



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Wednesday, November 8, 2017
6:31 p.m.

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Chair
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP), Deputy Chair

Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP)
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)

Also in Attendance

Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Clerk
Jessica Dion	Executive Assistant to the Clerk
Allison Quast	Special Assistant to the Clerk
Alex McCuaig	Chief of Staff to the Speaker
Shannon Dean	Law Clerk and Director of House Services
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Brian G. Hodgson	Sergeant-at-Arms
Cheryl Scarlett	Director of Human Resources, Information Technology and Broadcast Services
Scott Ellis	Director and Senior Financial Officer, Financial Management and Administrative Services
Darren Joy	Manager, Financial Services, Financial Management and Administrative Services
Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

6:31 p.m. Wednesday, November 8, 2017

[Mr. Wanner in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Before we get started with our business items, I'd ask that members and staff introduce themselves for the record. Mr. Clark, we'll start with you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Greg Clark, MLA, Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Cooper: Nathan Cooper, the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Ms Jabbour: Debbie Jabbour, MLA, Peace River.

Cortes-Vargas: Estefania Cortes-Vargas, MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and deputy chair.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Mr. Wanner: Bob Wanner, MLA for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Clerk of the Assembly.

Ms Quast: Allison Quast, office of the Clerk.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and director of House services.

Ms Scarlett: Cheryl Scarlett, director of human resources, IT, and broadcast services.

Mr. Joy: Darren Joy, manager of financial services.

Mr. Piquette: Good evening. Colin Piquette, MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, MLA for Calgary-East.

Mrs. Schreiner: Kim Schreiner, MLA, Red Deer-North.

Mr. Dang: Good evening. Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. McCuaig: Alex McCuaig, Speaker's office.

The Chair: Any other staff here that you would like to mention, Mr. Clerk?

Mr. Reynolds: I think we're good.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you to all of the staff and the MLAs for being here.

Before we turn to the business, a few operational items. The microphone consoles are operated by the *Hansard* staff. Please keep mobile devices on silent for the duration of our meeting. Audio and video of committee meetings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. Audio and video access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website.

I think the agenda was posted. Are there any additions or changes to the agenda? If not, would a member move adoption of our meeting agenda for November 8? Mr. Cooper. All in favour, please say aye. No? The motion is carried.

Now approval of the meeting minutes for September 14, 2017. Members should have a copy of the minutes of the September 14, 2017, meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move adoption of the minutes? Mr. Cooper. All in favour of the motion, please say aye. Opposed, say no. The motion is carried.

I would just like to draw attention to one thing in the minutes and say thank you to the staff and all the members. We committed last time that we would aim to get items on the agenda seven days prior, and I'm glad we were able to do that. So thank you to all those who helped facilitate that.

Item 4 on our agenda is an information item, and I would ask the Clerk if he could please speak to this.

Mr. Reynolds: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is an item concerning, obviously, broadcast services, and I'll ask Cheryl Scarlett to speak to it. It relates to the broadcast of question period and some developments that were the subject of a memo from the Speaker to all of you about TV coverage in various jurisdictions throughout the province.

The Chair: Cheryl.

Ms Scarlett: Thank you. For information and as follow-up to the memo from the Speaker and the news release, the broadcast of the Assembly proceedings continues to evolve, and we remain committed to ensuring the proceedings of the Assembly are accessible to all Albertans. Recent changes to the mainstream landscape, however, at this time have limited our options for televised broadcast during the fall sitting, particularly with our cable providers in the two larger centres in Alberta, so Edmonton and Calgary.

What we wanted you to know is that there are other avenues. At this time there continues to be gavel-to-gavel coverage of Assembly proceedings and now of the committee proceedings, both in video and audio, daily. In addition, we have Shaw TV community stations in our areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary that are now picking up our feed live from 1:30 to 3 p.m. However, it's very important – we appreciate your support – and we are continuing to explore as quickly as we can here additional opportunities to expand our coverage to include cable providers in the larger centres.

Mr. Cooper: I'm just curious to know how many people have complained.

The Chair: I don't know about your offices, but I can tell you that my office has got a significant number of calls in both the local constituency as well as in the Speaker's office.

Mr. Cooper: Would you say dozens and dozens?

The Chair: Keep going.

Mr. Cooper: I can't keep a straight face anymore. Sorry.

The Chair: As I understand it, it was not an expected item that we were anticipating, but we are trying to address this as urgently as possible, recognizing that, particularly, older persons who may not be on the Net – and I might include myself in that – don't have access to that and were frequent watchers on TV. I know that in my own constituency individuals indicate that they watch TV regularly.

Mr. McIver, could I ask that you introduce yourself for the record, please?

Mr. McIver: Ric McIver, MLA, Calgary-Hays.

Cortes-Vargas: I'm just curious, Cheryl. Is there anything that we can do to make question period more appealing so that the broadcasting companies can pick it up? That's not a serious question.

Mr. Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, if I may, just for a moment.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Reynolds: The memo from yourself to members was dated October 30, and there was a news release issued about the coverage, as it were, on November 1 this year. As Cheryl, I believe, explained, part of the problem is that what used to be Shaw TV in Edmonton and Calgary literally does not exist anymore. In Edmonton, if you turn to channel 10 – you can't turn to channel 10. It goes from 9 to 11. That was the problem we face.

The Chair: Any other questions?

We move along to item 5 on the agenda, Legislative Assembly Office 2018-2019 budget parameters. As noted in the minutes of our September 14 meeting, the committee reviewed a draft timeline document related to the 2018-19 Assembly budget estimate process. I should tell you that we are going to be hard-pressed to stay in line with that, but we will make best efforts. The committee is reviewing and approving the budget parameters, followed by the LAO in preparing the Legislative Assembly 2018-2019 budget estimates.

6:40

I first of all would like to thank the staff who have already put considerable time into the preparation, and they will be over the next ensuing weeks, and I'd just like to thank them for their efforts and hope that we can move the process along as effectively as possible.

