretend to be operating independently if it's being given direction on how to do it. We have a government caucus that has a majority, so if direction is given to a government caucus and it has a majority, it's going to get what it wants.

To conclude, I support the point of privilege, that the committee vote in favour of sending this issue forward to the Legislative Assembly. As *Maingot* said in 225, we do have new forms of contempt. This is a new form of it, where we have a publishing and social network of a direction given to committee members which results in an impediment to all members on the committee whether that be government members, who do not wish to have anyone believe that they have been influenced, or nongovernment members on this committee, who don't want to believe the

government members are influenced or that anything is a foregone conclusion.

This is an unhappy day for all of us. I support going forward to the Legislative Assembly for a conclusion of this debate.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Blakeman.

I have Mr. Rogers, followed by Mary Anne Jablonski. Are there others? Proceed, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I feel it necessary to add a few of my thoughts to this discussion. I think it's naive for any member around this table, be they from any particular caucus, to suggest that members do not come to these meetings with somewhat of a bias or a position from their various caucuses: those members around the table that have spoken already, others that have yet to speak.

2:30

I think that this particular situation is an opportunity for us to learn. I, for one, like most of us around this table, am still trying to wrap my head around what is Twitter and what role it plays in our society today. I have to tell you that I am very cautious, extremely cautious, how I use that medium. I think this was a very unfortunate situation, that this particular tweet, I believe is the proper term, was made at the time that it was. I still believe and I will always hold on to this belief that regardless of the biases or what have you or leanings that we all bring to these meetings, ultimately, until the final call is made and a meeting is concluded and any matters are finally discussed and concluded, nothing happens. That is the nature of the beast.

Frankly, I can remember as recently as within the last two months when I have sat in legislative committee meetings in this very building, namely committee room A, where members of the government, or the PC caucus, have voted with the opposition on matters that led the discussion in a much different way than some might have thought it was going to traverse, so to speak.

So while I believe that we can learn a lot from this very discussion we're having today, I'm struggling, Mr. Chairman, to understand or wrap my mind around what positive conclusions we might draw from taking this forward to a larger discussion in the Assembly. I believe the discussion here today is very healthy and helpful, and I think we can learn a lot. I think, just from the discussion here, that we will influence choices that are going to be made, particularly with the use of some of these social media vehicles in the future.

It's my hope that this matter will be concluded here today, Mr. Chairman. I personally don't see a need to take this beyond this meeting today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mrs. Jablonski. Are there others?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Chair, this is a question of clarification and understanding and process. I always understand that a ruling by the Speaker or chair of a committee is a serious matter. The chair in this case has ruled that the point of privilege does meet the basic thresholds of being a point of privilege. So I'm asking: am I understanding that correctly? If this committee does not send this to the House, does that mean we don't agree with the chairman's determination?

The Chair: No. The chair's role is to determine whether or not the issue that's been raised as a point of privilege touches on

privilege. I have determined that it does. Now it's up to the committee to decide what it wants to do about that.

A motion is on the floor. If you support the motion, then this issue will be raised in the Assembly, where points of privilege can only be decided; specifically, the *prima facie* issue. However, if you defeat the motion here, then that's the end of the matter.

Are you ready for a wrap-up, then? If Mr. Mason speaks, that will be the end of the speaking list, and then we'll call the question. Is that understood by everyone?

Ms Calahasen: Can I ask you a question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: A point of clarification from Ms Calahasen. Yes.

Ms Calahasen: When we're talking about the processes that we utilize, that's under the Commonwealth parliamentary processes, right? First of all, it's an adversarial system, one against the other, right? My question is: if we have that system and we always deal with these kinds of things, I'm sure all parties have different strategies that they bring. I mean, I see in some of our committee meetings that people read off their questions that they bring to the table. If we utilize that system, the Commonwealth parliamentary processes, once this is voted on, whether it goes through or it doesn't go through, are there any other processes that one can utilize to address this issue?

The Chair: The point of privilege specifically?

Ms Calahasen: Yes.

The Chair: Well, it's unique, and I know you'll enjoy reading my earlier comments when *Hansard* comes out. We've never had a point of privilege, that we could find, that was raised at the committee level. That's why it was important for me, working with Parliamentary Counsel – and we did a tremendous amount of research, and got it down to the bare minimum number of words as well – to point out clearly to you what the process is. The process is as I outlined. A point of privilege has been raised. Some early discussion occurred. Then there's a ruling by the chair. I make a determination, which I did. Then a member of the committee presents a motion, which gets debated and decided. We don't have much precedent to go on, none from Alberta, so we're relying on the authorities, several of which Mr. Mason has raised.

I'll go now to Mr. Mason to close debate, and then we'll automatically go to the question. Mr. Mason, the floor is yours for the second and final time.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. Just to clarify, Mr. Chairman – and this touches on Ms Calahasen's point – if the committee votes to send it to the Assembly, then it sort of starts like privilege would start at the beginning in the process in the Legislature. Is that correct? That's my understanding.

The Chair: That would be the process.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to members of the committee for their comments. I want to make, I think, a distinction. I think it is absolutely okay for members to consult in their caucuses on decisions that are going to be made in this committee. I even think that, you know, if there are whipped votes in this committee, that's a legitimate thing as well. If people want to read prepared questions – and I've done that because we have researchers to help prepare for this. To be really honest with you, I didn't write that thing that I just read.

Ms Calahasen: It was well written.

Mr. Allen: Well read.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. Thank you.

I don't think that's what this is about. I don't blame the PCs if they have caucuses, if they make decisions, even if they carry them out in the committee. It really comes down to the tweet itself, and the tweet itself announced a decision of this committee before it had been made. It put the committee under ridicule. It exposed the committee, I think, to the potential of publicly being embarrassed, and it was completely inappropriate.

I think that it put all members in a difficult position. I think it put government members in the most difficult position because, as I argued, they can't very well be persuaded by arguments in the committee and do something a little bit differently because their decision has already been announced by the Premier. So that is contempt, in my view, for us as individual members and for this committee.

2:40

The contempt is not in the actions of the PC caucus. The contempt is in the actions of the Premier's office, for which she is accountable. This is not a Premier who is well known for placing a lot of emphasis on her relationships, particularly relationships with people that might be considered subordinate. I don't like to be in that position. I'm perhaps in a better position to stand up on that kind of thing when it happens.

To me, it really is the contempt that was shown by the Premier and her communications office for us as members and the committee that I'm addressing. I don't mean to point the finger at my colleagues in other caucuses, who are just doing their jobs, not much differently than the way we do our job. They just have more people.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to say that I feel very strongly that our committee needs to defend its independence, and it needs to insist on respect from the Premier's office and the executive branch of government. This is, after all, part of the legislative branch of government, and we do have under the British system a division of powers and a tradition that the legislative branch is free from interference by the executive branch. This is a matter, in my view, of that type of interference, and it ought not be accepted by members of the committee regardless of their political stripe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you for those concluding comments.

We're going to proceed now with the vote. Mr. Mason has moved that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services report to the Assembly the purported question of privilege as raised at the February 7, 2013, meeting of the committee.

