

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[5:45 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll call the meeting to order; we have a quorum.

Item 2, approval of the minutes of the meeting of July 15. What is the pleasure of the committee? Is someone prepared to move the adoption of the minutes?

MR. CAMPBELL: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the minutes of July 15, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any, please say no. Carried.

That brings us immediately to the matter of ...

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I think you said the 15th.

MR. HYLAND: You said the 15th; it should be the 22nd.

MRS. EMPSON: It should be the 22nd, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Abject apologies all the way around, from the secretary as well as the Chairman. Let the record show the 22nd.

Are we all agreed on the minutes of the 22nd?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

With respect to item 3(a), we were engaged in a rather fascinating discussion with regard to the items before us, and we have a motion that is amended.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, in light of the discussions that have taken place between representatives of the four political parties and what appears to be a consensus, I ask for the unanimous concurrence of members of the committee that the motion be withdrawn so that the committee may entertain a new motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Moved by Mr. Bogle: request for unanimous consent to withdraw the motion of the previous meeting. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any, please say no. Let the record show that it is indeed unanimous. Thank you.

Mr. Bogle, a motion?

MR. BOGLE: I would move that the revised budget estimates for the per-member allotments be based on \$40,000 per member, which would give a total of \$80,000 for the two Representative members, \$160,000 for the four Liberal members, \$640,000 for the 16 New Democratic members, and \$1.4 million for the 35 government members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The effective date would have been the day after the election?

MR. BOGLE: The effective date would be May 8 or 9.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, this would be for a fiscal year, which commenced April 1, 1986. So presumably the allotment would be retroactive to that time and, in the case of members having been newly elected in May, would be prorated.

MR. BOGLE: Why not prorated for all of us?

MR. STEFANIUK: To what date?

MR. CHAIRMAN: May 8.

MR. BOGLE: May 8, to be fair, because that's really the intent of the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much. There is a motion before us, \$40,000 per member.

MR. WRIGHT: Could I ask a question on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed.

MR. WRIGHT: I am a little puzzled by the idea of proration, since we understood that no

distinction is made between who happens to be the member at a particular time, that it runs from anniversary to anniversary. But then there were the problems. Is this a solution to the problems that we . . . Okay, good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other matter was the increased number of members in the Legislature, which would again have thrown it out of whack.

MS BARRETT: That's correct.

MR. WRIGHT: If this solves the problem we raised before, that's fine.

MR. TAYLOR: A point of clarification. Am I to understand we're going to be to May 8, not to April?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time of the election.

MR. TAYLOR: I was going to say that while I intend voting for the motion, I'm not happy that in order to come close to a reasonable overall amendment, we had to go to such a large amount per capita, because I think our original plans were okay. I still maintain that the government caucus have researchers in the civil service; opposition parties have to hire them. However, let's get the show on the road. Right now we're sitting without a budget and only two permanent offices. I've noticed that we're supposed to move into the Annex.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, but remember last week's ruling about space. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: I still think the whole attitude towards opposition comes in here. However, I'll go.

MR. CAMPBELL: This is not part of the motion, is it?

MRS. MIROSH: We haven't even finished the motion yet. Let's stick to the issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would assume that there are going to be at least two motions with respect to this issue.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, can we get it clearly on record then that what we mean by

proration is that members, whatever their political stripe of course, who sit from May 8 onwards, are entitled, whatever has happened before, to the prorated amount of the budget for the year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would think it's fairly simple, ladies and gentlemen: the rules that were in effect for the 20th Legislature were in effect until election day. You get no more money until there's been an election, and this resolution, if passed, would then decide it from the day of the election, period.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I understand that.

MR. CAMPBELL: So that resolves the problem.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, assuming that the excess prior to May 8 cannot under any circumstances carry forward.

MS BARRETT: Nothing can.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Looking at this motion, I think there seems to be somewhat ample provisions for everyone concerned.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I would think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion, please signify.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any, please say no. Let the record show that it was carried unanimously. Thank you.

You have a second motion?

MS BARRETT: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman. I would like to propose that we entertain a budget which would permit the following for each of the opposition caucuses: \$140,000 for the Representative opposition offices, \$220,000 for the Liberal opposition offices, and \$300,000 for the Official Opposition offices. I would like to make such a motion, subject to the same terms as the previous motion, which, as the

Chairman has pointed out, makes sense given that we are a committee struck by this Legislature, not the previous Legislature.

In supporting this motion, I just moments ago calculated what the overall effect of this motion would be on the offices of the various opposition caucuses. It would strike the sort of balance that each of the three opposition caucuses were proposing in terms of one in relation to another, and it would also get each of the offices very near to the sort of funding that we had originally proposed in our line by lines. At the same time, it recognizes that the membership of a caucus makes a difference as well. So I think it's a very useful balance between the two.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder if Pam would add to her motion the phrase we used in the last Members' Services, global budgeting, then there's no way we can get into arguments about how you spend your money; it doesn't have to be broken down. Maybe the way the motion is worded is all right. I'm just concerned that it's not our business to tell you how to staff your office.

MS BARRETT: I would be very glad. Can I amend my own motion in this kind of meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, you can't. You may carry on.

MR. WRIGHT: I'll do it.

MRS. MIROSH: Just add to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's understood.

MS BARRETT: Oh, all right. The consequence of this motion would be that the combined -- is that what you're getting at?

MR. HYLAND: No. I guess the total amounts.

MS. BARRETT: Okay, I've got you. I can do it. Just watch this.

This motion would bring to a total for the 1986-87 budget years \$220,000 for the Representative opposition, \$380,000 for the Liberal ...

MR. KOWALSKI: For the office of.

MS BARRETT: You don't want it that way?

MR. HYLAND: No.

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry; I thought I was doing it right.

MR. WRIGHT: Can I add the necessary words, Mr. Chairman?

MS BARRETT: Please do.

MR. HYLAND: Now we're in trouble; we've got a lawyer adding words.

MR. WRIGHT: That the totals for each caucus arrived at will be spent in the discretion of that caucus.

MR. HYLAND: That's the same thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again the Chair invited the Representative Party leader here this evening, and all of this seems quite acceptable?

MR. R. SPEAKER: No comments. We've had earlier discussion with all parties, and I'm satisfied. Thank you for letting me sit in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question. All those in favour of motion proposed, pleased say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. The record will show unanimous. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Item 4(a): clarification of the term "spouse." Do I understand Mr. Kowalski, from existence on the previous committee, that you have a memo to be read on this?

MR. STEFANIUK: I have it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Clerk, please.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the Members' Services Committee, at a meeting on June 2, 1983, agreed to the following motion:

that for the purposes of this Special Select Standing Committee on Members'

Services, the term "spouse" be defined as the person who is married to the Member, or a "guest" as designated by the Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the clarification on 4(a). With respect to 4(b).

MR. TAYLOR: I'm sorry; I have a question on 4(a), Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You want to change your spouse? What's your question?

MR. TAYLOR: Actually, that was the whole question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, that was the whole question.

MR. TAYLOR: How often can you change the spouse under this definition?

MR. KOWALSKI: It's okay, Nick, it covers everything. There's nothing left out.

MR. TAYLOR: You've looked it over, have you? You don't need the previous spouse's permission to introduce a new spouse?