I want to highlight that the '18 budget document states that the LAO will not be seeking an increase from the amount put forward and approved by the Assembly. Based on approval of the parameters and any other direction provided by the committee – and I would welcome that – the LAO will return with a draft budget as well as a strategic business plan for the committee's consideration at its next meeting.

As members are aware, the deputy chair requested additional information and budgeted items for the legislative committee as well as additional information with respect to members' allowances. All of this information was, I think, sent to the internal website yesterday.

Now, I'm assuming and hope that each of the members has reviewed the 2018 budget parameters document in advance of today's meeting, and if there is any additional or specific information that the committee wants to receive as part of the LAO budget estimates for 2018, we should be prepared to include these in our directions to the Clerk, the Legislative Assembly, and, indeed, my office as soon as possible.

I'm just going to ask the Clerk and his staff to, at a very high level, go through the parameters document, and then it would be my hope that we can answer questions and seek your guidance on any changes that you think are not clear enough and that you want us to address.

Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will, if the need arises, call upon the directors who are here. They are Shannon and Cheryl and Brian, Val Footz, and Rhonda Sorensen, who are here along with other managers.

I just want to point out that the budget parameters is a document that we've had – I believe this process has been going for I'm going

to say about five years, and the purpose of this is to set an outline so that we can go back and prepare a budget. So you don't really have numbers, as it were, because in order for us to prepare the numbers, we need to know the parameters. That would be the general, if you will, view of the world as you see it.

We have a few assumptions built into it, obviously. One assumption is that we're not increasing, obviously, the amount that we're going to be asking for in the budget, as the Speaker indicated. We will try and find savings wherever possible. We will look for areas where there is any duplication or overlap and trim that out. Some of the assumptions that we operate on – you must know that certainly the LAO component of the budget as opposed to, well, mainly a lot of the caucus and the members' allowances section of the budget is driven very much by salaries in the sense that most of our expenditures, I would say, are related to staff costs. We are not projecting an increase in remuneration.

With respect to the employer costs – and we have no control over that – that would be the amount of, like, CPP or EI or whatever. That is entirely driven outside of our control, and we will be using the actual figures. Cheryl can supplement this. As of yet I don't know if we actually have the actual costs, if there will be any increase in that, but we're hoping not.

There is a proposal based on 75 sessional days and 82 committee meetings, which is meant to parallel – sorry.

Mr. McIver: I don't mean to interrupt, but when the time comes for questions, I'd like to ask one.

Mr. Reynolds: The assumption we have is 75 sessional days with an average of 30 hours per week, and this is based – well, it has been trimmed over recent years. It used to be projected at 80, and we've reduced that. Just to give you an idea, the number of meetings in '16-17 was 68, the Assembly meeting. For this fiscal year we're projecting that if we go according to the calendar set out in the standing orders, we would have 70 sitting days. It's been consistent with this number since the 2015 election although in '15-16 it was a little lower because the election was held in May, so that year in the spring, obviously, there wasn't a sitting in April and May, and it recommenced in June, so the number for that year is a little lower. That's what we've based it on. We've based our assumptions on 82 committee meetings, and Shannon can speak to that later.

Oh, by the way, when we're looking at LAO events in this building, the Edmonton Federal building, the actual events have doubled over the past year. You know, we support the machinery for getting that going, for supporting those events. That's something we can talk about. It's in the committee and venue services envelope and visitor, ceremonial, and security services.

Now, one thing about this budget that you should know is that under section 38.1 of the Election Act the next provincial election must be held between March 1 and May 31, 2019. Now, that means that, if we were planning, the election could be called in the next fiscal year in the sense that if it was held sometime in March, it would be in the fiscal year in which we're now considering. Even if not, it would be held by May 31. Typically what we do is that there is funding provided, or we make preparations for the election and the dissolution of this Legislature, and the next Legislature we start preparing six months before, and that continues six months after the election.

Sorry. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have a new member here.

The Chair: Yes, we do. Mr. Nixon, I wonder if you might introduce yourself?

Mr. Nixon: Jason Nixon, MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

The Chair: Welcome.

Mr. Reynolds: What we're projecting is that there will be additional costs associated with preparation. There will be some additional staff resources required in order to prepare both staff and members for the dissolution of this Legislature and the commencement of the 30th, and that involves preparation materials for members, et cetera, to orient them to the Legislature, as it were.

Now, we've listened carefully to what happened after the last election, and quite frankly we want to be on top of our game. We want to provide members with information in a manner that they can ingest and accept and also to do the same for staff, both caucus staff and constituency staff. There will be costs associated with that, but hopefully we plan to incorporate, or assume, those costs within the amount, let's say, that was voted, certainly an amount that was voted last year. So our budget would not go up; we would just accommodate those costs.

6:50

The next area is the MLA administration budget. Pay and benefits for members, we're assuming, will not increase because there's a members' services order that says that they're frozen until – this is shocking; I should remember it off the top of my head – two months after the date of the next provincial election, I believe it is. Yes. There we are. I'm getting the nod. We're not looking at any increases for constituency office staff costs, similar to what we said about the LAO's staff.

With respect to the members' services allowances constituency budgets, you have held one element of that consistent, which is what we refer to as the communications component, where there was an amount that we put out for postage. Postage has gone up, but we haven't increased the amount over the past few years, and we're proposing not to increase it again.

With respect to the matrix component we're not proposing any increases because of the matrix component. I'll just throw this in: after the next election, when the new electoral boundaries, if there are new electoral boundaries, come into force, there may be some changes based on constituency size, but that would not be your concern right now.

Second lastly, for caucus budgets we're not looking at or anticipating or assuming any changes in increases to staff remuneration, and there's no general inflation factor applied, like any other salaries.

We have listed some planning and development initiatives on page 4 of the document. There's an amount that has been set aside for that. We're just looking in general terms and talking about the initiatives that we're planning, mainly in the technological field and some related to the topic of broadcasting, that we mentioned earlier. There will be some improvements and upgrades to the services provided by FMAS related to technology, which we certainly are prepared to talk about if you wish.