Please remember that only MSC members and official designates can vote. I have four official designates: Mr. Rogers for Mr. Quest, Mr. Allen for Mr. Young, Mr. Khan for Mr. Dorward, and Ms Blakeman for Dr. Sherman.

Mrs. Forsyth: If we could have a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Let's go around the table and identify ourselves. Those in favour of the motion, please state your names. We'll go down the list for those in favour.

Mr. Mason: Brian Mason, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman, the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

Mrs. Forsyth: Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

Ms Smith: Danielle Smith, Highwood.

The Chair: Are there any others who wish to be recorded as being in support of the motion?

If not, let me go to those who are against the motion, starting on my left side here.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mary Anne Jablonski, Red Deer-North.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Allen: Mike Allen, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Khan: Stephen Khan, St. Albert.

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

Mr. Goudreau: Hector Goudreau, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

The Chair: You are against the motion, Mr. Goudreau?

Mr. Goudreau: I am. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Accordingly, that motion is defeated, but I do want to thank everyone for a good, robust discussion both on February 7 and here.

With that, we'll now close item 4 and move on to item 5 in the second revised agenda, which is old business. The first one is item 5(a). It's an update from the working group on constituency office budgeting. Mr. Dorward chairs this committee, and he has provided a brief written report.

Is there someone here who has been asked to read it into the record? Mr. Khan, would you proceed on behalf of Mr. Dorward, then, please.

Mrs. Forsyth: Just on that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm a member of the committee, and I have not seen that report.

The Chair: I believe it's very unsubstantive, Mrs. Forsyth. If you'll just let Mr. Khan proceed with it, I think you'll see clearly what we mean. I've just been provided with a copy of it. It's just a matter of 60 words.

Stephen.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, on behalf of the chair, David Dorward. Mr. Dorward has stated to me personally that he's been very pleased and impressed with the co-operation of the associate chair, Mrs. Forsyth, in attempting to find a time for everyone to get together for this working group. Unfortunately, they have not been able to find a time that would work for everybody. The purpose of getting together on this effort was to work with the LAO staff to draft a motion which would move for the 2012-2013 fiscal year certain budget items to the MLA administration budget. The same for the 2013-2014 year except that some had already been moved.

Mr. Dorward has also passed on to me that he was hoping that he could co-ordinate with Ms Quast a time that would work for everybody on the working group at some time in the near future.

The Chair: Thank you.

So there's nothing really here to discuss at this stage, I don't think, because the committee has not had a chance to meet, but I'll ask, Mrs. Forsyth, if you wanted to add anything.

Mrs. Forsyth: No. I guess my only comment is what I said previously. As vice-chair I had not seen the report. It would only take about two seconds to hit so that others on our committee could see the report. We have had, as Mr. Dorward said, difficulty getting some very busy members together. We'll continue our work on behalf of the Members' Services Committee, I think, once we're back in session, when everybody is sort of planted in one place.

The Chair: Understood. Thank you.

I don't think that we need any further comment unless somebody really has a burning issue they want to raise or bring to their attention. No? Thank you very much.

Let us move on, then, to item 5(b), the temporary residence allowance. Hon. members, you will recall that at the February 7 meeting, consistent with the practice that we had earlier with respect to some motions that Dr. Sherman had, I asked Mr. Young to just read into the record the two motions he wanted to raise. It was agreed by the committee that we would not discuss or debate or decide them at that time. Mr. Young had moved at the time that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services direct Legislative Assembly Office administration to prepare draft orders for the committee to review, incorporating the recommendations outlined in the Proposal To Amend Members' Services Committee Orders, circulated at the February 7, 2013, meeting.

At the same time he also read a second motion into the record, which I'll share with you quickly. That's item 5(c). Moved by Mr. Young that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services direct Legislative Assembly Office administration to prepare draft orders for the committee to review, the intent being that when a member is required to travel more than 60 kilometres from their primary residence for the purpose of carrying out the member's duties, the member may claim expenses for travel, meals and accommodation, that are reimbursable under the public-sector travel directives with the member not being eligible to be reimbursed for expenses under any other provisions in the Members' Services Committee orders.

Those were the motions.

I'll pass over to Mr. Young's official designate, Mr. Allen, to lead off on how you wish to proceed.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Young has provided as well an amendment to the first motion, that I believe everyone should have received now. Or is that just coming out now?

Mrs. Forsyth: We have not received that.

Mr. Allen: Okay. Thank you. That's just being handed out now to those on the teleconference.

The Chair: Just a moment. "Mr. Young to move that the motion moved [on] February 7": that's the one you're talking about?

Mr. Allen: That's correct.

The Chair: Okay. Just give us a moment.

Has that now been circulated to the people who are here? Okay.

It's very brief, so I'll let him read it in a moment. In the meantime, how are we getting this to Mr. Goudreau, Ms Smith, and Mrs. Forsyth?

Mr. Goudreau: I have received a copy. Thank you.

The Chair: It's just gone. Heather, have you received yours?

Mrs. Forsyth: No.

Mr. Chair, if I can ask a question. In the notification of this meeting you were very, very specific and very clear about, you know, the 24-hour notice. I know that that talked about substantial additions or amendments or adding on, but I mean, really, I don't know why we can't follow that on this, too.

2:50

The Chair: Well, if you wish to, we can certainly make that determination, but the guideline that I provided and said to please follow is that if you have a substantive issue, please let me know so that we can put it on so that people can start thinking about it. Now, sometimes it culminates in a motion; sometimes it doesn't. The chair has no knowledge of that until it actually hits the floor. It has now hit the floor. I appreciate what you're saying, and perhaps that is something that we as a committee might want to think about when motions are contemplated.

Meanwhile, Mr. Allen, you have the floor. It's very brief, so if people could listen carefully, I'll have you read your motion as worded.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is actually a new motion; it amends that one. It actually says: Mr. Young to move that the motion moved at the February 7, 2013, meeting of the Members' Services Committee concerning temporary residence allowances be amended by striking out "direct the Legislative Assembly Office administration to prepare draft orders for the committee to review" and substituting "adopt amendments to the Members' Services Committee orders as distributed at the February 27, 2013, meeting."

We have attached as well a draft copy of the revised Members' Services Committee orders.

The Chair: Just to be clear, are you referring to two pages, or are you referring to all four additional pages?

Mr. Allen: I am referring to all four additional pages.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. members, what we're looking at here at the table are basically five individual pages, the first of which is simply the motion that Mr. Allen has read on behalf of Mr. Young. The second and third pages together would constitute revisions to the Members' Services Committee orders, with a members' allowances amendment order for our committee. In other words, it would give effect to what your motion was just all about, Mr. Allen.

The last two pages are revisions to Members' Services Committee orders, members' allowances amendment order. That, too, would be part of the consequences of your motion. The third page would be revised Members' Services Committee orders, administrative services amendment order, which is a consequential series of amendments that become necessary if the first two pass. That being the case, it appears to me that you're really dealing with 5(b), which is temporary residence allowance, and 5(c), MLA travel allowances, as one under this new motion. Is that right?