MR. KOWALSKI: I checked with the Faculty of Law at the U of A, and it's okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just as long as you don't introduce this revolving spouse to the Assembly and take 10 minutes to do in terms of the time of the House.

MR. WRIGHT: We could have a clarification for Mr. Taylor: it's one spouse at a time.

MR. KOWALSKI: Agreed.

MR. CAMPBELL: Or their designate.

MR. TAYLOR: I think that's chauvinistic. We should be allowed more spouses if we wish.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Come on you guys and gals.

Review of kilometre rate for members, 4(b): is there some collective wisdom with regard to this? You have some background information in your file folders.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, the kilometre rate is one that this committee has looked at over the last number of years. Amendment order No. 1, 1984, which is in the documentation before all members, basically looked at the existing situation as of April 1, 1984. In the past, essentially what the committee used as a principle and the target in terms of allocating the cent rate per kilometre was based on 3 cents less than what was used in the public service in the province of Alberta. In 1984 the public service rate was 21 cents per kilometre. So as a principle the committee struck that in essence it would be 3 cents less than the public service rate. At that time, it was 18 cents per kilometre. Today in 1986 it's my understanding that the public service rate is 24 cents per kilometre.

Perhaps my colleague from Cypress-Redcliff will be introducing a motion on this, but just by way of background to add to that, since that time as well, the committee has received correspondence from a number of members basically saying that the 15,000 kilometres available for travel in the province of Alberta was insufficient to allow members to conduct the duties described for them under the Legislative Assembly Act and expected by the people of Alberta. In the past we have talked about increasing that 15,000 kilometre basis. I just offer that by way of background.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that Members' Services Order No.1 of 1984 be amended in section 2(c.1) where it would read "an allowance of 21 cents per kilometer travelled." Also in section 2(c.1)(ii)(B) that would read "25,000 kilometers per year" rather than 15,000.

If I may speak in support of the motion to outline my own case; I know everybody is different. I have a fairly large constituency areawise. I bought a vehicle two years ago in March, and I think it's been to Edmonton once and maybe to Calgary six times. The rest of the time it has been around the area. I looked on the odometer when I was driving in on Monday morning. It now reads 66,000 kilometres; that's on one vehicle. So in two years and two months, and that includes sessional time and everything, I've put on 66,000 kilometres. If you write off 6,000 for trips to Calgary and Edmonton, you're still looking at 60,000 kilometres in just a touch over two

years, even with all the flying I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And you also use a second vehicle for some other . . .

MR. HYLAND: I have a second vehicle that we use occasionally as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there further discussion with regard to the motion before us for 21 cents?

MR. TAYLOR: Just a point of clarification. What does this come to as a percentage? Is this 95 percent of what the government is paying?

MR. HYLAND: Yes. I believe the government is 24 now, isn't it?

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MR. HYLAND: It's the same difference, Mr. Taylor. It's just taking the 18 cents — it's the same difference as what it was before between that and the government rate. It's the same ratio.

MR. TAYLOR: But we're lower than . . .

MR. HYLAND: Yes, because of the credit card.

MS BARRETT: To answer Mr. Taylor's question, I just calculated that the per kilometre rate of 21 cents would come to 87.5 percent of the rate that I believe Mr. Kowalski pointed out was the rate paid by government for other vehicles.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there a call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any, please say no. Let the record show unanimous.

I apologize to members. I should have noted that we have regrets from Mr. Stevens, who is one of our representatives at the Canadian Parliamentary Association conference in

Toronto.

MR. BOGLE: And Mr. Pengelly is unable to be here due to another committee he is involved in.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, does that mean that if we went to a vote, it would be even?

MR. BOGLE: Check with your calculator.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 4(c), furnishings for constituency offices. No comment with regard to 4(c)? Will we move on to 4(d)?

MR. KOWALSKI: No, Mr. Chairman. My hand was raised. The services we're talking about here tonight are services to the people of Alberta. They are not benefits that are accrued by Members of the Legislative Assembly. They are services expected of members on behalf of the people of Alberta and their constituents.

One area I believe it's important we address is the question of the allowance allocated to the constituency office. When the review was made in 1979 and the report came out, it identified, after lengthy concerns raised by individual members, that an allocation should be made for Members of the Legislative Assembly to have an office to be known as a constituency office, whereby their constituents might be able to attend upon them and obtain information in terms of what was happening in and emanating from the Legislative Assembly. It was to be an access point where constituents could bring concerns to an MLA or to a representative of the MLA, such as the constituency secretary. A figure of \$14,700 per year was identified in 1979.

Since that time, I think it's safe to say that most members who have brought constituency office matters to the attention of this committee have indicated that they were really pleased with the kind of service the constituency office was providing within their constituencies. Adjustments have not been made since 1979 with respect to the allocation provided. Our tradition had been that even in the case of a by-election, the Members' Services Committee would continue the operation of such an office. Members will recall that in the unfortunate death of the former Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Notley, this committee dealt with the matter of

the extension and continuation of the constituency office and indicated that the person Mr. Notley had employed in his constituency office should continue and that the office should remain open as a service to the people of that constituency. It was then known as Spirit River-Fairview.

As years have gone by, each individual member has utilized their own initiative in terms of where they want the office to be located, the format for the office, and the like. I think most members would agree that it serves as a very, very useful extension of the Legislative Assembly and the offices members have in this particular building. It's become a well-known and important addition to the services we provide on behalf of our constituents and the people of Alberta.

I think the question essentially is the need to seriously take a look at dealing with the amount of dollars currently provided. I believe the figure is approximately \$15,400 per year. Some constituencies have found that is rather inadequate. In fact, most have found it to be inadequate. I would like to place before the Members' Services Committee a suggestion that constituency office allowances, which are solely for the service of constituents, be increased to \$30,000 per annum.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is \$30,000 per year. Is there any discussion?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I'd like to actually speak against it, Ken, mainly because I think we should be giving some example to the public of trying to hold costs where we can hold costs. Secondly, my experience has been that in the area of construction and furnishings, the prices are actually cheaper now than they were a couple of years ago because of the competition and the depression. It's not something any of us would have wished on Alberta, but it is certainly much easier to acquire accommodation or office space in most areas of the province. For those two reasons, the increasing availability and also that we should be setting some sort of example of moderation, I really don't see voting for any increase.

MS BARRETT: I guess I'd like to say that I am a member who believes the basic operating allowance that exists right now is not quite sufficient, given the city rates for rent. The

Member for Westlock-Sturgeon may find that rents in rural areas are a little bit more affordable, shall we say, than those in city areas. Of course, one of the reasons would have to do with property taxes, and the other would have to do with city constituencies preferring to locate on main routes. That is a really important consideration, and coming from an inner city riding, it's one of my most important considerations. The other thing is that it is quite tricky to have somebody staff a constituency office, either on a part-time basis or a casual basis. It's not easy to find someone who can afford not to have a full-time job. The alternative is to suffer the consequences of a staff turnover which might not be acceptable. I actually believe in the principle of the motion.

However, I too believe that going for \$30,000 for a constituency office might be considered a little high, given our ability to function within this building as groups or as individuals. It's not that I wouldn't agree to a motion of some increase, but it's my view and the view of the people I represent at this table, the New Democratic caucus, that a little caution might be exercised in this regard. I speak against the actual number in the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could the Chair ask if you have a figure in mind?