In summary, the LAO is not seeking any increase in the amount voted from '17-18, and we're hopefully going to come in with a reduced amount, subject to what we discuss here this evening.

I may have missed something, and I would ask that if any of the directors see that I have made a glaring omission, they interject now if that's allowable, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Seeing none, please underline that if there are areas that the committee thinks the staff should be looking at changing or amending, I think this is the time to let us know where those are. It's important that for the parameters here today you send a signal on specific areas that you think require closer attention.

Mr. McIver.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I guess before I send any signals, I just want to make sure that I understand what I heard, so if you don't mind, I'll ask a few questions of context.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. McIver: This isn't challenging anything. I'm just trying to get some understanding here. I think I heard in the comments that you're not sure if you can make this year's budget, but you're going to try hard and endeavour to and try to stay within budget. I thank you for that. If I heard that correctly, that's great. But the other thing . . .

The Chair: Ric, if I might, I'm not sure that you heard that. I think they have always stayed within budget, and they're going to look for potential savings.

Mr. McIver: Okay. No. Then I perhaps didn't word it exactly the same as you did, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your correction. But I did hear, then, that you're going to endeavour to stay within budget this year, yet it says in the remarks that you're not looking for a budget increase next year if I read it correctly. So I think it's a reasonable question to ask. If you are endeavouring rather than sure that you're going to stay within budget this year and you're not looking for an increase next year, is there an area of the budget that's made it stressful or more difficult than anticipated to stay in budget this year that we should know about?

Mr. Reynolds: I'm terribly sorry, Mr. McIver; I may not have expressed myself as well as I should. I mean, for the budget we have right now, yes, we'll stay within budget. That's not really an issue. What I meant to say, if I didn't, was that we would look for next fiscal year, for the fiscal year that we're considering right now, '18-19, that we're certainly not looking for an increase over what was voted last year, and what we'll be endeavouring to find would be savings for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Mr. McIver: All right. Okay. No. That's fair. I read too much into the passing comment, and you've explained that. I'm grateful for that explanation.

The other area where I think I've got a question is that I think there was a comment made about the LAO budgets having doubled this year. Did I hear that correctly? Otherwise I've got to check my ears if I didn't get that one right.

Mr. Reynolds: If I did say that, I certainly misspoke. I think the only time I said . . .

Mr. McIver: Maybe it's me. I thought I heard that somewhere.

Mr. Reynolds: Surely not.

Cortes-Vargas: Just checking if we're all listening?

Mr. McIver: No. Right now I'm questioning myself, so I'm going to ask the question. I didn't hear that?

Mr. Reynolds: The only time I mentioned doubling – and perhaps Brian or Shannon would like to supplement this – was with respect to the number of events that are held in the Edmonton Federal building.

Mr. McIver: Okay.

Mr. Reynolds: That was, I think, the only time I said doubling.

Mr. McIver: No. Fair enough. That's what I think I heard.

Mr. Reynolds: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: So my follow-up question to that is – and I'm just trying to get understanding here – what effect has that had on the budget as compared to if the events in the Federal building had not doubled?

The Chair: I'm going to take a stab at that one. I think what the Clerk and the staff have done are that we're going to work within the envelope in spite of those kinds of pressures. I think that's a good sign, that this building is being used by the community and for various events. But staff will meet that demand by looking at other areas where they might have savings and shifting it there. So it's hold the line, and it ain't ever gonna get doubled.

Mr. McIver: Okay. No, Mr. Speaker, and to be clear, if the building is open to the public more, I couldn't agree more with you that that's a good thing. I'm just trying to understand it, if there are budget pressures, where they're coming from. What types of events do we have? How would you characterize the events that have doubled or added to what has been done in past years? Can you characterize them in any way?

Mr. Reynolds: Sure. I may ask Shannon and Brian to supplement because – not that we're a large bureaucracy – there are two elements to that. One is venue services, where we support events that occur in the Edmonton Federal building like, you know, helping to arrange the operation and make sure the food is there or whatever, and the other side is the security aspect that we provide. Shannon? Brian? If that's okay, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Ms Dean: What's occurred in the last year is an almost twofold increase in the bookings on the second floor. I think that just speaks to the awareness in terms of the wider GOA knowing that we have rooms available for use, so they're taking us up on that offer.

Mr. McIver: Are those cultural events or committee meeting events? What type of events?

Ms Dean: It's a wide range of events. It's not LAO specific; it's GOA, the broad GOA, officers of the Legislature, including . . .

Mr. McIver: GOA events. Are they open to the public, these events?

Ms Dean: Some may be.

7:00

Mr. McIver: Many aren't? Is that what I'm hearing?

Ms Dean: I can't speak to – I think Brian might be able to speak to that more accurately.

Mr. Hodgson: Some events are open to the public. Some are by invitation. But just to give you an idea of the increase and the budget pressures, we went from 202 person-hours in terms of security support for these events to 962, so that's a 480 per cent increase.

Mr. McIver: You know what? I don't want to drag this out. Is it possible that at some point in the future, the not-too-distant future, I could get a list of what the nonpublic events were and when they were?

Mr. Hodgson: I'm sure we can do that. It would require a bit of work, but yeah.

Mr. McIver: I can stop asking questions, then. If I can get that, I'll just look forward to that.

Mr. Hodgson: As Shannon said, I mean, some of these were GOA events that were, you know, in-house.

Mr. McIver: I only need to know the title of the event and the date if they're not public.

The Chair: Well, we'll make best efforts to get that, and we'll post it for all members' information on the website.

Mr. McIver: That would be fantastic. I thank you so much for your answers.

Cortes-Vargas: I guess I have a few sections to go through, the first one being within the LAO branch budget's parameters. Having not introduced, like, motions to edit parameters, I'm looking to you, Mr. Chair, as to what the protocol is. Like, would I introduce a motion to edit something in the parameters as they stand?

The Chair: I'm inclined to suggest that we address your questions, make a note about them, and we make whatever suggestions and changes at the end. Is that agreeable?

