

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[12:17 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We may as well get started since we declared there are a fair number of things to be done today. I assume you all have copies of the agenda in your books. First off, if you look at item 10, other business, I've been notified that under other business we have something to do with MLA gas credit cards, Mr. Bogle, and item 2 under other business, MLA expense claim forms, by the member from Milk River as well. Any other items for new business? I'm sure we can adjust as the spirit moves us if we need to.

Okay. What is your wish with regard to item 2, the approval of minutes of October 24?

MR. WRIGHT: It looks great to me, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff. Adoption?

MR. BOGLE: Excuse me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, a question?

MR. BOGLE: There was just one minor change that I saw, and now I don't see it on the page. It's where I made reference to the chairs in this room. These were once chairs in the cabinet room, and I made the point that it might be nice that if these chairs are to be replaced, members have the opportunity to purchase a chair if they so desire. I note the minutes make reference to use in constituency office; I don't think I said that. I know the intent was . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It certainly wasn't what you meant.

MR. BOGLE: It wasn't what I meant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that correction, the motion to adopt the minutes. All those in favour please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wave a fork or a croissant. Opposed? Carried.

With regard to the chairs, it was determined by Public Works, Supply and Services that to

hold back a supply of chairs from the Chamber itself for use in here was not really appropriate when they looked at it a second time. So all the chairs from the Legislative Assembly, as far as I know, have been sold and spoken for. They're all gone, so there's no need for any replacement of the chairs here. Nevertheless, we'll keep it on record that if indeed these do move . . .

MR. BOGLE: A question, Mr. Chairman. Where are the surplus chairs? We're not using all of the chairs from the old cabinet room in this room.

MR. CAMPBELL: Are there some in 512?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, those are a different kind, but we'll check. We'll try to find out.

MR. BOGLE: If it could be checked. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Business arising from the minutes. Anything further to report on 3(a), Mr. Bogle?

MR. BOGLE: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: 3(b). We had a subcommittee with regard to the telephone system. Nothing to report at the moment?

MR. HYLAND: It's just ongoing. We didn't get any dates on . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: So I gather that the subcommittee is in process.

MS BARRETT: I think the installations are just going forward. I keep seeing office by office being redone. I think Public Works, Supply and Services was done just a few days ago. I think they're just going ahead.

MR. HYLAND: Hopefully floor by floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Item 3(c). I take it from the last meeting, Edmonton Strathcona, that you're now getting some of those cheques for presentation?

MR. WRIGHT: I haven't received any yet, Mr. Speaker, but maybe there haven't been any. I

hadn't realized that that change had been made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very well, I'll raise the matter again. Sorry; it was Westlock-Sturgeon who had mentioned that.

MR. WRIGHT: I think it was I who raised the question in the House one time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: So that item in fact we'll put over to the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our understanding then — the Clerk has refreshed my memory — is that the leader of the Liberal Party made the statement that he had received some, so we'll follow through on that.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I apologize. I was remiss earlier in not offering regrets to the committee on behalf of Mr. Taylor, who is unable to be present today. In his place one of the staff members from the Liberal caucus, who is being terribly abstemious with regard to the calories but is still present, and then again as an observer the leader of the Representative Party.

3(d), office allocation. I've got nothing to report, because I've just been too all wrapped up in other things that have been happening, primarily with the Chamber. That also impinges on whether or not some discussions will be held and any movement from the discussions with regard to the new Deputy Minister of Executive Council. It's one of the areas that Mr. de Rappard and I had noted we would be talking about now with shifting to Dr. Mellon. He and I have already been in initial contact, and that will be one of the areas we discuss.

As you know, it's a matter of jurisdiction, the areas which the Speaker is responsible for and government and that interface. In terms of the federal House, for example, the Speaker is in control of the buildings, security, and things like that. So we need to do some comparisons there in terms of our discussions and hopefully work to what might be seen to be a better or fairer or more mutual way of allocating space. I'm sure this is going to be a long-term item.

MR. WRIGHT: Is there currently dissatisfaction on the part of any group?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understood that the Liberal Party was not entirely at ease. Is that fair, or do you know?

MS WHYTE: [Inaudible] participate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's some ongoing concern there.

In regard to item 3(e), you recall at our last meeting that this was dealt with briefly. My interpretation may well have been erroneous, but I understood that there were to be no monetary gifts either in cash form or by cheque form, gifts handed out to various groups on behalf of a member no matter how worthy the cause. I gather the interpretation by the Member for Lethbridge West was that the committee had said there would be no cash gifts made; therefore, a request was made to do donation by cheque. I didn't believe that that was indeed what the committee had meant. I'm prepared to take direction from the committee or even to invite Mr. Gogo to our next meeting and have him make his case at any rate.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it's a very, very fine line interpretation. My idea of this is that if somebody comes along, some group in your constituency, and says: "Hey, you're the MLA. Can you give us the money to do something?" We say no to that. Oftentimes a group will come along ... In my area everybody's having a 4-H club or something like this and they say, "Would you like to donate a trophy?" The response is, "Okay, how much and what's it for?" and all the rest of that and then ask them to purchase the trophy for you because you don't spend a half day going around to buy a trophy. It's presented on behalf of the constituency of Barrhead or wherever the heck it is, and you give that group the cheque for \$20 or \$25 and then file it under this scheme that we have. I've done that, and I want members to know that I've done that. It's that fine interpretation here that bothers me. I'm not sure if I misunderstood it. We talked about it in the past as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Better they should send you the bill and you pay it.