MS BARRETT: Yes, actually I do. I think it would be appropriate to raise the amount by \$5,000 or \$6,000. It could be that rural constituencies don't have the same problems as urban constituencies. We certainly don't have the driving problems that rural people do. That's for sure. Maybe some kind of a compromise could be worked out here.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I want to speak generally in support of the motion. I don't use a constituency office as extensively as some of our colleagues around this table and in our respective caucuses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Forgive me. Could we all speak a bit louder tonight. There seems to be an extra whir and buzz coming back this way.

MR. BOGLE: Over the past week I've tried to solicit input from other members. I think the Member for Edmonton Highlands very astutely pointed out a factor that those of us who

represent rural constituencies should keep in mind. That is, in order to obtain necessary office space in an urban constituency, it's important to be on one of the main thoroughfares or main arteries. Therefore, you're looking at higher priced accommodation. Certainly if we want to go on the backstreets, we can find less expensive accommodation, but then we lose half of the objective, which is to be visible and accessible to our constituents. Speaking as a rural member, I'm very appreciative of the support that was just given by our urban colleagues on the mileage charge. As the Member for Cypress-Redcliff pointed out, it's really important in most of the rural constituencies, in particular those that are quite large and sparsely populated.

It is also my understanding that members are not obliged to take all the constituency office allocation. If we were to increase the allocation and those of us who have a part-time arrangement deemed not to increase the support we're providing, we could still do that. The excess funds could either be left in the budget or, I understand, transferred to a portion of the budget used here in Edmonton. In other words, what I'm saying is that I think there is enough flexibility so that we can accommodate those members who want and need offices that require financial support in excess of what is currently provided and those of us who feel it can be a lesser sum. So I'm generally in support of the motion as presented.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I've had a constituency office in Redcliff, I guess, ever since there was the ability to have one. Before that I had an office that I paid for out of my own pocket; that would be for the first four years. I find it a very useful thing. It's a service to the constituents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. I think we'll take a three-minute break . . .

MR. R. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I'm just trying to assist the process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm just a little concerned that there are too many people wandering around. Thank you. All right, Alan, please.

MR. HYLAND: I know that members in the

cities have to pay higher rent than I have to pay. It's causing a lot of problems at \$15,700. I think I was the one who raised that in Members' Services last time we were budgeting, and it was suggested that it was okay to leave it. I think now is the time to do it. I support the motion, but I have problems with Mr. Kowalski's amount. I would be prepared to move an amendment to have it \$26,000 rather than \$30,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, the amount?

MR. HYLAND: Twenty six thousand dollars.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're now speaking to the amendment of \$26,000.

MRS. MIROSH: As the MLA for Calgary Glenmore I probably have one of the most expensive offices in the city of Calgary. It's a bare minimum. With a secretary for three hours a day, five days a week, it costs me \$15,000 on the button for one year for about 400 square feet: very, very small. It's in the middle of the constituency, and I haven't got any other place. I've searched the area. That is the bare bones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You didn't ask to lease my garage.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, I knew it would cost a lot more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It wouldn't have, but now it will.

MRS. MIROSH: That didn't allow me any increase for next year, and I anticipate that the rent will go up for next year. That's including utilities and is just for this year.

MR. TAYLOR: How much was the total? I'm sorry; I didn't hear you.

MRS. MIROSH: Fifteen thousand dollars.

MR. TAYLOR: Fifteen thousand dollars is the overall total?

MRS. MIROSH: For roughly 400 to 450 . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Don't forget that you're living

in a depressed area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You should know. You ran there once, didn't you?

MRS. MIROSH: It is depressed. A lot of my colleagues to the south of me are looking at about the same price, with no increment for next year. I would certainly support a motion to increase it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To?

MRS. MIROSH: I think that the figure Alan gave is sufficient.

MR. TAYLOR: Twenty six thousand dollars will allow you to move up to Calgary Elbow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has just used his time in respect of this one.

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to bring another dimension to the committee in the fact that when you're representing a constituency that has two towns of equal size, you've got competition. When you have an office in one particular town, the other town would like to have an office also. With that, I would support the amendment of the Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we can hear from Ray Speaker on this one, members. As I look down the list of constituency offices, no man on God's green earth has as many constituency offices as the Member for Little Bow.

MR. R. SPEAKER: I think Mr. Campbell puts his finger on the problem that I faced when this allotment was made in the first place. In my old constituency there were 20 population centres, each jealously guarding the fact that I was their representative and should be there to talk to them or have someone present. There are three more now; I have 23 with Gleichen, Cluny, and the Blackfoot Reserve on which I have to serve and make my presence known. I actually put a delay on establishing any kind of constituency contact or office there because the \$14,000 and some had been used up for these others. Some of the centres are not represented at the present time. I had to cut it

down because of the budget as it was. What I pay is \$35 rent and \$35 a month for the person to be on top of the list of various things that I request them to do and ask them to report on each month and as well make observations on what is going on in the community. So I'm continually in contact.

The sum that we presently get, as I said, doesn't adequately cover it. I was looking at reducing the \$35 I am giving some of them so that I could serve these other three constituencies. So I would speak in support of an increase.

The other problem that I know is faced is that the cost in the city is a lot more. If I were to serve, say, three or four primary ones, it would require at least \$26,000 to do an adequate job and to have someone do a competent job when they're sitting there.

MR. WRIGHT: Perhaps someone who has been around here longer than I could tell me the basis on which the \$14,700 was arrived at originally. Assuming it was thought to be a fair sum then, the consumer price index would show that in constant dollars that \$14,700 in 1980 — and I suppose it was in 1979, so it would be in excess of this, but not very greatly — would now come to \$21,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things that happened with it was that it came out of another committee that was dealing with MLA remunerations. This was the first time that the matter of constituency office allocations came up, so it really was nothing more than an educated guess and a shot in the dark and seemed to be a benefit to members. But in actual fact, where members have indeed set up constituency offices, it turns out to be an extension of Legislative Assembly offices. Every member should be very much aware of the fact that when you do open one of these, it's another place where every constituent expects you to be 24 hours a day, even if the Assembly is in session.

It's a benefit in one sense, but on the other hand it's far from being a benefit to you personally as a member. Again, I would reiterate for the benefit of Highlands and Strathcona . . . Well, it doesn't matter what I'm saying, so I'll recognize Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Speaking to the amendment, I

still feel this is a bit high. I'm one of those who is going to have three constituency offices, and I might rue the day that I put up a battle. I won't try to speak from experience. Naturally, I'm fairly expert for the last 10 to 12 years getting by where offices were zero. I think you people have been fairly lucky to have any money.

Nevertheless, speaking from a philosophical point of view and going along the lines that the Member for Edmonton Strathcona mentioned that \$14,700 would be now \$21,000, I would feel much happier if we were giving any kind of leadership and any kind of effect to the public that showed we're staying within range. We've raised our per capita allowance, the research allowance, and the mileage amount. I think we have to stay somewhere at least within the inflation allowance. I would move that we amend the amendment, if I may do so, to \$21,000 a year, which then keeps it the same rate as inflation. At least we can . . .

MR. WRIGHT: A little under, that would be. That was 1980.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have an amendment to the amendment. There will be no further subamendments entertained after this one. Anyone speaking to the amendment to the amendment? The figure is \$21,000.

MR. BOGLE: I find the information that the Clerk's office provided to us on the comparative study of Canadian Legislatures to be of real benefit at times. For those members who have their material present, if you turn to pages 38 and 39 . . .