Mrs. Forsyth: Does that not, then, go to 6(b), MLA compensation, amendment to previous motion, under new business?

The Chair: No. The MLA compensation is to do with salaries, I believe.

Mr. Allen: These are expense allowances.

The Chair: These are expense allowances. Heather, under 5(b) we're dealing with the temporary residence allowance. That's the \$1,930-a-month issue for people who have temporary residences in the capital region, and 5(c) is the MLA travel allowances, which include travel and meals.

This has been broken out a little differently, though, in the amendment orders. The first one deals with accommodation allowance. We'll have Mr. Allen go through that as well as members' travel expenses. The second one deals specifically with consequential-type amendments regarding accommodation allowance.

Mr. Allen, would you proceed, then. Your motion is now on the floor.

Mr. Allen: Thank you. Perhaps I can clarify the motion a little bit for those on the phone if they haven't read it. Essentially, there were two motions moved by Mr. Young on February 7, and both motions stated that we move to "direct the Legislative Assembly Office administration to prepare draft orders." What we have here today is a draft copy of those orders, so we're substituting in those motions that we "adopt amendments to the Members' Services Committee orders as distributed at the February 27, 2013, meeting."

I assume, Mr. Speaker, we could even deal with them separately if the committee chose to separate them, but it does deal with both motions. It deals with the accommodation allowance, as was originally moved, as well as the travel expenses.

The members that are on teleconference right now should have received that by e-mail.

Mr. Goudreau: I believe I've got it all here.

Mr. Allen: Okay. In essence, the temporary residence allowance portion of this is suggesting that a cap would be instituted for allowances under section 6 of the members' allowances order and under section 3 of the members' committee allowances order to a total maximum amount of \$1,930 per month regardless of whether the Assembly is sitting or is in a period of adjournment.

Secondly, under the members' travel, when a member is required to travel more than 60 kilometres from their primary residence for the purpose of carrying out the member's duties as a member, the member may claim expenses for travel, meals and accommodation only, that are reimbursable under the public-sector travel directives. A member is not eligible to be reimbursed for any expenses that otherwise the member is able to be reimbursed for under any other provision of the Members' Services Committee orders. Therefore, that would not allow for any duplication of members being able to be reimbursed for specific expenses and make it far more accountable and transparent.

Mr. Mason: Well, that's helpful. I was really looking for sort of a side by side, what's there now and what this changes to, but I think that explains it. Maybe you could just describe a little bit what it says now, before this change that you want to make?

Mr. Allen: I could certainly attempt to do that, sir.

The Chair: We have people who deal with this 24 hours a day to help out.

Mr. Allen: I would prefer to defer that to a member of the Legislative Assembly Office.

The Chair: It's not terribly complicated, but when you don't deal with it all that often – can we go for some clarification here, Scott, to you or Jacquie? Which one of you would like to explain briefly what's there now?

Mr. Ellis: What are there now are provisions that allow members to claim sessional days when the House is sitting, and when the House rises, there is another allowance that kicks in for nonsessional periods of time. A nonsessional particular time period is claimable in two ways, on a by-day basis and on a monthly basis. So it goes back and forth between sessional and nonsessional. The nonsessional days are capped. The sessional days are not capped up to the maximum number of sitting days that are in a particular session.

Mr. Mason: At what rate?

Mr. Allen: Well, \$193 is the daily rate, and the monthly is \$1,930.

The Chair: The amount isn't changing as such. Some of the criteria surrounding it – it's \$1,930 maximum, either \$1,930 per month or \$193 per day to a maximum of 10 days.

Ms Smith: Mr. Chair, can I get on the list as well?

The Chair: Yes, Danielle. Thank you.

This is, of course, for members who are eligible, and perhaps you could just explain eligibility in a nutshell, living more than 60 kilometres from the Leg. and so on. Who would be eligible for this under the existing one? That's what his question is. What's the existing one, first?

3:00

Mr. Ellis: I'll read the specifics of the order.

5(1) A Member may claim an allowance for temporary expenses while in or near the City of Edmonton to facilitate that Member's public or official duties

- (a) where the Member's permanent residence is located 60 kilometres or more by primary highway from the Legislature Building, or
- (b) where the Member, other than a Member whose constituency is in the City of Edmonton, whose permanent residence is less than 60 kilometres by primary highway from the Legislature Building works 12 or more hours in a day for which the allowance [may be] claimed, including travel time.

It goes on to clarify permanent residence.

(2) "Permanent residence" referred to in subsection (1) means the residence the Member declares, in a form prescribed by the Clerk and filed with the Clerk's Office, to be that Member's permanent home with which the Member may maintain personal, legal, business, community or family ties, or which may be considered permanent by the Member through other criteria such as being the community in which that Member is counted for census and enumeration purposes.

The Chair: Okay. Good, Brian?

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Back to the speaking list. Mrs. Jablonski, followed by Ms Smith.

Dr. McNeil: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to get on the list, as well.

The Chair: Thank you, David. Okay.
Mary Anne.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Just as a point of clarification, once again, on page 2 that accompanied the motion we're talking about members' travel expenses, and it says:

- 7(1) When a Member is required to travel to a location within the province that is 60 kilometres or more by primary highway from both
- (a) his or her permanent residence, and
 - (b) the Legislature Building.

My question is on the definition of primary. What is considered to be a primary highway? The reason I ask this is because I know that our northern MLAs and possibly some of our southern MLAs who have extremely big constituencies may not have a lot of primary highways, which I consider to be something like highway 2. What is the definition of primary, please?

The Chair: I'm glad you asked because I asked the very same question two hours ago in preparation for this meeting. I know exactly what you're talking about. So here it is. By the way, I'm quoting from a definition of provincial highways in Alberta. Here's what it says:

All of Alberta's provincial highways are maintained by Alberta Transportation . . . a department of the Government of Alberta, and all of them have been designated by [Alberta Transportation] as "Primary Highways" since 2000/2001. The Primary Highways are divided into two series, the "1-216 Series" makes up Alberta's core highway network, has the highest traffic volume, and are mostly paved. The "500-986 Series", formerly known as the "Secondary Highways", provide more local access, and include a large number of gravel highways.

The short and long of it all is that all the highways by this definition are considered primary.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, if I may, in my case I live on a gravelled municipal road. It's not a provincial highway and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the province.

The Chair: But you're more than 60 kilometres away from Jupiter.

Mr. Goudreau: I agree.

The Chair: So you're okay.

Okay. So that clarifies that. Was that all, Mary Anne?

Let me move on. I think I have Ms Smith next, followed by David McNeil.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wanting some clarity on page 2 where it talks about section 7(2): "When a Member is required to travel to a location within the province that is 60 kilometres," and so on, and it says that "the Member may claim expenses for meals at the per diem rates set out in the Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expense Directive issued by Treasury Board." Now, I have never claimed anything under that, so I don't know what those levels are. Could you actually just clarify what those levels are and when a member would be able to claim them?

The Chair: Sure. For breakfast the maximum is \$9.20; for lunch the maximum is \$11.60; and for supper, or what some people call dinner in the evening, the maximum is \$20.75 for a total of \$41.55. Does that answer your question, Danielle?