Cortes-Vargas: Sure. What the suggestion is – okay; let's see. I looked over the annual reports, starting from 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 – there wasn't one for 2016-17; it's not posted yet – and I looked through what the actual sitting days are. I understand that you have to follow the standing orders and do what is projected, but what I'm proposing to the members on the committee is that if we can project it based more on the actual sitting days that occur versus the assumption of the session calendar in the standing orders, which we've never met, like, the 75 sitting days – in 2012 there were 50 days. In 2013 there were 49; 2014, 42; 2015, 43. I got that from the annual report. In 2016 I counted them, and there were 56 days. I'm proposing that we use the assumption of 70 sitting days. I'd love to have members of the committee see if they're in agreement with that.

The Chair: Well, I would just rather let Shannon speak to the details of that. I don't have the same numbers that you have, but I think we're already projecting this year that it will be 70.

Shannon, would you elaborate on . . .

Ms Dean: Well, you're correct, Mr. Speaker. We're projected to hit 70 sessional days according to the standing order sessional calendar requirements. I would point out that we have hit 75 sessional days. That was in 2008-2009. We hit 70 days in 2009-10, and I think the Clerk pointed that out. The sessional calendar requirements mean that when you figure out the number of sessional days, it varies from 70 to 75, depending on the particular year and where the constituency weeks fall, whether there's a holiday, et cetera.

I'd also point out that 70 sessional calendar days is as per the standing order requirements. That doesn't take into account any additional days if the Assembly sittings are extended. I would also want committee members to be aware that in the last two years each of the sittings has been extended.

Mr. Orr: Can I change the subject? Like, if you're in the middle of this conversation, I don't want to interrupt.

The Chair: I think we'd better stay on this subject.

Mr. Orr: I have nothing to contribute at the moment, no. I'll wait.

Mr. Cooper: Just a quick comment. Listen, I don't have a problem if we plan off 70 days. I don't know what the net value is in terms of how much of a difference it's actually going to make. Like, it can appear to be that the LAO is going to be saving monies in terms of the actual budget, but I don't know that there is really a big net positive. I don't have significantly strong feelings one way or the other around 70 or 75 days, but I do struggle to see what the net benefit is of making a change.

Cortes-Vargas: Just to speak to my point, when reviewing the estimates of the last few years, especially when it comes to parliamentary and House services, usually there was quite a bit of money left over within that budget – I think I looked at it, and there was about \$2 million that was left over – and that's because it is budgeted over and usually you don't go that many sitting days. If we don't have to budget that money and take that out of taxpayer pockets, then it's unnecessary.

The Chair: Is there anybody speaking to this issue?

Mr. Nixon: I think Mr. Cooper's question or point was – maybe we need some clarification. You didn't spend it because you budgeted for 75, correct? So if we come in at whatever dates that ends up – like, to your point, are we saving the taxpayer any money? The reality is that you would not have spent the money if you're not using it. Am I correct? Okay.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's correct. I think one of the issues is that, as long as everybody understands that there have been several discussions about this with staff, in the event that the Legislature determines that it's going to go beyond 70 days for whatever reason, you would need to most probably go back to the Legislature for a supplementary budget. I think that's one of the risks. As long as committee knows about that, that that might happen.

Mr. Nixon: When was the last time? Maybe you said it, Ms Dean, when I was out of the room. I apologize if you did. When was the last time that the Legislature sat more than 70 days in a fiscal year?

Ms Dean: It's been a number of years. It goes back to 2009. We hit the 70 mark, you know, consistently the last two years and are projected to this year.

Mr. Nixon: I guess the question then becomes, for the standing committee, the framework of whether or not it's better budgeting practice because we're budgeting over. To be clear, that's what we're talking about. We're not talking about saving the taxpayers money. I'm not saying that it's wrong that we don't try to make it more clear what we actually spend. I just want to make sure that we're all on the same page of what we're talking about.

The Chair: Either way, the taxpayer would pay. If you needed to go, you'd go back and get it. It's a budget estimation process. With the guidance of the members we'll take a look at that. We'll come back and tell you more detail about what the number is with the budget if that's agreeable. We'll have the background to those risks available if an option like that is chosen. Is that fair?

Cortes-Vargas: I'm actually completely okay with just moving forward. Really, I'm bringing this forward. I've looked at the information. I have the actuals of what parliamentary and House services spent: in 2012, \$5,500,000; in 2013, \$5,900,000; in 2014, \$6,273,000; in 2015, \$5,900,000; in 2016, \$6,163,000; in 2017,

\$7,663,000. I think the estimate this year is \$9,000,000. What I'm saying is that there's a cushion there. If it doesn't need to be there, if we can take it away, I think it does, due to past practice – honestly, if you guys don't want to do that, we can put it back to 75, and it is as it is. Right now we're sitting at a zero increase. I just think that we have the ability to not ask for that money in the first place. If that's not agreeable to members, I'm open to suggestions. I don't see the need to come back to specifically debate whether we will or will not sit 70 days. It's a hypothetical question, right?

7:10

The Chair: The wish of the committee?

Mr. Piquette: Oh, I guess maybe I'm just having trouble. When we started at the beginning, you were talking about making an estimate of 70 days for this . . .

The Chair: Seventy-five.

Mr. Piquette: Seventy-five. Okay.

The Chair: As per the . . .

Mr. Piquette: As per the calendar. I don't know. I'm inclined to agree with Member Cortes-Vargas. I mean, if we haven't exceeded 70 days, you know, historically for quite some years and then also take into account the morning sessions – but same thing. I mean, you look at the value of the committee. I think Mr. Cooper's point that – it's something where if you don't spend the money, it goes back into the budget. The risk, of course, human nature being what it is, is that big questions tend to give people a feeling that you don't have to economize quite so strictly. I don't know. Besides that, I'm okay with it.

I guess I don't know what the – like, I guess, some historical precedent: in the past has the Legislature underestimated the number of sitting days, then had to go back and make an allocation, and if so, what kind of impact did that have? Like, what kind of a grave risk are we actually running by cutting closer to the average?