MR. WRIGHT: What tab number?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was from the original set of documentation.

MR. BOGLE: It's the original documentation; that is correct. Support services for private members. I just want to make the point that if you're looking at the House of Commons as well as Quebec and Ontario . . . You can see that the total allowances for the House of Commons, for instance, amounts to \$97,000. That's for both the Ottawa and the constituency office. There is a maximum of \$77,600 for the Ottawa office and no restriction on the number of

staff. I don't see it for the constituency office. A Quebec member has an annual sum of \$74,700, at least one-third to be used in the Legislature office and one-third in the constituency office. In Ontario it's \$90,986.

I only wanted to point out these factors to members of the committee to show that even the amendment proposed by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff, reducing the amount originally proposed by the hon. Member for Barrhead from \$30,000 to \$26,000, is well below the figures represented by the three parliaments I've made reference to.

MR. TAYLOR: Ontario and Saskatchewan you mean?

MR. BOGLE: I don't see a quick breakdown on the constituency offices for Saskatchewan unless you do, hon. member.

The subamendment is \$21,000. I think that may be a little low for those members who view this as a very important part . . .

MR. TAYLOR: I can't lose on this. If I lose the vote, I win in the constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Further discussion on \$21,000.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if I could briefly outline what the constituency office started at and if I make a mistake I'm sure the Clerk will correct me. The constituency office initially started out \$10,000, I believe, and the Legislative Assembly Act specifically said \$5,000 for rent and \$5,000 for labour. Initially when you started a constituency office, you had to buy your furniture out of the \$10,000. So you tried to start it near the end of the year. Then they said, "Well, out of government surplus we'll supply furniture." Some of it out there is really surplus, but that's another story.

I should say that this came out of the Tevie Miller report. A couple of years after that the Legislative Assembly Act was changed to say that you could move the money within that \$10,000 for either office rent or staff; it didn't have to be \$5,000 of each. We made certain adjustments through Members' Services after that, and three years ago was probably when the last adjustment was made on the \$14,700. So it was adjusted from time to time. That's not to

say that the \$5,000 was anywhere near enough then, but it was an amount tagged out of the report, the report was accepted in full, and no changes were made to that report. So the constituency office amount couldn't even be changed to a more reasonable amount, because the report was accepted in its totality.

I think there's one thing we have to remember: there's a vast difference between somebody such as the Member for Edmonton Highlands, who has a riding in the capital city — even though you have a constituency office and everything, when your office is in the Legislature, there are certain things that are easier to do. When it's further away from the capital, it becomes more work in the constituency office.

I think we have a chance to make it right, and we should do it now. Mr. Taylor is sitting in an ideal position; he can vote against the motion and be happy if the motion is lost. But when he comes to starting three constituency offices, he's going to find that \$7,000 for each office isn't going to be enough. If we surprise him and support the motion, then he's going to go back and say, "Those blankety-blank guys, why did they do this to me?"

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's at least one more speaker. The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to recognize once again that there are differences from one constituency to another. Each individual MLA will have their own style and their own flexibility as to how he or she would want to deal with a constituency office. That's always been the tradition the Members' Services Committee has followed in dealing with this matter. An hon. member might want to put forward an argument that he or she views is best suited to his or her environment; another member might want to put forward an alternate argument. The argument that I choose to put forward is to reiterate once again that this not a service to the hon. member; this is a service to his or her constituents. Without any doubt, that's the purpose of a constituency office. There are clear rules that all members follow in terms of the operation of a constituency office.

Secondly, I wish to speak on behalf of rural members of the Legislative Assembly. There's no doubt at all in my mind that some hon.

members who have an office right here in the Legislative Assembly may choose, if they represent a constituency in the city of Edmonton, to not even have a constituency office and just use their Legislative Assembly office as an extension for that, and that's fine. It's prudent and good financial management on their part not to have a constituency office. There's nothing inherent in the motion that suggests they have to take advantage of one of these pennies. In fact, I would certainly hope that perhaps in the future this committee might even want to ask the question: is it a good expenditure to use the office in Legislature Building? If your constituency is in Edmonton or Westlock-Sturgeon, which is approximately a few miles away and bordering the city of Edmonton, why have the other office?

But some of us have constituencies that go some 120 to 150 miles as the crow flies, in one direction to the other. Some have constituencies that have a number of large urban centres within that constituency. I certainly would not want to have anything inherent in here that those of us who represent constituents who live in rural Alberta should have services that are less advantageous than what might be offered to those constituents of an urban member. I would be horrified to feel that there would be a suggestion that rural Albertans were to be viewed as second class citizens in all of this. I can explain what the parameters are for the constituency of Barrhead, the existence of the various towns, villages, county seats, and everything else. But to reiterate once again, the point I want to make is that it is service to our constituents; it's not a benefit to the member.

Secondly, I would ask for understanding in recognizing that the people of rural Alberta should have equal access to their provincial Legislature with the good folks who live in urban Alberta. I certainly hope there's no suggestion being made by anyone that rural Albertans are to be treated in a secondary nature with respect to this service that I believe they have come to expect and have some empathy and understanding for.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that certainly from my previous comments, I would not ever want to intimate that rural Albertans are second class and shouldn't have access to their MLAs. As I said

before, I face problems because the core part of the Edmonton Highlands riding is in the downtown area, and downtown areas mean much higher rents. So it's not that I'm being unsympathetic. I just want that to be understood.

MR. TAYLOR: I've heard all the arguments for more money. I've heard paranoia expressed by Barrhead that rural is being discriminated against, and I've heard the city ones say that because they're downtown, they need more money. I don't think there's any question — and I didn't frame my amount of money on what it would take you to do it. I think Parkinson's law rules supreme in a constituency office: the chores and the duties that are necessary to be done will expand with the amount of money that you have available to do them. I doubt whether we could move up to the level of \$50,000 or \$75,000 or \$90,000 for the House of Commons.

I'm basing my argument on the fact that we were at \$14,700 and normal inflation takes it up to \$21,000. I know everybody — including Barrhead, Edmonton Highlands, and hopefully my own constituency — will utilize all of that and probably have to dig into their pockets a little more. I'm saying that I think \$21,000 gives us an example of responsibility that moves it ahead at the rate of inflation. It's a good, solid amount that is probably not adequate, but I don't think that's what we intend with this figure. I think we're trying to move not to an optimum amount but to a sensible amount. I maintain that \$21,000 is a sensible amount.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question with respect to this amendment.

MR. KOWALSKI: If the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is prepared to follow through in his philosophy in terms of percentage allocations from \$15,400 to his suggestion of \$21,000, I'm sure we could work out a percentage allocation. Just a few minutes ago we approved motions which saw the second party in the Legislative Assembly move funding of from \$220,000 to \$380,000. It would seem to me that we could very easily calculate what the percentage increase has been for that one. If the statement being put forward by the Member

for Westlock-Sturgeon is that we should follow a percentage allocation from \$15,400 to \$21,000, I'd be happy to move a motion a little later to say that the same percentage, exactly the same level of funding, should apply for the second party in the Legislative Assembly.

MR. TAYLOR: Do we say what you just passed here ... Go ahead. I'll call your bluff on that. If you want to move us back to \$30,000 per, I'll take it right now. I'm getting tired of your ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Thank you very much. We're on the amendment, the subamendment.