Ms Smith: It does. But just so I'm clear, we have, I think, in this year's schedule 39 days of session. Are our members able to claim

this meal allowance for those 39 days of session, or is the amount that they're getting, the \$1,930 cap, supposed to include meals as well?

The Chair: I'm not sure that I quite exactly got where you were going with that.

Ms Smith: I'm just wondering. It says here under 6(1) that it's accommodation allowance. There's \$193 per day to a maximum of 10 days or \$1,930 in the calendar month. The way it's written, it appears to just apply to accommodation, which would suggest that you're also, in addition to that, able to claim a maximum of \$41.55 per day on the meals. That's what I'm just seeking some clarity on. The \$1,930 cap: is that just for accommodation, or is it meant to include accommodation and meals? I've had a member ask me. If they've got a capital allowance of \$1,930, are they also able to claim the \$41.55 per day for meals under the second part, under 7(2)?

The Chair: The short answer is yes. You've hit on a very important point, which, if Mike didn't mention it, I'd like to just mention. That is that they have now with this motion, from first look and in my opinion, at least, clarified something that has always been a little bit of a grey area, and that's the term "temporary residence allowance." Under that old formula of temporary residence allowance some people thought it was just accommodation; others thought it was accommodation and meals; others thought it was accommodation, meals, and incidentals. So what they've done here, Danielle, is that they've specified very clearly that section 6 deals with accommodation; in other words, a place to sleep. Section 7 deals with travel expenses, and it explains what that means.

Now, Mike Allen has greater clarity on it with the other part of your question. Go ahead, Mike.

Mr. Allen: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that when the question was raised by Ms Smith, she was speaking specifically to section 7 under the travel expenses. I think it is important to note that this amendment and the substitution going in here is for when members are 60 kilometres or more by primary highway away from both his or her permanent residence and the Legislature Building. So this is to deal with items over and above or business that's being conducted in other parts of the province whereas previously we were just looking at a straight \$193 allowance up to 10 days per month, and that would include accommodations, meals. That's where I think the grey area was.

In this case – and I was speaking with our colleague Mr. Rogers earlier – he would say that if he was somewhere, he would claim \$89 for his hotel. So it's an actual expense for the hotel and a per diem for meals, that would not require receipts for the meals.

The Chair: Just to add some clarity, Rob Reynolds, before we go back to Ms Smith and then David.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I hope it adds clarity. There is the provision in the proposed section 7(2). Just to be clear, as everyone said, it would be in addition to the \$193 a day or the total of \$1,930 a month that a member who qualifies – and this would only apply to members who qualify, from more than 60 kilometres outside of Edmonton – for that portion of it could claim the meal allowance.

Now, if you are travelling anywhere 60 kilometres from your constituency and 60 kilometres from Edmonton, you can still claim meal allowances.

Am I right, Scott? Yes.

Ms Calahasen: Like the opposition when they travel all over. They can claim that.

3:10

Mr. Reynolds: Members, I know that you're more than capable of debating this. I just wanted to get this out here on the table right now.

I just also want to say that under the proposed 7(1) members are also entitled – this is like it is now in the orders – to 10 overnight stays in a fiscal year, once again, 60 kilometres from your permanent residence and 60 kilometres from the Legislature Building. So that's in another part of Alberta. It wouldn't qualify for what we used to call the capital residence or when you're attending the Legislature, but you can go on 10 trips to other parts of the province, and you can be reimbursed for that.

Ms Blakeman: So I'd qualify for that.

Mr. Reynolds: Ms Blakeman, you would qualify, depending upon where you were going, yes.

Ms Blakeman: As long as it's 60 kilometres away.

Mr. Reynolds: Yes.

Ms Blakeman: But I do not qualify for the first part.

Mr. Reynolds: Edmonton members would not be entitled, as I understand it, to the meal allowance for sessional days or activities in Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay. I think we've had a lot of great clarity here.

Let me go back to Danielle. You had the floor. Do you have any additional comments, Danielle?

Ms Smith: No. That's fine. Thanks. That clarifies it for me.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Let me move on, then, to Dr. McNeil.

Dr. McNeil: Yes. I have a question. There are a few members – I think it's four – that don't declare a temporary residence. So if they're up in Edmonton during session for, let's say, 15 to 20 days and they stay in a hotel that, let's say, averages \$150 a day in costs, for 20 days that would cost them \$3,000, but they would only be reimbursed for \$1,930. Is that the intent for those members who do not have a temporary residence and have to, you know, stay in a hotel, for example?

The Chair: Well, that would be how I interpret it. I don't know.

Mr. Allen, did you want to offer a comment?

Mr. Allen: I believe that most members that live outside of the city of Edmonton or 60 kilometres away from the Legislature for the most part anticipate that and have made arrangements for a temporary residence either by renting or purchasing in Edmonton.

Dr. McNeil: My point is that that's not the case.

Mr. Allen: But it's not the case with this, yeah.

Dr. McNeil: There are four members that have not declared a temporary residence.

Mr. Allen: But they're still limited to \$1,930 per month. That is my understanding.

Dr. McNeil: Okay. So that means that for those members who want to stay in a hotel – for example, if they stayed at the Matrix, which charges, I think, a total of \$150 a day – they'd be out a thousand dollars if they stayed in Edmonton for 20 days during session. Is that correct?

Mr. Allen: That is my understanding, yeah.

Dr. McNeil: Okay.

The Chair: That would be how I'd interpret it.

Is that it, David, from your end?

Dr. McNeil: Yeah. I just wanted to make that clear because there may be a situation where members who choose not to declare a temporary residence may be impacted negatively by this approach. That's all.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Chair, if I may, I believe the \$1,930 was established, you know, quite some time ago. It was \$1,930 when it first started. Then the additional per-day claim was to offset what Dr. McNeil is talking about. Now we've eliminated that, so some members, as Dr. McNeil is indicating, will get caught short here.

The Chair: So it would appear, but let's carry on with the discussion.

David, we will probably be referencing your issue again a little bit here.

Mr. Mason: Well, you know, I'd like to know if that's an intended consequence of the motion. If not, then are you prepared to accept some sort of accommodation for those people?

Mr. Allen: My understanding of the intent of the motion initially was – and I don't think that when the motion was drafted, that was understood or that the author of this motion was aware that there were four members that have chosen not to declare a temporary residence. I think the intent of the motion is to try and put the appropriate limits as to what the taxpayers of Alberta would expect their MLAs to spend on living and accommodations while doing business in Edmonton. This motion is setting that out in a very clear, defined manner. So I honestly couldn't answer that any further other than to say that we were probably not aware that there were members that have not declared that.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Chairman, I think this speaks to the wisdom of the original motion of establishing the principles that we want to establish and referring it to our staff to prepare something that covers all of the bases rather than drafting it entirely in a final form and then bringing it forward. I wonder if the hon. member would accept a motion to accept it in principle and to refer it back to staff in order to resolve the issue that's been identified.

The Chair: Let me just leave that on the record while I go to Ms Blakeman, followed by Ms Calahasen. We'll come back to your request in a moment.