The Chair: Well, I'll let staff speak. I mean, it depends on the will of the House. If you choose to, you know, debate longer or put more days in, more hours in, then you're having a risk that the budget you estimated – past records, track indications would say that we've been under that, but this is a lower risk scenario, that we went with 75.

Member Cortes-Vargas, are you saying that you specifically want to address the parameters estimating at 70 days, specifically go with that number, or do you want to take that as a refined parameter, and we look at it, flesh it out in greater detail? Or would you like to – is it a motion? If you'd like to make a motion . . .

Cortes-Vargas: Sure. I'll make a motion that it says 70.

I'm open to a different number. Like, honestly, I think that we should look at reducing the amount that we leave on the table each year. I think it does lead to not being as diligent.

Mr. Orr: First of all, I want to say, Member Cortes-Vargas, that I really appreciate the work you've done. I like that kind of detailed, involved work. Thank you.

A question for staff, I guess. Help me understand. You know, whether it's 70 or 75 days, that portion of the budget – I realize it's not necessarily expended, but if there's that cushion in the budget, if you want to call it that, does that money only get used if those days are actually sat, or are you able to use that money, then, in other parts of your broader budget?

The Chair: The Clerk can speak to it. I don't ever recall it being used in other parts of the budget. I think we've stayed fairly close in terms of our budget estimate.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It remains in the areas related to House services for providing services associated with sitting days. The difficulty is, you know, that we – perhaps it's a little overestimated because we view this as the core business of the Legislative Assembly Office, to support the operations of the Assembly in the Chamber. As the deputy head of the organization under the Financial Administration Act, frankly, I don't want to face the situation where we hit 71 days and we've only budgeted for 70. Is it possible to find money? Yeah. But it creates a problem if you haven't budgeted enough for it.

Now, I take the point that there were a number of years where they sat under that. You know, is that a good measure? Well, I would say that during the early teens it was perhaps, obviously, a different government, and, well, obviously they didn't sit as much. If you go back to, as Shannon said, 2008-2009, you've got 70 days and 75 days.

What the committee decides is what the committee decides, and of course we will work within what you decide. But we set 75 as a measure that, you know, we wouldn't want to go over. We tend to put it a little higher so we don't go over it, and we're projected to go 70 this year. If we carry on without extending the sitting.

So those are the only concerns, but of course we are guided by what the committee decides.

The Chair: Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Nixon: I don't know if the Clerk was done.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: First, I'm a little confused, Mr. Speaker, on whether we do have a motion, but my one concern with this is that I suspect there are some other line items that are about to be discussed that I think will be easier to talk about in trying to make the budget closer to estimates. My concern on this topic, on the sitting days, is that the LAO has almost no control over that topic, so most of that is up to the government and the opposition. Often, actually, quite frankly, that's one of the few things that the opposition gets to control, when session is over, because it's usually when we stop talking. So I sympathize with the LAO on this particular topic because, you know, we say that we want you closer to where it ends up being, but the reality is that they absolutely have no control. It's not like some other line items, like possibly – I don't know – food or catering or things where they may have some ability to deal with options. In this case it's one hundred per cent up to the political parties that are in the Assembly.

I just think 75 to 70 – I kind of sympathize with why you want that buffer, so I probably won't support this motion.

The Chair: Would you like to make an official . . .

Cortes-Vargas: No. I mean, honestly, I wanted to pitch it to the committee to see what their thoughts were. If it's something that makes opposition uncomfortable or it if makes them feel like they're going to be limited in any way, then I'm happy to just move on to the next topic.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I didn't say that I think that it made the opposition feel any way. I think that for the opposition members that are on the committee, this would have very little impact on us.

My point was that the LAO has no control over that number. It's all in our court, so I sympathize with why they would want a buffer given the fact that they can't control that number.

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Yeah. I guess, given this, I don't have too much to add other than that I think it's not a super big deal either way. I mean, we're going to sit as many days as we sit, and our fine friends across the aisle determine a large part of that, as Mr. Nixon was saying. I think that as long as we're able to do the work we need to do in the House, it works out for everybody.

Cortes-Vargas: Okay. I will move on to a different topic, then, having discussed that line.

The Chair: If I might, hon. Member Cortes-Vargas, I just want to clarify that we're all on the same page, then. At this juncture you agree to the estimate of 75 days.

Cortes-Vargas: Uh-huh.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Cortes-Vargas: Okay. The next part that I wanted to discuss was looking at kind of bringing in and reducing the food budgets within the committee meetings. I think the actual costs have been in 2015 and '16 – again, like, the annual report of 2016-17, even though it's passed, for that year is not available, from what I've gathered. Please correct me if I'm wrong there. From 2015 the actual amount spent on the committee meeting food budget, or the hosting line, would be around \$23,000 and forecasted for \$45,000 in the documents provided for 2016-17. That's, of course, not an actual.

7:20

What I wanted to ask the committee is if there's a desire to actually restrict some of the amount that we're putting into committee spending for food – I think we can even look to tonight as an example; you know, first of all, how many people are we ordering for? – to just basically send the message that we are looking at making sure that we're spending appropriately, that we're spending where we need it and not more.

There are certain situations where I think food is very appropriate for committee meetings. Like, right after a full day of session we basically run from the Leg. here, or with a full day of committee meetings having lunch available is fair. I think that for three-hour committee meetings having food, you know, is nice, but it's not necessary. I think we have to look at the realities of what we're facing, so I wanted to have this discussion with the committee and see where we land on an actual direction for a parameter that says that we're reducing our expenditures in committee hosting.

The Chair: If it's of any value, this is a fairly detailed question in terms of the budget, a bit beyond the parameters. As a broad principle I'm hearing that you want the LAO to economize and examine those expenses as a part of the detailed budget. Is that close enough?

Cortes-Vargas: I think it's fair to say that if you're building a budget based on parameters that we're setting out today, we want to see a reduction in the amount allocated and maybe not overestimation for the committee budget estimates for hosting. It's a fair discussion for today. It is, in fact, a parameter that could be

stated, a clear direction for the LAO as to how we want the budget to be created.