MR. TAYLOR: As long as we all do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. TAYLOR: You allowed him to speak after we closed the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you recall, on the amendments people go wandering all over the place. Your style is becoming somewhat copied by various members of the Legislature, with all due respect.

All those in favour of the \$21,000 figure per year, please signify. Those opposed? Thank you. That was defeated six to three.

MR. BOGLE: May I ask a question for clarification before we move on? It is my understanding that a member has the ability to transfer unused funds from constituency office — to what category?

MR. STEFANIUK: Promotional and communications.

MR. BOGLE: Has this committee ever considered a reciprocal arrangement whereby a member could transfer money from promotional and communications to a constituency office?

MR. STEFANIUK: That is in effect now.

MR. BOGLE: It's in effect; all right.

MR. STEFANIUK: All allowances are transferable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The promotional and communications allowances are based on the number of constituents. That then allows for variations within that. So really you do have global funding within it.

Is there a call for the question?

MR. BOGLE: May we have a brief coffee break?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you.

[The committee recessed from 6:42 p.m. to 6:47 p.m.]

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, the second amendment to the original motion having been defeated, I'd like to speak in favour of the first amendment to the original motion, given that those members who do not need as much of an increase as some who may need an increase somewhat beyond the rate of inflation always have the ability not to spend that money, just as those of us who don't do extensive provincial travelling have the option of not spending the money we are thoroughly entitled to with respect to our car allowances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the amendment, the \$26,000 per year figure? Let the record show that it was carried unanimously. Thank you.

The Chair also apologizes for earlier saying that the previous motion was [defeated] six to three. I was accused of voting with the government by a government member. As I look down the table, I see the reason. I was really counting the other Mr. Speaker. So the Member for Cypress-Redcliff was indeed correct; I was counting that Mr. Speaker had voted but not the one at this end of the room. My gosh that's complicated.

Therefore, the motion as amended to \$26,000 becomes the motion that is carried by the meeting as a whole.

MR. WRIGHT: Speaking to the motion, I want to reiterate the burden of what Ms Barrett has said, that we made our position clear before. We feel that the correct sum was somewhat

lower, but rather than see us possibly end up with the motion unamended at \$30,000, I'm prepared to vote for the \$26,000.

MS BARRETT: I think we already did.

MR. WRIGHT: That was the amendment. Now we're voting on the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's one of those cases where an amended motion appears to be duplication.

All those in favour of the motion as amended? It's \$26,000. Opposed if any? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

The effective date of this, plus the previous item with respect to the kilometre rate, will be May 9, I assume, one day after the election.

MR. HYLAND: We're assuming then that the amounts we are setting are for a year, but we're prorating it from May 9.

MR. BOGLE: For clarification, Mr. Chairman, members who have submitted a claim on the kilometre charge for the first quarter would be entitled to submit a claim for the additional 3 cents?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any kilometres travelled after the election, yes.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the end of our meeting we will need to pass a motion to enable us to have whatever the appropriate amounts are to deal with the increased administration costs to the Legislative Assembly. It's a just a matter of being able to fold all of these various amounts in but to have the operative motion for us to carry it forward to the necessary budgetary process. That may or may not involve having a revised set of estimates for the Legislative Assembly brought in in this current budget process. It's customary that those are not challenged, since it comes from an all-party committee. I believe the government Whip is the one who's challenged to carry them through.

MR. CAMPBELL: That's correct. So

remember, Nick, if you're going to say anything, make it good.

MR. TAYLOR: It will be. Have I ever disappointed you?

MR. KOWALSKI: And if we have a standing vote, you may find 60 of your colleagues standing with you against this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the questions the Chair has is with respect to item 4(c). While we were dealing with furnishings for constituency offices, together we have artfully managed to work it into something even more important. Am I given to understand that there was some communication, perhaps with the Minister of the Environment speaking to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, or someone has had a conversation — thank you, vice-chairman Mr. Bogle.

MR. BOGLE: It was a discussion about furniture not only in constituency offices but in our offices in this building and, indeed, the whole operation in the Leg. Annex. [interjection] That may be something this committee will want to address as a specific at a later date. Ms Barrett, Mr. Taylor, and I have had some general discussions on that subject as well. I found the minister to be very sympathetic to the concerns that were expressed, and I think it might be in order, Mr. Chairman, if we were to invite him to a meeting in the not too distant future so that we could talk about ways to improve communication with his department. The end result would therefore be better services to our members for their constituency offices as well as their offices here, whether in this building or in the annex.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Might we then take that as information, and we will carry it on in our minutes for future consideration.

MR. HYLAND: If this idea is no good, throw it out. I wonder if we could take a committee of, say, three in whatever combination — whether it's one opposition and two government members or whatever — and spend some time discussing the thing and bring some sort of a proposal back to the committee so that when we do meet with the minister, we would have

something to work with. Whether we agreed on it or not, at least it would centre our discussions around some parameters that we would be talking about. I think it could be expanded to not only these offices in Edmonton but the furnishings in our constituency offices.

As I said when I brought it up before, you now get what's left over; you don't get to go to wherever they're storing the excess furniture and pick it. The manager of the local provincial building [inaudible] gives you what's there. Three or four meetings ago I described the stuff that went to Red Deer, for example. I just put that idea out, and I'd be prepared to serve on such a committee.

MS BARRETT: I have no objection to striking that sort of subcommittee if it's the will of this committee. We have no particular complaints, but we're not familiar with 83 ridings either.

MR. HYLAND: I think the majority of your stuff may come from Edmonton, where there's more of a pool.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we take it as a constructive suggestion and bring it up at a future meeting? We will carry it on as an agenda item and give the matter of how we might get around the daily limit a little more thought.

MS BARRETT: Might I further recommend then that Mr. Hyland, having been the sponsor of this consideration, come back to our next meeting, whenever that is, with a recommendation of the parameters of discussion with the minister and suggestions for the three members for the subcommittee.

MR. HYLAND: I'll dig out my Ontario report and reproduce it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hyland.

The matter of 4(d), telephone systems: that is primarily but not necessarily exclusively with respect to the annex.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I don't know what all the opposition offices are like, but I think the telephone system we have in the Legislature and the annex is something like our speaker system in the Legislature. With modern technology and trying to be the development

centre of modern technology, the equipment that the central government head office, per se — the governing office in the Legislature — has is just unreal. I don't know why we can't get more up to date and come up with a modern system throughout all caucuses. I know that the Clerk has talked to the administrator of the government members' offices, for instance, or has given a proposal, but I believe she hasn't replied yet. I think we should make a budget allotment so that we can do this and get ahead with it when we decide what system so that we have a better system here.

For example, there is a big change from when I became an MLA. Initially, I think government members had one number with about six lines coming in. At the end of the day in the House or just before it went in, you'd be forever trying to get a line. Those times should be gone now; at least now we've got individual lines. I think each member should have at least two lines, and we should have speakerphones and stuff like that, so at least it's a little more modern and a little more dependable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Strathcona first.

MR. WRIGHT: No, I was just making a smart crack. I was asking if you had a speakerphone.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I finally got one now that I've become the nonspeaking Speaker.

MS BARRETT: I might be off on this, but it was my understanding that as groups — we inevitably are four groups represented here — we had the right to requisition ordinary utilities that would suit our needs. I am advised by Bill Dryden, our chief of staff, that we are going to a different system very soon with respect to telephones. I wonder if in fact it's not possible for all caucuses to do that independent of this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you doing it in both buildings?