Mrs. Forsyth: Could you please add me, Speaker?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Well, it's on the same point. Currently there is an option for members who live further than 60 kilometres away from the Legislature Building. They can choose to rent an apartment, purchase a condominium, or stay in a hotel. The passage of this particular wording would mean that no matter what

they do, there's a cap, and they're only going to get that particular amount of money. So for most people I think it would preclude staying at a hotel. I've had a colleague, Gary Dickson, who chose to do that, and he often would either fly or drive home and drive back the next day overnight, so when he did stay, he stayed in a hotel. I don't know that this option would allow him to do that any longer.

Ms Calahasen: The question I do have is to David. Are you still there?

Dr. McNeil: I'm still here.

Ms Calahasen: Of the four that do not claim temporary residence, do they not claim it throughout the year as well? This is throughout the year for whatever it is, \$1,930.

Dr. McNeil: They claim it on a per-day basis when they're in Edmonton.

Ms Calahasen: Only when they're in Edmonton?

Dr. McNeil: Correct.

Ms Calahasen: Okay. So if they're from out of town, then they have an opportunity to be able to make up for that amount if it's going to be \$1,930 for 12 months.

Dr. McNeil: Only if they have a temporary residence. They have to declare it and demonstrate that they have a temporary residence. I'm talking about the people that don't have a temporary residence.

Ms Calahasen: Yes, I understand. Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: You know, this looks to me – and, Mr. Allen, you can clarify this – like an attempt to kind of standardize it, to put everybody under the same umbrella so that we wouldn't have situations like what David is talking about, where all but four members have type-A accommodation on a temporary lease/rent/buy basis and others don't. They just use hotels when they need them.

Mr. Allen: My understanding is that it was set out to have a very clear cap, as Ms Blakeman mentioned, on what living expenses should be. If member A is 200 kilometres away from Edmonton and is spending \$1,900 a month and member B, who's also 200 kilometres away, is spending \$3,000 or \$4,000 a month, is that appropriate? Can we just clearly define what is the appropriate living expense while on business in Edmonton?

The Chair: That's what I'm saying. It standardizes it to a degree. Ms Calahasen, you're finished?

Ms Calahasen: Yes, I am. Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chair, I agree with where some of the members are going. I personally don't know who the four members are who do not have a temporary residence. I can tell you that a couple of my previous PC colleagues, men – I'm sorry; I don't want to make anything of it here – preferred to stay in a hotel without seeking a temporary residence and having the upkeep of an apartment and those things. I can understand that in session, as David alluded to, it might get expensive, but if you average that out over the 12 months, I would imagine that it would probably equal out to just about what everyone else is getting. I certainly

wouldn't want to have to force the four members that David has alluded to to move into a temporary residence if they're more comfortable in a hotel.

I would suggest that we put aside this motion and come back to it at another meeting once we get some clarification from David. I'm not sure if under privacy legislation he can share who the four members are, but I think they have to be consulted, and we have to find out exactly, you know, the situation they're in. Would it be appropriate to put this motion to another meeting?

3:20

The Chair: Two quick points. David, I don't know who the four members are, and I don't think it would be cricket to name them. Please, let's understand that.

Dr. McNeil: No. I agree. I wouldn't reveal that information.

The Chair: Yeah. But it's a very good point that Heather raises, which is similar to what Brian mentioned. Should we just accept this in principle and move on? I don't know what the committee wants to do, but let's go on and find out more information.

Mrs. Jablonski.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that Dr. McNeil has raised a very good issue that we did not look at in the beginning. I know that in the beginning, when somebody is elected or when they come to Edmonton for the first time, it's difficult and it's very time consuming to find an apartment or a condo. It may take you four months or more to do that. If there is no regulation for accommodation if you do not claim a temporary residence allowance – and I understand that you have to have a place; you have to have a signed contract in order to claim a temporary residence allowance – for the first four, maybe even six months of coming to Edmonton for the first time while you're looking for your apartment or your condo or whatever it is that you might be looking for, I think that it would be only fair and right to consider that this is a really good motion.

I would support it, but maybe we could go along with what Heather Forsyth has said and defer this while the staff looks at including perhaps an exception to this rule when someone is not able to claim a temporary residence allowance for the reasons that I cited.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to go to Mr. Mason for a quick comment, and then we'll have a 10-minute comfort break, and maybe people can chat amongst themselves and decide what they might want to do.

But before we conclude for a break, let me go to Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: Okay. Thank you. I just want to be clear that someone might use a hotel when they're here and that doing so and not paying anything while they're not here might actually be cheaper than taking out a temporary residence. Is that a fair statement? By forcing people to take out a temporary residence through this policy, we're actually costing taxpayers more money. Is that right?

Dr. McNeil: Yeah. That would be the case, from my perspective. That person can't claim the \$1,930 a month if they don't have a temporary residence, so they could only claim the days that they're in Edmonton outside of session.

The Chair: They also have to provide proof. They have to show our LAO staff the copy of the lease or the deed or whatever.

Mr. Mason: If the objective is to demonstrate that we're fiscally responsible and so on, I think, you know, it might not be what we're after.

The Chair: Okay. It is 3:23, so we're going to adjourn for 12 minutes for a comfort break and start at 3:35. Let us take 12 minutes for a comfort break, and we'll resume at 3:35. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 3:24 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. I think we're all reassembled. Mr. Mason indicated that he had to leave for another engagement, so we are all here.

Heather, are you there?

Mrs. Forsyth: I am.

The Chair: Danielle?

Ms Smith: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Danielle.
Hector?

Mr. Goudreau: I am. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
David McNeil?

Dr. McNeil: I am.

The Chair: Okay. Is there anyone else on teleconference that I need to know about? No? All right.

Let us proceed onward. We were in the middle of an interesting discussion on the combination of old business items 5(b) and (c). Are there any other speakers at this time to this motion? Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just speaking to what we're trying to do here with this piece on the \$1,930 versus some individuals who may use the hotel option, it would seem to me that a prudent way to move this forward would be, I guess – and I'm not suggesting that we split the motion – if we got some clarification for the next meeting from the staff in terms of what it means for individuals, whomever they may be, or maybe others that might choose that hotel option. Having that information between now and the next meeting, we would just deal with that piece and conclude this matter at the next meeting because I certainly don't see any need to rehash the rest of it but this one little piece.

It would seem to me that the intent of the motion was to sort of tidy this up from a fiscal standpoint in terms of what these costs ought to be. But if we jam everybody into the same box and take away the option for individuals that might use that hotel option, which potentially, from what I've heard, could cost us less, then I don't think we would achieve what the mover had intended.

Those would be my thoughts.

The Chair: Thank you.
Are there any other thoughts?

Mrs. Forsyth: You know, there are things that need to be clarified. I think Mr. Rogers was correct in what he talked about and Dr. McNeil in what he brought forward, that he's aware of four members who do not have temporary residences and that they spend time in the hotel. I personally am not opposed to that. What

I would like to just get a clarification on is, again, in regard to the MLA travel allowances and the meals. Just so I understand, so I'm not confused, originally you could claim the session days, \$1,930 plus meals. Am I right?