The Chair: What's the sense of the committee? Would you like that included at this point as a parameter item?

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. I guess I would just say that while I certainly have no problem finding savings around committee food – in fact, I'm happy to bring a lunch prior to committee meetings and all of those things – I guess my question is a little bit around the intent of the meeting. You know, I had the chance to talk to Member Cortes-Vargas earlier today, and we chatted a little bit about the meeting this evening, but my sense now is that, generally speaking, the LAO is looking for broader direction on things like zeros for large categories and not a specific sort of line-by-line instruction. I guess I'm looking for some clarification around that piece.

The Chair: You'd need a consensus, an agreement, on what is broad and what is narrow.

Mr. Cooper: I think we're likely to achieve with that.

The Chair: This one is pretty specific. I just got a note here. I think Shannon can say that we are projected to spend the dollars budgeted this year. Is that correct? Notwithstanding that, to the point that Member Cortes-Vargas is raising as a broad principle, if that's agreeable, we will take a look at that. What's the sense of the committee?

Mr. Cooper: I would never speak for my colleagues, but my sense is that we would be happy to see a reduction in the overall delivery of food services for committee meetings or otherwise.

Mr. McIver: Well, I don't mind gathering some information on it, some more detailed information, but I wouldn't want to be dealing with that until we get the information that I asked for on the other events, the events where the government has an event in the rotunda and invites ethnic or community groups up to have an event without the opposition invited. It makes it kind of a partisan event, and I'd like to see the information on that before we look at the committee budgets on food.

The Chair: What's the consensus or the direction? We've tended to not have a specific motion. What's your wish? Would you like to test it?

Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My tendency would be to say that I'm happy to support in general reducing the amounts that we spend on committee foods. I think that any way we can save money in these times is agreeable for most members of the committee. I guess I do have one question, which would be: is there a rough breakdown of how the current committee foods are being allocated and what that expense looks like in terms of per plate, per person, or things around that nature so we can know sort of what we're paying for and why?

The Chair: I'm sure we can get that. I'm not sure that that kind of detail we have tonight because that's fairly specific; nonetheless, I think it is available.

Mr. Nixon?

Mr. Nixon: I'm a little concerned that we're now getting into operational details, and I don't think that's our job as a standing committee. I think Mr. Cooper was getting closer to the instructions

that the LAO would be looking for, which was, it sounds to me – and I don't know about a motion – that the standing committee would be interested in the LAO looking at reducing food costs and that MLAs would be happy to participate in that. I think that is what I've heard, or at least from the ones around this table. I don't know if I want to get into details of per plate and that type of stuff. I don't think my constituents sent me here to get into that level of detail.

I sense some consensus, though, on the food issue, I think. I'm looking at my hon. colleague on the end. I think that we have consensus on that, but I don't think we want to send you guys back to talk about detailed prices per plate.

Cortes-Vargas: I think that, yeah, he just captured it in saying, you know, that we have the hosting lines in different areas. We have parliamentary services at \$48,000, the Clerk's office at \$33,000, visitor services at \$30,000. I think that if the general direction is to look at ways to find savings within hosting and limit that thing, if that provides enough direction for the development of the budget, the detailed questions asked by Mr. McIver about the details of the other events – I mean, we're still going to have another meeting looking at the budget that is developed based on these parameters, right?

The Chair: You absolutely are.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. So I think I'm good with moving forward like that if there's consensus in the committee. If I need to introduce a motion, I'm just not sure what that has to look like.

The Chair: I'm sensing there is a consensus on the general direction, and you will get a second shot at that.

Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to clarify. I wasn't looking for receipts or anything. I was just wondering, if there are opportunities to save, just what that might look like in terms of changes of service. What we're doing right now versus what we could be doing is sort of the question I was looking for generally. I think I agree with everything that's been said.

Mr. Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, if I may, we capture the direction that the committee is going, and when we prepare the budget, we will pay special attention to the hosting, and we will seek to achieve reductions in hosting. It would mean, quite frankly, less food, and that's fine as long as you know that, but we will seek to achieve that and provide more information about the hosting budgets when we come forward with the actual numbers. Is that sufficient?

Cortes-Vargas: That sounds great.

The Chair: Great.

Cortes-Vargas: Can I keep going?

The Chair: Sure. Keep going.

Cortes-Vargas: Okay. The next one I have is travel budgets. Looking through the travel budgets, there is about \$95,000 in parliamentary services; Parliamentary Counsel, \$55,000; security, ceremonial, \$19,000; visitor services, \$69,000; ITS, \$64,000. At least, those are, like, forecasted.

7:30

I was wondering if we could introduce in this one more of a consolidated parameter because that also encompasses the Speaker's office sending elected officials. We could introduce something along the lines of: unless there is a requirement for

Alberta to be a representative, than travel for public service and elected officials should be restricted. When it is, there should be a limit on the number of people attending. Maybe that one is more closely linked to a motion to say that we do have different – it's hard to determine, not knowing exactly which trips are being sent for which ones, but to kind of, in the same way as the food, say that we really want to look at restricting these two only if necessary.

Really, if Alberta needs to be represented – there's not a travel list of why people go, so it's hard to say: just don't do it all. But I think that there's a general sense that we are trying to restrict travel through different forms in the government, and I think that that is really important. You know, we have at this moment a very tight budget and we're running a deficit, and I think it should be clear that travel should be when necessary and very required when we do that. I think that message should be incorporated within the development of this budget.

Again, I seek your guidance on how to introduce that as a parameter. I think the other thing to be considered – again, I'm going down as not saying that I'm explicitly asking for a reduction in these amounts. I'm just saying is there a way to really hammer in and say: where are the necessary travel expenditures occurring, and why are they necessary?

The Chair: Just to clarify, is the observation related to elected officials and travel and related to staffing as well?

Cortes-Vargas: It's both.