MR. DRYDEN: No, we've been advised only in the annex, that it's not possible in the Legislature Building yet. The system they're talking about and recommending with the renovations over there is Buscom, which I believe is somewhere in this building. Is it the

Premier's office that has it?

MR. TAYLOR: ET or private?

MR. DRYDEN: It's ET.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would like to suggest that perhaps someone from each of the four caucuses could meet before the next meeting and ascertain what the real needs and solutions are, rather than taking up the time of the committee tonight. It sounds as if there is obviously some way to solve it. Mr. Hyland, would you like to carry on with that little project as well on behalf of the government members, and Ms Barrett and Mr. Taylor?

MR. TAYLOR: I was going to stay out of it. As a matter of fact, I thought that was the only thing that has been done perfectly since we've been in here. Maybe we're outvoted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, but perhaps they could still check. Thank you.

The next item is with respect to budgetary over-runs. This matter was initially raised by the Member for Edmonton Highlands. Would you like to speak to it, Pam?

MS BARRETT: Yes, I would, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure that the Clerk of the Assembly, as per our previous discussion, was able to requisition some information with respect to particularly — I was going to highlight one of the three budgetary considerations from a total constituency allowance that may have been over-run in a number of instances prior to the election having been called. I don't have the documentation in front of me, but I do know that this has happened in several instances in ridings now represented by New Democrats.

What I would like to propose is that this committee look at a two-stage formula — it doesn't matter if the second stage doesn't happen tonight -- which would allow the members who inherited sadly deficient constituency office allowances, whether that was through the operating, promotional, or communications allowances, to be permitted, by the formula agreed to by this committee, to have their allowances restored to approximately eleven-twelfths of what their annual constituency allowance would have been; even slightly less might be fair.

I don't know what our previous discussion means in terms of constituency allowances.

MRS. MIROSH: We just made this retroactive.

MS BARRETT: It was retroactive, but what does it mean in terms — would it eliminate the relative deficits that some of our members inherited when they took over in a constituency? It's at the will of the committee. I'm sure everybody understands that some members have inherited constituency allowances that are totally over-run in terms of communications and promotions.

MR. WRIGHT: They're all used up in other words.

MS BARRETT: Some have inherited constituency allowances which are significantly and disproportionately spent in terms of even the operating allowance, compared to the number of days in the fiscal year which had elapsed prior to the call of the election.

I'm asking, first, for a formula to fix the problem as we see fit. I don't think we have to nickel and dime this one. We're talking about something that is principal, to give these members a chance at having equity and, in the longer run, Mr. Chairman, considering some kind of formula that might kick in after three years or so of a constituency budget so that no more than 10, 12, or even 15 percent of the overall could be spent in any one month, to protect against this kind of event in the future. It's pretty complicated, but there it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The second part, with respect to the last two years before an election had a term gone full term, we'll carry on the agenda for a future meeting.

The documentation we have relates to the constituency of Calgary Mountain View. The difference is \$1,131, if you want to jot that down. With respect to Edmonton Glengarry, the difference is \$6,421; Edmonton Kingsway, \$6,256; and Olds-Didsbury, \$7,913. I'm leaving off the cents here.

MR. TAYLOR: On a point of information to the Clerk of the Legislature. How were amounts claimed for the constituency offices? Were they done by quarter or yearly or what?

MR. STEFANIUK: In the case of a constituency office, Mr. Chairman, there are no direct payments made to the member. Rather, payments are made pursuant to lease agreements entered into with a landlord. Payments are made for staff engaged in a constituency office pursuant to a contract agreement made with an employee or staff person. In some instances, there are contracts entered into for payment of utilities directly to the company or body supplying the utilities, because they are not included with the lease. So payments are made on the basis of contractual agreements.

MR. WRIGHT: And also goods and services for promotion, et cetera?

MR. STEFANIUK: That is the constituency office by itself. We are grouping the three allowances. With the communications allowance, those payments are made to the supplier of a commodity or a service based on invoices approved by the member and delivered to the Legislative Assembly's administrative branch. Similarly, with the use of the promotional allowance, the commodities or services are paid for on the basis of invoices received and approved.

MR. TAYLOR: With an amount of \$6,000 or \$7,000, how could you get have . . . Was that due to paying for rent or for a service ahead of time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was primarily moved into the area of promotional items, and the previous Members' Services Committee had not been able to meet to draw the guidelines with respect to it. Then the election was called even before government members knew it was being called.

MR. TAYLOR: I see; you could buy a year's supply of buttons or something like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other constituency raised was Athabasca-Lac La Biche. But as we've checked into it, there is no discrepancy.

MR. SCARLETT: It was transferred in the budget. One hundred percent of the promotional allowance might be spent, but it didn't use any of the constituency office

allowance. So in the total it doesn't make any difference.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, in front of me I have the readout from June 17, 1986, with respect to Edmonton Kingsway. What I show for a total of all remaining balance -- that is, what is known as budget unspent -- is \$8,723.98. All the previous expenditures had been made by the previous member.

I have a motion, and I'm open to all kinds of friendly amendments. I move that through the Clerk's office, if I may be so bold as to do this, we put out a memo to all MLAs who were not in this Assembly prior to the election call, asking them to submit discrepancies that they believe to be inordinate, given the budgets that one would ordinarily start with at the beginning of a fiscal year and agree then to retroactively prorate their constituency allowances -- those are their promotional, communications, and operational allowances -- to a figure which would represent eleven-twelfths of the year. In fact, it would be as though they became members in June instead of May.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I was going to make mention of a suggestion as to how we resolve this kind of concern, but Ms Barrett has brought forward a motion. So I'll speak around the motion, if I can stay on the agenda the chairman has for us.

In retrospect, I think there is one bit of information that perhaps all members would want to know. As I recall, budget night was a Thursday. The Premier called the election on that Thursday. We had a meeting of the Members' Services Committee scheduled for the following Friday morning at 7:30. We were going to lay down the guidelines as to how members might deal with this kind of issue. With the election being called, the House of course dissolved, and the committee no longer existed. And that was that. Some of us were guessing the election would be called the next Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. So the Members' Services Committee didn't have a chance to deal with it, so you've got the issue.

This is a new Legislature. We're dealing with matters that occurred in a former Legislature. Ms Barrett has a recommendation. The Clerk now has before him an horrendous amount of paperwork and bookwork in calculating all the figures we've agreed to this evening. My

suggestion was going to be that the Clerk should calculate all these things out. We've agreed that the new constituency office allowance is going to be such and such an amount. I guess beginning on May 9, 1986, and going through to March 31, 1987, the amount will be prorated on those days within that 365 days. It wouldn't be back to April 1.