MR. KOWALSKI: I appreciate and recognize that, but that's the intent anyway. The same purpose is resolved and accommodated. I would get a bill or a receipt from them anyway. That will always be accommodated with it.

MR. WRIGHT: I would have thought that was just over the line really, because that's a thing of some intrinsic value. It's certainly symbolic value; it's a lasting thing, which is a donation, really. I think on the right side of the fine line it seems like an advertising thing. If it helps them out, it's mainly a gift, because it really doesn't do a great deal for publicity. But it's still ephemeral. It's not a donation essentially, or if it is, it's on the right side of the line so to speak, something that has some intrinsic value and stands as a small monument, if you like, to you or to constituencies. I think it's not right.

MR. HYLAND: As far as stuff like trophies and that, I've given trophies, sponsored trophies. Some of them I've paid for and submitted a receipt, and some of them I've had people bill the Legislature directly. I guess you could really get into an interesting conversation there. I think what happened, I believe, a few years ago was that some members started to give cash donations. I believe some even requested the Speaker's office or the Legislative Assembly Office to have cheques drawn up for a certain amount for a certain group.

As I remember, we had quite a bit of discussion on it in the last committee. That doesn't mean to say that that binds the committee's hands by any means. We had a lot of discussion on it. I guess I would have to go back and look, because my memory just isn't quite as clear as what it should be on the final decision out of there regarding the cash contribution part. It's clear as far as trophies and that sort of thing, but as far as the cash part, I guess I was the one who told Mr. Gogo without looking back in the old minutes that it wouldn't be accepted if he gave cash, but it might be accepted if the proposal was this way. But I should say that I told him it would be subject to the committee's acceptance or rejection.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I recall the discussion we had a few months ago on this matter, and I'm sure our intent was that by

whatever means the MLAs should actually be giving out money, whether it's in the form of a legal tender or it's in the form of a cheque. I would move that if Mr. Gogo feels quite strongly about wanting to make a case to us, we invite him to our next meeting on this matter please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have a motion. Mr. Bogle, did you want to speak to that or to the motion which is to invite him to the next meeting?

MR. BOGLE: I'd certainly like to echo what Ms Barrett has said. My feelings were very similar to those of Mr. Wright. However, if Mr. Gogo has some other information he wants to share with the committee, I think he should be invited and be given an opportunity, and let's deal with the issue once and for all.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Depending upon developments, I would hope that the next meeting is going to occur within the next two weeks, and we'll come back to that.

Would someone enlighten me on MSC 1/86 and 2/86?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the matter contained in those two Members' Services orders has been previously discussed and approved by the committee. This is to bring before the committee the question of formal approval of the orders and their final text as signed.

MR. KOWALSKI: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: These are the ones we had approved and signed. This is a pro forma matter, isn't it?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the copies of that are under section 4.

MS BARRETT: Could I ask you, Mr. Chairman: what do we do with these now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hopefully, just fill out the forms and collect them. For a formal basis, the procedure is just to bring them back here as a ratification and presentation and show that they've been done, or do we need to pass a motion?

MR. STEFANIUK: We should have a motion recording their final approval, Mr. Chairman, and within 15 days of the next sitting of the Assembly, the Speaker would be required to table them in the House.

MR. WRIGHT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Strathcona has made the motion with respect to the first order, which is MSC 1/86.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried. Thank you.

With respect to order MSC 2 . . .

MR. HYLAND: I move MSC 2/86.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. The motion is carried. Thank you.

All hon. members will remember that last time we had a considerable amount of discussion with regard to the members' benefits package. The information was supplied to you at that time. Those who were not present at the time received the documentation in their offices. At that time we were favoured by the representatives from Red Deer — different kind of representatives — who have kindly returned to be with us today. In that regard, we circulated to you just at the beginning of the meeting correspondence from McPherson & L'Hirondelle Associates. If you haven't had time to review that, I would invite you now to

take a moment to at least read the first page, because it indeed clarifies some things which are very essential for the operation of this committee as well as for the two gentlemen who are with us. In particular, I point out paragraph two.

Perhaps I might have to send one to the Red Deer Advocate.

MS BARRETT: Are we open to questions now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Surely. With regard to this document and the answers, would you like to do that? Do you want to respond to questions generally, or do you want to do just a quick overview update and then take questions?

MR. McPHERSON: Perhaps if I may, Ms Barrett, before you ask your question — I'm trying to anticipate it — I did want to make one remark about our opening letter, at least.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, the question was raised about our role in this project, not in the meeting last time but outside the meeting. We wanted to address it in the meeting, on the public record.