The Chair: Both of those. Okay. It seems to me that I'll test something, that if you want in the parameters to review the travel policies in those two categories, I think different conditions apply in each category, certainly from staff versus elected officials. Yes, we can review that.

I think, though, that we also need to remember that as a member of the Commonwealth and as we move forward in this world of ours, we need to be conscious of the success that it has with building relationships with other provinces and other nations. That is of value, which may not immediately be evident. But I think that, if I paraphrase it, it's a review of the policy, and we if looked at that, certainly it's possible.

I can tell you also that we have not sent – you recall what the process is. My office circulates the list. These are for, primarily, Commonwealth-related trips. We've passed on several. I know that we've cut our numbers in terms of people attending. There might be some savings there so long as we can set out in some kind of a measurable outcome what the cost of that might be. We can look at it and, I think, come back with some facts to answer many of the questions that you might be searching for. Is that agreed? Is there a consensus on that point, or do you want it more specific than that? The notes will say: we'll review travel policies and come back as part of the budget to examine what savings might come out of a review.

You're on a roll. Keep going.

Cortes-Vargas: I was just hearing that David Swann has collapsed at an event.

The Chair: I'm sorry?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, could I move for a quick break?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. McIver: Five-minute recess.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. Five-minute recess.

Mr. McIver: You need to say yes.

Cortes-Vargas: Yes.

The Chair: Yes.

[The committee adjourned from 7:35 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.]

The Chair: We're ready to start again.

Member Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me occupy so much of the committee's time. I think that's where I'll stop. I think I just want to end with thanking the LAO. I know that it's a lot of work to maintain within the budget, you know, and having maintained it for the whole time that we've been in government. It is difficult, and we understand that. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you. I can tell you that we get the message about the need to economize and save as much as we can. We recognize that issue.

Mr. Orr.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to express my appreciation to Member Cortes-Vargas for the work she's done on it. The initiative, I think, is really good. I think the point of agreement is what you've just said, you know, just the consciousness of finding economies where they can be found by the staff, the awareness of just being sensitive to those issues. At the same time I don't think we're in a role here where we can perform an audit function, so that's for others to play. The principle has been voiced, and I think it's been heard.

I guess I should say, well, two things. One, I've never been in favour of sort of large cushion budgets. I just don't think it's helpful. But at the same I think that the LAO has demonstrated an intention to try and keep the budgets tight and to spend economically and with integrity, and that's demonstrated to me by sort of the final summary without seeking any increases. So I guess I would say that I support the intent of all of this and at the same time to the staff: thank you for the fact that you're demonstrating that, and just please keep it up.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: I would like to move a motion before we leave today if I can, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if it's the appropriate time on the agenda, but I think we're there.

The Chair: I think we're there.

Mr. Nixon: I'd like to move the following motion, though we may have to reword it once Parliamentary Counsel discusses it. The motion that I would propose would be as follows: that matters of caucus funding and official party status be referred to the subcommittee that is reviewing the Members' Services Committee orders and that the subcommittee be empowered to make any recommendations concerning these matters that are deemed appropriate.

The Chair: Okay. A motion for referral to the subcommittee. The subcommittee – I forgot. Is this Mr. Dang's?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Dang's subcommittee. Yeah.

The Chair: Any discussion?

Mr. Nixon: I'll discuss briefly on that, Mr. Speaker. The intent would be to take a matter that may or may not need some more clarity and bring it to a group that is already working on similar issues, increase the mandate of that group. Of course, that would not be binding, what that group comes up with. Those would be recommendations that would come back through the same process, and then we would go from there.

The Chair: Can I just inquire: would it be the intent that if the subcommittee's recommendations, not only on the issues that already they've been dealing with and this one, did recommend a reduction or change in related expenses, would it be expected that that would be incorporated into the 2018-19 budget? If that's the case, we just want to know.

Mr. Nixon: That would be correct, Mr. Speaker, which, I would recognize, as I'm sure Mr. Dang would also recognize, would give us a bit of a tight timeline to make sure that we could accommodate the budgeting process, hence why we would move it today so we could get that job done.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a quick question for clarification, first off, to either yourself or Mr. Dang: how long has your subcommittee been working? When was it first struck?

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been working for just under a year now, I guess. We were struck in, I believe, December of last year.

The Chair: That's my recollection. I urged a review of those kinds of matters you're dealing with. I don't have the exact date, but I would think . . .

Mr. Dang: November or December of last year. Yeah.

The Chair: November?

Mrs. Sawchuk: I would have to pull the exact date. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it was a meeting at the end of October.

Mr. Dang: Okay. Yeah.

The Chair: So it's been a year.

Mr. Clark: About a year. Have you submitted any reports to this committee yet?

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, we haven't come back with a specific report yet. But there's been a lot of work that's been undertaken thanks to LAO staff and the subcommittee members, which at the time represented three parties in this Legislature. It now represents, I think, a good cross-section of the members as well, and I think that we've been doing good work. But we don't want to presuppose any decisions at this point.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you.

I just find it fascinating that just a week or so after, you know, the two-member Alberta Party caucus has been granted third-party status and the budget that goes along with that, we'd have a motion on the floor from the UCP to refer this question to the committee with a sense of urgency, that we need to turn this around immediately to address this question. I just want to note for the record that it strikes me as odd that we would have that under consideration. I'm restricted in my ability to do much here given that I'm not a voting member of this committee, but as a member of the Assembly I have, obviously,

the ability to come and speak. I just note this motion to be curious in its source.

The Chair: Excuse me just a minute.

Mr. Nixon: Well, to be clear, this motion in no way impacts this fiscal year's budget. The urgency that I indicated was in response to your question, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that any decisions or recommendations that may come through that process that would affect the next fiscal year would impact the LAO budget process. I was recognizing that I think the committee, if they intended to recommend changes for next fiscal year, would have to make sure that that was accommodated within the process. With that said, you know, the level of urgency in that debate would probably be determined as the committee began to discuss it.

The Chair: I recall discussion in this room on this matter in, I think, March or February of 2016. This matter was discussed before.

Ms Luff.