We know what the figures are for the promotional allowance and the communication allowance. They haven't changed; they're all fixed. My thought was that he should basically calculate for all 83 members of the Legislative Assembly what their apportionment would be for those three items beginning May 9, 1986, through to March 31, 1987. He will have to submit for the estimates a global figure that will cover all these things. Just what happened from April 1 through to May 9, I have no idea what the figures are or anything else, but undoubtedly a whole series of calculations can be made. But there could be one global one. If we determine what the figure would be from April 1, 1986, to March 31, 1987, on the new arrangements we've had, reduce the amount of dollars that were utilized in that period from April 1 to May 9, then the constituencies of Calgary Mountain View, Edmonton Glengarry, Edmonton Kingsway, and Olds-Didsbury are all on par with everybody else and away we go. Recognizing that that was the previous Legislature and we're now into a new Legislature and that we're carrying over business from one Assembly to the next, I thought it might be the easiest way of doing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair has recognized a signal from the Member for Edmonton Highlands who wishes to withdraw her motion. Do we have unanimous consent to withdraw the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Is that also some kind of a signal that the Member for Barrhead will make a motion congruent with his remarks?

MR. KOWALSKI: We'll have to do this all over again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: While you're thinking about that ...

MR. BOGLE: Before the member does, I recall a letter that was sent by Mr. Hawkesworth to the Speaker with copies to members of the committee. As I recall what Mr. Hawkesworth was suggesting, it was that all new members of the Legislature as of May 8 should have a budget prorated back to May 8. That was the import of the letter. There's still the question of those members who were re-elected on May 8. There was a period of time between April 1 and when the actual writ was issued.

It seemed to me that Mr. Hawkesworth's suggestion was neater and cleaner in the sense of fairness and equity. It seems to me that those members who used parts of their budgets prior to the call of the election did so within their rights, because this committee had not set any guidelines. We're now recognizing that it's not fair to a new member who has inherited a budget which has been used in a disproportionate way relative to the amount of time left in the fiscal year. So if there is a way to address that concern, keeping in mind fairness and equity to both new members and those who have been returned — I'm not suggesting a motion. I wouldn't want to be so presumptuous, as the suggestion actually came from Mr. Hawkesworth. I wonder if that might be the basis for a motion the committee could consider.

MR. WRIGHT: I think it has to be the basis, because we already agreed earlier that the new allowances would be prorated to May 8. Perhaps Mr. Kowalski could incorporate the idea I'm having, if it recommends itself to him, into his motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if the Chair might suggest that in the next two minutes that Strathcona and Barrhead come together and shrink the miles.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, it's a very simple suggestion.

MR. BOGLE: Are we taking a quick break?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's take the two minutes so you can work it out on paper.

[The committee recessed from 7:18 p.m. to 7:23 p.m.]

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I would move that allocations be determined for all members for the period to March 31, 1987, based on eleven-twelfths of the per annum allocations approved on July 29, 1986. The allocation will cover the constituency office allowance, the communication allowance, and the promotional allowance.

MRS. MIROSH: Are you giving any numbers?

MR. KOWALSKI: They'll be different for everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We need to hear it once more, please.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay, and then I'll explain it. Allocations are to be determined for all members for the period to March 31, 1987, based on eleven-twelfths of the per annum allocations approved on July 29, 1986. The allocation will cover the constituency office allowance, the communication allowance, and the promotional allowance.

What it would mean is that on the basis of the figure we agreed to tonight of \$26,000 for the constituency office allowance, which applies to every member — each one of us also has a communication allowance, which is different for all of us because it is based on population within each constituency. The promotional allowance is the same for everybody. Mr. Clerk, I think it is \$2,100 per year or \$2,400.

MR. STEFANIUK: The promotional allowance varies.

MR. KOWALSKI: But just by \$100 or so for each member.

MR. HYLAND: There's a minimum.

MR. KOWALSKI: The Clerk would add those three figures. Each member would begin with eleven-twelfths as of May 8 or 9, which would be put in that little account. We'd all get a statement. This is a new Legislature, and we'd begin on that basis for this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we'd have topped it all up.

MR. WRIGHT: There is still one thing that

hasn't been specifically addressed. That is that there may yet be some over-runs in the particular constituencies saved up from the previous period. The question still has to be answered of where that comes from. The answer is from the surplus in the budgets generally for the period between April 1, 1986, and May 8, 1986.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps, Mr. Wright, I could just explain. What the Clerk would have to do is arrive at a figure for 83 members on this basis. Within the estimates we have a certain amount of money that will cover 1986-87. That's been adjusted. So whatever that new figure is would be minus what is existing in there already, and that would be the additional amount added to the estimates that we would be dealing with the Legislative Assembly. It would all be covered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Bohdan looks like he's not sure.

MR. CAMPBELL: Are you still with us, Bohdan?

MR. STEFANIUK: Oh, I'm still with you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect to the next item on the agenda, 4(f), a question was raised by the Deputy Speaker with respect to promotional allowance.

MR. TAYLOR: Is this the solid gold pins?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, a previous memo came around about the pins, which we're not showing on the agenda at the moment. This is a matter where he wanted to be able to write a \$25 cheque or something or other to, say, the Boy Scouts association. I assume that in a previous lifetime the Members' Services Committee did not grant this permission, or it was allowed to happen, or what?

MR. STEFANIUK: Rejected the proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rejected it before?

MR. TAYLOR: Isn't there a problem here, Mr. Chairman, of infringing on the federal tax thing? If you gave a cheque for a charitable donation, how would it be policed? Not that any of the MLAs would be guilty of getting the kudos and honour of donating to the Boy Scouts and then having the nerve to take it off our personal income tax. Nevertheless, it could open a can of worms as far as issuing receipts is concerned.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I have grave concerns about the suggestion that has been made. I think the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has just pointed out a very valid concern. I believe that past Members' Services Committees have moved a long way to enable elected Members of the Legislative Assembly to present pins and gifts to various groups. I know I've presented plaques with the provincial coat of arms on them and appropriate statements along with signatures. But to go to cash gifts, and that's what we're really talking about, is an area where — if a member feels that strongly about a particular organization, then the donation should be by the member as a private citizen, for which a receipt in most cases can be given because they're registered and it's therefore deductible on income tax. So I think this would open a whole new area. While the intent of the hon. Member for Lethbridge West is probably correct, I think there are many more minuses with the proposal than there are pluses.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I believe this happened last time for a short while about three years ago and then there were some changes made. When I spoke to the member, I said I could support his proposal as long as the receipts that were turned in were the receipts he was getting from his charitable donation. Those receipts came in and then nobody received the tax benefit. The original receipt had to come to the Legislature, and that would be the only condition I would support it on — that there wasn't a double receipt.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt at all that the public would regard this as treating, not merely with the member's money this time, mind you, but with the government's money.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I read that we have consensus to reject the proposal. I assume that because we take no action on it, that means rejection. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are two other items. We need a motion on one, and I believe the vice-chairman has been working on one, to enable us to amend the overall budget of the Legislative Assembly with regard to estimates.

MR. WRIGHT: I have a point under other business too, if I may raise it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BOGLE: By the actions we've taken this evening with regard to our own allowances on a per member basis as well as on a per caucus or per leader basis, the kilometre rate increases, the constituency office allowance, and the most recent adjustment to reflect the overspent allowances of some members, we are in fact placing some additional work on the Clerk and the Clerk's staff. Therefore, I would like to move that the Clerk of the Assembly, subject to the approval of the Speaker — because I understand we're under some time line pressures here in terms of getting our budgets before the House — be authorized to alter the previously approved general administration budget to reflect additional funding now approved for member kilometre rate allowances and constituency office allowances and to adjust proportionately the overspent members' allowances.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? Let the record show unanimous.