The Chair: Scott will clarify.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Chairman, under the former order with respect to temporary residence allowances the \$193 was intended to cover both accommodation and meals while in Edmonton, but now and as is proposed, they've separated the accommodation element from the meal element. The accommodation element is dealt with in 6(1), I believe, and the meal element is dealt with under 7.

Mrs. Forsyth: Scott, just for clarification, what this does is takes away the \$193 daily rate that you could do when you were in session, and the residential allowance is a clear \$1,930, period. Can you still claim meals under that \$1,930 when you're in session?

Mr. Ellis: No, because under 7(1) it talks about the fact that it has to be outside Edmonton.

Mrs. Forsyth: I just need to get some clarification on that so I understand. The meals that we're referring to: living in Calgary, if I have to go to Medicine Hat for a meeting, then I can claim the meal – right? – because it's past the 60 kilometres from either Calgary, my permanent home, or Edmonton, my temporary residence.

The Chair: Why don't we just read this. Do you want to read it, Rob? Section 7(2) reads as follows.

Mr. Reynolds: Yes. Well, 7(1), I guess, would be the first part.
7(1) When a Member is required to travel to a location within the province that is 60 kilometres or more by primary highway from both

- (a) his or her permanent residence, and
- (b) the Legislature Building

for the purpose of carrying out his or her duties as a Member, the Member may claim, upon production of a receipt, the cost for his or her overnight accommodation . . .

That was overnight accommodation.

. . . to a maximum of 10 overnight stays in a fiscal year.

(2) When a Member is required to travel to a location within the province that is 60 kilometres or more by primary highway from his or her permanent residence for the purpose of carrying out his or her duties as a Member, the Member may claim expenses for meals at the per diem rates set out in the Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expense Directive issued by Treasury Board.

Now, the point of that is that if you do come to Edmonton and your permanent residence is more than 60 kilometres away from Edmonton, you can claim the per diem amount for meals under this proposed order.

Mrs. Forsyth: While you're in session.

The Chair: Regardless.

Mr. Reynolds: Regardless.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: If you're on MLA business and you're more than 60 kilometres from your permanent residence, you are eligible.

Mrs. Forsyth: I got it now. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. It's tricky. I'm not poking fun. It's tricky. I asked a lot of these questions myself during the break here.

Okay. Let me go on. Are there any other speakers?

It sounds to me like we have a choice here. We can either vote on this motion, or we can adjourn this motion to the next meeting, or we can accept it in principle and say that we're in agreement with everything except for this part that needs clarification and give the committee some chance to talk with their caucuses, their colleagues, and whatever. I'm at the mercy of what the committee wishes to do.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Chair, we had new information introduced to us today at this meeting. That information came from Dr. McNeil, who let us know that there are some members that do not have a temporary residence, so they wouldn't fall under this order of temporary residence. I think we need to examine further what that means. I still maintain that for new members coming to Edmonton, there should be a way that they can claim their first few months or whatever while they're looking for a place to live and looking for a place to sign a contract, which is what you need to claim a temporary residence. I think that in fairness to new members or future new members coming into Edmonton and to those who haven't been able to find a place at this time, we should look at this more carefully because, like I said, it was new information brought to this table today. I'd like to adjourn this today.

The Chair: Mrs. Jablonski has moved that we adjourn debate on this issue today and bring it back to the next meeting of this committee.

Mrs. Jablonski: It would be my hope that we could examine this new information further and maybe get some advice on wording from our LAO staff, who know it so well, and of course there is the legislative wording we have to worry about, too.

The Chair: Without having to go through the entire discussion all over again.

Mrs. Jablonski: Exactly. Just that one point.

The Chair: The only reason I'm saying that is because we have a number of subs here today, who will share with their colleagues, I'm sure, but it could be a whole different set of faces next time around, and we could start the discussion right from scratch, which I don't mind doing. I just want to make sure everybody is clear on what we're doing.

Ms Calahasen: I'm just wondering: are you saying that we accept this in principle and then bring back that component with that exception?

The Chair: Well, it's a motion to adjourn debate on the motion, but there's an underlying understanding of why it's being adjourned, and I think that's what Mrs. Jablonski's point was.

Ms Calahasen: Okay.

The Chair: On the motion to adjourn, Mr. Mike Allen.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think Mrs. Jablonski's comments are very valid. We did receive new information, I think. Even though he's not here right now, I think we can remember that Mr. Mason mentioned the unintended consequences and the potential that if we were to force some of these members into a new structure, it could in fact cost more money to the taxpayers. If they averaged it out over 12 months, are they actually spending an average of \$1,930 a month?

3:45

So I would certainly think it would be valid and appropriate for us to get more information to make the appropriate determination as to whether or not that's the best way to go. But I think the intent there is to ensure that we're not exceeding that amount of \$1,930 per month.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

So we have a motion here. Are you ready for the question, then? It's the motion to adjourn debate on this matter.

Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: Okay. The question has been called. Those in favour of Mrs. Jablonski's motion to adjourn debate on this matter and to bring it forward to the next Members' Services Committee meeting, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no. Accordingly, that matter stands adjourned at debate.

We will move on to the next item, which is new business, item 6(a), interparliamentary conferences and seminars. This was an issue that Mrs. Forsyth wanted to put on. Heather, could you start off, please.

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have given you proper notice of this particular motion, and I have actually forwarded a motion to all members as of yesterday so that they can see it. What I'm proposing is to take your travel budget for MLAs who go to parliamentary conferences and cut it by 50 per cent. Now, I'd like to just explain what I'm presenting. It's entirely up to you on which conferences you send people to, but what I'm suggesting here is that instead of sending six representatives, you send three, or if there's a parliamentary conference you feel isn't worth while, you forgo that.

In the times that we're seeing with the budget and all of the things that are happening right now with the government, both Danielle and I had brought to your attention when we were talking about your budget our concern in regard to the deficit that the government would be facing. We have spoken, as has been indicated in the conversation earlier, on forgoing MLA allowances. We're now hearing about the government talking in regard to freezing managers' salaries, looking at cutting back 10 per cent of the government's management.

I am asking the committee to support this particular budget on conferences that MLAs attend. I know that you have had a huge increase in funding for hosting the 51st Canadian regional conference of the Commonwealth, which I understand is every 12 years, plus we're doing another parliamentary association in July of this year and an annual parliamentary counsel conference in September of 2013, so that certainly will give us some exposure.

I'm asking the committee to support this. I have also included in it that we continue for the next three years following some of the government's initiatives on what they're proposing and what has been proposed before this committee. I'm, in essence, asking for support of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Heather.

I just want to interject here from the chair's perspective to say a couple of points. First of all, thank you for advising us well in advance that you intended to bring this forward and for providing us with a sketch of what the issue was. That having been said, however, I think I have to tell all committee members that the budget for the LAO was discussed. It's been approved, it's been signed off, and it's gone. So we have little ability to pull it back at this stage. It's being tabled next week. But if I read your intention,

Heather, it's for me in particular, when I'm making the decisions, to consider not always sending the maximum amount allowed and to be cognizant of the dollars and to pare down, and I would undertake to do that.