Ms Luff: Yeah. I just want to say, you know, that this is something that's been a matter of discussion at this committee prior, and it's something that is largely determined based on precedent. It isn't always consistent and is sometimes a little fuzzy. We have a set of consistent rules for my MSA, that's set out every year, so I feel like caucus expenditures and how we determine who gets what funds in caucus should have a set of rules as well. I'm in support of this motion.

You know, it's varied widely in the past. Sometimes two-member caucuses get official party status; sometimes they don't. It's a lot based on convention. I think a crossjurisdictional analysis to look at what other provinces do and to have something consistent would be worth while.

I just wanted to say that.

Cortes-Vargas: I just wanted to speak in support of the motion on the floor. I think the subcommittee has really looked at the places where there could be more clarity in regard to how we proceed on so many levels. I think Robyn kind of outlined, you know, that there have been different practices based on whatever is happening at the time. There are points where four MLAs that were together never received a leader's allowance. Like, there are all of these different things and circumstances and funding changes, and you can't tie it to a specific reason why other than precedent or the decisions at the time.

7:50

I think that it is well served to have something definitive. Constituency budgets are defined, and you can look at the formula and say: this is why they're getting this amount of money. I think it's helpful for everybody involved to have them established, those rules. I know that this issue actually has been brought up in previous Members' Services committees. Last budget cycle we also had this discussion. We asked a few questions; we got some answers. But, I think, at the end of the day, it still doesn't point to a reason why funding is tied to certain ways.

I think we had quite a few discussions, which is why it took us so long last time to get through the budgetary process, right? We talked about this a few times now, so I think it's very important to look at this information and to look at it in the subcommittee, that has been hard at work. I think that we're almost reaching a point where, hopefully soon, we'll be able to come back. I think the timeliness of this is important as well.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, this is the UCP and the NDP working together to try to take money away from the Alberta Party caucus. That's what this is. I can't be any more blunt than that. To misrepresent the way that this decision has been made, both for this Legislature as well as past Legislatures, is disingenuous. To say that it's random and inconsistent ignores the fact that two-member caucuses of third parties have been granted recognized opposition party status in 1982, 1986, and 1997, when the two-member NDP caucus, Pam Barrett and Ray Martin, received the funding. In 2001 the two-member NDP caucus, Ray Martin and Brian Mason, received that, and in 2008 the two-member ND caucus, Rachel Notley and Brian Mason, received that.

I raise that, Mr. Speaker, to counter Member Cortes-Vargas's assertion that this is somehow unusual that the Alberta Party caucus has been granted this. To characterize what's happening here today as just sort of a simple matter of procedure and trying to clarify a few things is laughable. To question decisions made on precedent – and I won't ask . . .

The Chair: Greg . . .

Mr. Clark: Just one final point, Mr. Speaker, if I may. I apologize. Thank you. I will make this final point, and then I'll end my comments. I won't ask Parliamentary Counsel to weigh in. There are some constitutional law classes that I'm sure could be taught on the role of precedent in the Westminster parliamentary system. Your rulings regularly in the House are based on precedent, and this has also been based on precedent. The purpose of precedent is to allow – anyway, I'll stop there. I just want to be clear that I believe very much that that's what this is about, and I'm going to do everything I can to ensure my views on this matter are heard.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Nixon, and then I'll bring closure on this matter.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate Mr. Clark's concerns, the reality is that most of what he just said has absolutely nothing to do with the motion that I've moved. He's making a tremendous number of assumptions on what the subcommittee would determine. I think that that is a leap, to assume that the subcommittee has already come to some sort of conclusion that he seems to be implying. The reality is that we have a subcommittee that's working to provide some clarity on some issues, and this clearly seems to be an area where that subcommittee can complete that project as well, so we moved that for discussion. If the subcommittee came back with recommendations that Mr. Clark was uncomfortable with, he would totally have the opportunity to be able to speak to it.

The Chair: One more, Mr. Dang, and then I'd like to bring closure.

Mr. Dang: Yeah. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly, speaking as the chair of that subcommittee, I'd say that the committee members have been working very collaboratively together on some very difficult issues that encompass many different aspects, and the scope of that committee has changed a couple of times in the last

year. I think that, moving forward, I'm confident that they would be able to come forward with something that would work for all members. I would be happy to support it as well.

The Chair: On the referral motion I'm just going to add that I would urge that the subcommittee come back, and I really urge that the clarity on some of these kinds of matters was important. I think we go back to 2016, and this matter does rest with the approval of the Members' Services Committee.

But there are other matters, Mr. Dang, that would also, it seems to me, after – we need to get those issues brought forward and a direction and a clarification and get the committee to agree or disagree on what those changes should be. I would however hope that your subcommittee also gives Mr. Clark an opportunity to meet with you and express his views and outline his reasons on the matter, and then it's your subcommittee who comes back and requires the support of this committee on a go-forward basis. Is that agreed?

Okay. Would you like to read it, please?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Mr. Speaker, motion by Mr. Nixon that the matters of caucus funding and official party status be referred to the subcommittee that is reviewing the Members' Services Committee orders and that the subcommittee be empowered to make any recommendations concerning these matters that are deemed appropriate.

The Chair: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

Hon. members, the meeting was scheduled for 8 o'clock. We are 5 minutes to 8 o'clock.

Mr. Reynolds: I was just wondering if we could have a motion approving the parameters.

The Chair: Oh, yeah. That would be important. Sorry. An important part of the meeting that we missed: we should approve the parameters. That

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services direct that the Legislative Assembly Office prepare the 2018-19 budget estimates according to the parameters approved at the November 8, 2017, committee meeting, keeping in mind that the matters that were addressed primarily by Member Cortes-Vargas will be included in the preparation of that budget.

Is there someone prepared to make that motion? Member Cortes-Vargas. Do we need it written out with the inclusion?

Cortes-Vargas: I so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Thank you.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

Is someone prepared to move adjournment of the meeting? Mr. Nixon. All in favour? Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 7:58 p.m.]