MR. WRIGHT: It's a nonbudgetary item, Mr. Chairman, but I have been asked to raise it by my hon. friends as being a matter of some irritation to them, and justly I think. When there is a scholarship or grant or monetary payment of some kind in a constituency, the cheque or voucher or whatever is customarily handed out by the Member of the Legislative Assembly if that member happens to be a

government one, but not otherwise. I had a good example the week before last. A memo arrived from the Minister of Culture saying that a couple of people in my constituency had won scholarships and could I pick up the cheques and give them to them. Other people had said that this didn't happen, so I was puzzled by this. I was on my way up there, and the secretary called out and said, "Oh, Mr. Wright, Mr. Anderson's secretary called to say that it was a mistake; the cheques have been mailed."

There are other examples that I won't go into. But when we asked about this before in the last Legislature, the reply was made that it's the government that has made these provisions and it's fitting, therefore, that a government member should hand out the cheques. Well, aside from the fact that it's public money, it just isn't so anyway, because something like a scholarship or, for example, the literary awards are arrived at strictly on the basis of competition or other objective criteria.

We believe that the system that I understand is rigorously followed with members of the House of Commons, that these monetary awards are in fact borne to the lucky recipients by the member, should be made a practice in this province too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your representation has been made. I'm not certain that it's really within the total ambit of the Members' Services Committee, but I'll do some checking for you.

MR. WRIGHT: We're quite prepared to raise it more publicly if need be, but we hoped it wouldn't be necessary, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thank you. I don't take that as a threat to what I said.

MR. WRIGHT: No, I wasn't making it as such.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll do some checking on it, Gordon, and come back to you.

There is one other item I'd like to raise.

MR. BOGLE: May I, on that point, briefly, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. BOGLE: I'm not trying to deviate from the

point the member has made, but it was alluded to earlier in a discussion when we were speaking of space in the Legislature Annex. The government in the province of Alberta views it as its right to allocate space within the Legislature Building and the Legislature Annex, contrary to a practice that's followed in most other jurisdictions, where that is handled by the Speaker in consultation with the Whips of the various parties. Nonetheless, that's been a practice that has been in place in Alberta since before I was a member of this Assembly. Does it go back, Ray, to when you were part of Executive Council?

MR. R. SPEAKER: The Minister of Public Works always had the say.

MR. BOGLE: I see. But I think there is an opportunity for us as a committee, particularly with regard to the Legislature Annex building ...

MR. TAYLOR: I suspect the government would be glad to get rid of it right now. But they will be in another month if I keep at it.

MR. BOGLE: I raise the point in light of the discussion that Mr. Taylor had with me when he mentioned that opposition members are being asked to move from the second floor to the third floor so that the second floor can be renovated. Then you're going to move back to the second floor? That's not correct?

MR. TAYLOR: That's what we're thinking.

MR. R. SPEAKER: They want to remove the asbestos from the second floor. There is no indication that we would go back.

MR. BOGLE: I guess it's part of the bigger issue. It seems to me, from my new exposure to the Legislature Annex, that there's a completely different set of standards used in that building than there is in the Legislature proper. That may be an opportunity for the Members' Services Committee, through the Speaker, to become more actively involved. We've talked about meeting with the minister of public works, and he is certainly quite pleased and prepared to come and meet with us. I think there are a number of things we can do to improve the overall appearance and quality of

the surroundings in which we work.

That's not directly related to your point, but it is a cousin if not a brother. So I wanted to raise it under that context. I think that's an area where this committee might become involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sort of like a 26th cousin.

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to support the member. We think it should be enlarged, to put office allocation where other Legislatures usually put it. It should be part of the Speaker's Office. Although you would continue, whenever I brought it up here, to push it out like an unwanted child, I still insist that in the long run we should be putting it where most Legislatures do, which is in a committee like this. If you think about it, most governments would like to get out from under making arbitrary rules. Let the committee make those decisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's a topic well worth discussion by the committee as whole. I only brought you to order because it wasn't germane to the other topics at the time.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm trying to bring the little child back in. He can't deny paternity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to quickly raise a matter. I believe that tonight, by reason of the motions we've carried, the matter probably has been dealt with. With respect to the leader of the Liberal Party, last week I felt we got involved in a rather interesting exchange of memos and discussions with respect to hiring of your staff. On checking the records here, in the interregnum between two Members' Services Committees and with the transition from the previous Speaker to myself, the Liberal Party was given a directive as to the various categories of persons to hire; namely, three secretaries and two research persons. Then what happened was that we ended up with three research persons and two secretaries for a time and then three secretaries. In addition to that, I gather that we didn't get through the proper hiring documentation for the third researcher that was hired.

I assume from all of this that with the increased funding as received and approved this evening, this will now be at an end. So we don't need to consume great gobs of each other's time

with respect to this kind of thing. Is that your understanding? Is that correct?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, with the retroactive funding and everything, I think that can be done. I would just hope that we would move as fast as we can, because we have one employee that hasn't been paid, that we've had to loan money to out of our pocket to [inaudible]. So if you could speed up the process, we'd appreciate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will recall, hon. member, that we did our utmost to move heaven and hell last Thursday night and Friday morning, and then we came out of the House and discovered nobody even bothered to say thanks. They said, "No, the whole deal's off." Anyway, the net result is that as of tonight, this is okay, so we don't need another motion of this committee to deal with this.

MR. TAYLOR: As a point of information, so we don't look as if we're unappreciative, the deal was off because apparently in the short term it jeopardized the employee's pension benefits. The employee that we have, believe it or not, was a former employee of government, and somehow or other there's some transfer of pensions involved. If we did it the way you and I agreed to, which we appreciated very much and which I thought was fine, somehow or other the powers that be who effect transfer of pensions didn't like it, so it couldn't go ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's okay. So that's straight.

The date of the next meeting: because we have dealt with the most pressing matters, perhaps we could leave this for about two to three weeks, unless you have some other items.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, just one question. The estimates will now be going to the Legislative Assembly. Will they be coming back to this committee for a final review before they go, or will committee members leave it with the Clerk?

MS BARRETT: Our motion said that the Clerk would prepare the information according to motions passed tonight, and with the Speaker's approval, it will just go right into the estimates. Right?

MR. BOGLE: Would it be in order — if some members have an interest, I'm sure the Clerk and the Speaker would welcome their perusal of the documentation. But we won't be having a formal meeting on it.

MR. KOWALSKI: Pending that, I think it would be appropriate, though, for a representative from each of the various caucuses to sit with the Clerk just before that final printing is made, to ensure that everything is there so that there's no . . . Knowing the competence of the Clerk, I know the possibility of error is very, very remote, but it would probably be a comfort factor for all to know that they had at least 10 minutes to look at it and say, "Okay, that's that."

MS BARRETT: Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Besides, it would be terribly helpful to underline the fact that all of you are going to support the material unanimously in the House.

MR. KOWALSKI: My only point is that if there's an error in it and we all support it, then we'll come back and say: what did we do?

MR. BOGLE: Nick and I will come in together, won't we Nick?

MR. WRIGHT: What the Minister of the Environment means, I think, is that he wants to make sure that what he thought was happening is in fact happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stay tuned for the next installment to discover if it indeed did.

MR. TAYLOR: If Mr. Bogle and I have parity, you'll see us on the golf course.

MS BARRETT: Are you calling the next meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we'll leave it to the call of Chair, if that's agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you all very much for this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 7:44 p.m.]