The other point, however, is with respect to the three different areas that Heather has mentioned. For example, under House services there's a travel budget of \$247,000. Please keep in mind that that amount is basically for a variety of things that includes everything from constituency visits by the Sergeant-at-Arms and security visits. There's some travel for pages in there. There are some conferences for *Hansard* individuals, for our broadcast individuals, for our communications individuals, for clerks, and so on. In fact, there's also MLA professional development built in there, as you have said. But it's not all under my direct influence, if you will. I certainly do the choosing of who goes to where as MLAs, but the other ones are more staff oriented.

With respect to the \$167,000 travel budget, that's for legislative committees. In particular, there are two groups that come under this one. One is Public Accounts, which do their own thing. The one small exception to that is the one I just sent out to newly elected members for a conference in June, where they're specifically asking for newly elected members to attend a professional development thing for Public Accounts Committee members. The other one is COGEL, which is that governance and ethics law committee. That's conference and travel expenses and so on that affect the Ethics Commissioner, the Chief Electoral Officer, and so on.

So we don't have a whole bunch of room to move here with the exception of what I said earlier, and that is that I can certainly try and pare back and not send the complement of MLAs to some of these personal development seminars if that's your wish.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, if I may, Mr. Speaker. Under your budget for MLAs to travel not only in the country but in North America and, quite frankly, across the world, you must have a specific amount that is used for that.

My other comment. You talked about your budget. We've discussed it, it's been approved, and it's been signed off. I appreciate that; there's no question. But having said that, we're also talking about freezing MLA salaries, which is part and parcel of the percentage that was approved in that budget. We're now talking about sessional days versus nonsessional days, which you have incorporated into your budget. We're also talking about a travel allowance, which was also part and parcel of the budget discussions. I guess, you know, the rules: I'm not sure if they're the same or if they're different.

Again, back to your question. You must have a specific budget for MLAs for travel to conferences.

The Chair: We have an allowance, Heather – you're quite right – for MLA professional development, which includes travel, which includes accommodation, and it includes meals for those who are eligible to go, and we also have that large jump that you referred to. Thank you for the way you did that. Our budget for hosting is going to be about \$157,000. That's the CPA regional conference in July, which is, as you said, the first time in 12 years that we're hosting it, so we're not going to be able to pull back on that one.

Again, just for purposes of the record I will undertake to look at where we can send the minimum number of people for professional development, and that will still yield the same net effect. I don't know how successful we'll be at that because there are a lot of people who are very interested in these professional development seminars, some of which are as close as British Columbia and some of which are as far away as overseas. But, in

particular, with 38 or 39 new MLAs there's a very large appetite for new members, I can tell you. I would never mention names, but I've received a number of calls, letters, notes, et cetera from people who are very interested in going to those. I can keep that in mind, but it's the committee's decision how they wish to proceed.

Are there other speakers?

Ms Blakeman: Heather, I think that there's a technical problem here in that not all travel budgets of MLAs are under the purview of the Speaker, and to pass this motion would be to override, to set aside the will of certain committees that have already passed their budgets. So it would be undemocratic, to put it nicely, because in essence the passage of your motion here would set aside the decision of committees that have already considered their budget and passed it, and I think the Speaker referred to some if not all of the ones that can do that. There are Legislative Offices and Public Accounts, and there may be others.

3:55

The second observation that I have is that I always think that education is a good investment, and it behooves all of us as we move about on the taxpayers' dollar to ask ourselves seriously if the taxpayer really needs to pay for this and to be mindful that it's someone else's money we're spending and not to be wining and dining ourselves inappropriately. But to start to curtail the ability of MLAs to learn: I struggle to support that. I've saved a lot of time and money in the Assembly by attending those COGEL conferences because it helps me understand what the newest thing is that's coming out with privacy laws, and if I hadn't attended them, frankly, I just wouldn't have known the contacts and where to get them.

So I don't see the expenditure of travel for educational conferences as being out of control or out of line. I think they should be helpful. Now, I wouldn't go staying in, you know, swanky hotels in London, England, but I think – yeah, I'll leave it at that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Calahasen: Well, I think we're beating a dead horse again. What I want to say is that the budget has already been determined. We've debated it, we've talked about, we voted on it, and I feel that we have to move on. I believe you when you say that you're going to be able to take into consideration the interests of Albertans as well as the MLAs to make sure that we don't curtail any of the MLAs' situations but make sure that we are also dealing with the dollar situation. So, Mr. Speaker, I put it in your hands, I leave it in your hands, and I would ask for a vote now.

Ms Smith: Could I get on the list, Mr. Speaker?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead. You're on now.

Ms Smith: I guess maybe you can help me, being a new member, understand a bit about the process because it does seem to me that there should be a mechanism to be able to reconsider a budget when new information is on the table. I think what Mrs. Forsyth was reminding the committee of is that the day that we voted on and passed this budget was the very day that the Finance minister for the first time admitted the dreadful financial circumstances the province was in. We had tried at that time to put forward some motions to curtail the increases in the overall budget to 1.5 per cent. We'd also then tried to curtail the increases to just the caucus budgets to 1.5 per cent. Those were voted down by the committee.

But I think there's been a lot of water that's gone under the bridge since the vote on this particular budget. I think we've seen Ms Redford take to the airwaves and give a province-wide address – it's quite unusual for a Premier to do something like that – and hold an economic summit. We've been talking now for two full months about the circumstances that Alberta is in. In some ways it seems to me that perhaps we were a bit hasty in rushing to make a decision on this budget in the absence of that more complete information.

Perhaps I can just get some clarity. It seems to me there should be a mechanism to be able to reconsider budget decisions that were made when new information becomes available. I'm a bit surprised as a new member that there doesn't seem to be, so I would seek your direction on how that could actually be done.

The other part of it is that I do hear the Finance minister speak all the time about the process they're going through on the government side, going through the results-based budgeting and analyzing expenditures with the purpose of finding some of these in-year savings. If they're able to do it on the government side, why is it that we can't do it as a committee?

The Chair: Mr. Ellis wishes to speak. Go ahead.

Mr. Ellis: I would just say that the budget process is clearly outlined, and it is a process involving the Members' Services Committee. They approve the budget, it goes before the House, and there's no debate in the House. It is read into the record and established there. There is no mechanism to change that particular process once it's been undertaken. That's all I would say there.

Mrs. Forsyth: If I may, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Forsyth: I address this question to Mr. Ellis. The budget has been debated, and it's been approved.

In the same breath, when we're talking after the budget has been debated and approved, we all of a sudden have come and approved a freeze on MLA salaries. That percentage increase was already incorporated in the budget that we had already approved and discussed. We're now talking about the temporary residence going to \$1,930. That expense had previously been included in the budget that had been, as explained, debated and approved. We're now talking about the temporary residence. That money had been included in the debate and approved. I'm struggling with how you can pick one part of the budget and say, "Well, it's okay; we can bring motions forward," and with another part of the budget you can't. If someone would like to clarify that for me.

I understand what the members are saying. I have been on these seminars, and I know the value that they have. I appreciate what Ms Blakeman has talked about, that education is a good investment. We are facing serious fiscal problems in this province. We are looking at a \$7 million cut from a STEP program, which I consider hugely valuable in this province, hugely valuable for our young people. I don't understand why the Speaker can make the decision on the MLAs he wants to send. Instead of having six, take three. Send the next crew to another. It's your choice, but I think the people of Alberta, if they were aware of this discussion, would clearly tell the members around this table what they would like us to do.

If somebody could explain to me the budget, I'd sure appreciate it.

The Chair: Mr. Ellis.

Mr. Ellis: Sure. Mr. Chair, the budget is passed at a given point in time based on the best known information at that time. It is an estimate going forward that guides our financial transactions. If there were orders subsequent to the budget being passed that affected our actual expenditures, we would only be able to spend the element of that budget as defined in the orders. The budgeted money, although budgeted, would not be spent and, therefore, would be returned to the general revenue fund at the end of the year. So there are changes that occur.

Similarly, other things could happen the other way because we didn't anticipate something happening, whether that might be a settlement, a public-sector wage agreement. Things like that come into play from time to time. We are forced to live within our means to accommodate those kinds of changes where we are directed to pay certain expenditures that we didn't anticipate in the budget. We basically live within our budget, and specifically we live within the budget elements where it refers to temporary residences and where there are orders that direct us as to what the actual payment should be.

The Chair: Well, I'm just looking at what Heather provided in writing. She said, "The committee will agree to spend only half the budget available." I can't undo what's already gone. The puck has been shot, so to speak. What I can do is keep a very vigilant eye on this, and I can look ahead right now and pare back wherever possible and try to still live up to the spirit of what you're trying to accomplish, Heather.

Mrs. Forsyth: I appreciate that very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm still trying to find out exactly how much money is allotted for these professional development seminars.

The Chair: I believe the amount we just looked up is \$173,000. That's for meals, registrations, accommodation, and travel. All in.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to laud the spirit in which Mrs. Forsyth brought this proposal to us, but I can't support it. I want to support what you just said, that you would use your discretion, and I believe that you are capable of very good discretion. I would look forward to the question on this motion, and then we can move forward. I think we've had some good discussion, and it sounds to me like you'll be guided by a lot of the spirit of what you've heard around the table today.

4:05

The Chair: I will. Thank you. I, too, don't take this lightly.

I appreciate what Heather is saying. I don't think that anybody here would disagree. But there are other factors that we have to keep in mind here, which, I'll tell you, before becoming Speaker, I wasn't aware of. I'll share one of them with you. At some of these conferences you are in a particular pecking order, and if you don't take up the opportunity, then you may not get invited the following year. It's like losing your place. While that may not sound really significant, it is important when we're trying to encourage and develop more people to be better parliamentarians and hone their skills and bring that benefit back for all Albertans.

All I can do is try my best and see where it's possible to pare down, and where it is possible, I will do my level best to get that done.

Mrs. Forsyth: Just on that comment, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the pecking order, you know, it would be well and good for some of the people that are probably looking at the pecking order for Alberta to maybe set an example. You look at some of the

other provinces that are running huge deficits, the United States, Spain, all of the economic problems that are there. I'm sorry. I just don't buy a pecking order. I think that if you had said to some of these people at other conferences, "Look, Alberta is facing a huge deficit, and we're trying to set an example," it might send a very clear message to some of the people that have you in this particular pecking order.

The Chair: Your point is not lost. I'm just saying that doesn't apply in all cases to the various seminars and so on. For example, we have the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians seminar coming up next month. We have a spot. Alberta is only one of I think five provinces that have been given a spot to attend, and I think it's important for us to have a woman there representing women's issues and representing the province. I could start by cutting that one out. I wouldn't because I think it's a critical one. It's that kind of thing that people at the table may not always know, which Speakers do know, and we do our level best to consider all the circumstances.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, I know that one very well because I was on that committee, and I was the Alberta representative for two years. I think, quite frankly, that you might get some arguments on that committee. I sat down with the previous Speaker quite often on exactly what that committee does.

Having said that, that is your decision as a Speaker. All I'm saying is that you will have to make the decisions to cut this back 50 per cent. You know what? If you think it's important for a woman, then as the elected Speaker in the Legislature of Alberta that is a choice you have to make.

The Chair: Understood.

No other speakers?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, can I just make one last comment? Again, as a new member it occurs to me that I don't seem to recall seeing any budget variance reports as we went through the year on Members' Services. I appreciate your undertaking, but I wonder: at what point do we see whether or not you're successful in achieving some of these savings? Do we have a mechanism where we receive quarterly or monthly reports of what was budgeted versus what was actually spent, or do I have to wait until we get into budget deliberations for the 2014-15 budget year to be able to see the level of your success?

The Chair: Let me look into that matter. We're dealing with \$173,000 here, and as the expenses come in, I can certainly report to you what I know.

Ms Smith: That'd be terrific.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Calahasen: Question, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: All right. The question has been called.

Heather, was your suggestion in the form of a motion?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. I guess the motion is that we cut 50 per cent of the professional development seminars. You've said that it's now at \$173,000. I would like you as the Speaker to make the decisions on what MLAs you send to what conferences but cut it by 50 per cent, and I would like to include that it's for the following two years.

The Chair: Your point is registered.

The motion by Mrs. Forsyth as circulated was that the committee will agree to spend only half the budget available for the parliamentary procedures or professional development conferences the Speaker's office makes available to MLAs this year and to cut the budget by 50 per cent for the following two years.

Mrs. Forsyth: A recorded vote, please.

The Chair: You want a recorded vote?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Those in favour of the motion, please state your names now.

Ms Smith: Danielle Smith, Highwood.

Mrs. Forsyth: Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Are there others?

Those opposed, please state your names now, starting here.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman, the fabulous Edmonton-Centre.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mary Anne Jablonski, the incredible Red Deer-North.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Allen: Mike Allen, the exciting and dynamic Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Khan: Stephen Khan, spectacular St. Albert.

The Chair: Hector, I can hardly wait for yours.

Mr. Goudreau: I was going to say: Hector Goudreau, the unknown Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

The Chair: Okay. Accordingly, that motion fails, but I do have the undertaking to do whatever I can to bring the spirit of it into effect.

The last item we have is MLA compensation. Mr. Young or his representative, Mr. Allen, the floor is yours.

Mr. Allen: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I don't have any further information on that item that was on the agenda. Mr. Young may have some more work he's doing on it.

The Chair: Okay. We'll just table that to the next meeting. Thank you for that.

The next meeting will be called within, I hope, two weeks. I'll survey you again. I'll do a canvass because we want to get this other issue of allowances dealt with as quickly as possible as well as the accommodation and the travel and so on that was debated.

That having been said, my watch reads 4:14 or thereabouts. Is there any other business?

Mr. Rogers: I move to adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers has moved that we adjourn. Those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no. Accordingly, the committee stands adjourned.

Thank you all very, very much.

[The committee adjourned at 4:12 p.m.]