Essentially, we have acted as consultants in reviewing and analyzing the entire group benefits package afforded the MLAs through their various carriers. At the outset we suggested to the Speaker that if he wanted this work done, we would do it on the basis of not receiving a consultants' fee from the Legislative Assembly or the committee. We undertook to do a review of the entire package.

Our analysis at the end of the day has been that many of the benefits, in fact the bulk of the benefits, should remain where they are. However, there can be marked improvements within those benefits that will address the unique needs of Members of the Legislative Assembly. We are not in a position, nor were we mandated, to make those changes. We're making those recommendations to the committee and suggest that the committee contact their officials, whoever those people are, to effect the changes by the existing carriers.

As an example, I'm speaking specifically of the anomaly that exists within the dental plan that provides for a one-year waiting period for a Member of the Legislative Assembly. In our view, that's wholly inappropriate for people who may be here for a short period of time or a long

period of time. The fact is that there's a one-year waiting period on dental. We think there's a shortfall in the life benefits. But those benefits should remain within their existing carriers, with improvements.

There are two benefits that we feel can provide much better services on a better cost-effective basis. They are the supplemental health benefit and the long-term disability benefit. There will be a commission paid to us if this committee agrees with our recommendations to implement those two benefits through the carriers we've recommended. There will be no remuneration paid to us if the committee decides not to accept our recommendations or, in fact, decides that they would rather use services other than ours to acquire these benefits. So we would be paid a commission, a normal commission paid by an underwriter who is successful in implementing these benefit lines, if the committee chooses.

I think that sums it up, Chairman. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: On the second page of the correspondence from McPherson & L'Hirondelle, I see that Bohdan Stefaniuk was going to report on a comparison of various insurance packages available to members of other Legislative Assemblies. I wonder if he would be prepared to do that.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the information for comparative purposes was not readily available from a single source, as we anticipated it may have been through the survey conducted by the province of Ontario. Telephone inquiries made to other Legislatures have not as yet produced the requested information.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, one of the reasons we're involved in this is because we all assumed that certain things had happened with respect to the disability aspect, and as a member of this committee, we approved such a program a couple of years ago, and I assumed that that had happened. I found out a couple of months ago it has not happened, so that has now opened up this whole business of this whole review.

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: As far as I can see, we've got to deal with several items here. One is the long-term disability program, which we need. The recommendation you've got basically says that — there is a recommendation for it?

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. The second item, your changes within benefits that come — we have a plan that we're currently involved in and, like most people, the last thing in the world you ever do is look after things that affect you, though periodically you do take the time to do it.

The suggestions you're making, Mr. McPherson, basically are that we go with the basic plan we have but just enhance, improve, and change it.

MR. McPHERSON: Yes. In life or in which benefit?

MR. KOWALSKI: In life.

MR. McPHERSON: Would you like me to elaborate on that?

MR. KOWALSKI: Would you, in a very brief, quick way, overview?

MR. McPHERSON: There's \$150,000 maximum available to members. That falls short of two times their earnings, as normal group benefits will provide, for some Members of the Legislative Assembly who have higher earnings because of their positions either within Executive Council, as chairmen of committees, or that type of thing. We think the benefit should be raised. The nonevidence maximum limit should be raised to \$300,000, which would capture everyone. We think that can be done for no cost, on life.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, how are you going to handle this? An individual motion on each one or . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's what I would prefer to do. We'll do it one at a time. Are you prepared to make the motion to approve this?

MR. HYLAND: The first one is the long-term disability?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The first one I have here is life insurance.

First off, I've been looking at page 2. As I recall, our summary . . .

MR. HYLAND: Page 2 of this piece in the book, right? Okay, it's the same thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The recommendations, though, appeared as page 9, basically. We're working in conjunction with pages 2 and 3, but the recommendations are on page 9. So perhaps that's the tidiest way to go at it.

MS BARRETT: Yes, I think it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Section A, with regard to life insurance, recommends the Members' Services Committee increase it.

MR. HYLAND: I would make the motion as it's written there, the last paragraph:

We recommend to the Members Services Committee that steps be taken to increase the current non-evidence maximum limit for Members of the [Legislative Assembly].

MR. CHAIRMAN: To \$300,000 maximum, nonevidence.

MR. KOWALSKI: I second it.

MR. WRIGHT: As a point of curiosity, how is it that this would involve no higher premium?

MR. McPHERSON: The government of Alberta currently has a contract with the carrier, which, in this case, is Great-West Life of Canada. The plan in which the members participate is called the plan of insurance for management and excluded staff of the government of Alberta. It's a group, Mr. Wright — I don't know; if Greg Stevens were here, he could tell us. It's probably around 4,000 employees. We're recommending that you hive off from that group basically 83 or 86 members, if you include officials of the Legislative Assembly. It's a smaller group within a larger group, but we think that because it's still a part of that massive group the risk factor is almost nonexistent.

MR. WRIGHT: Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. McPherson, for clarification. That management plan and nonexcluded member plan that currently exists and provides for an opting in: when you cease to have service as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, you can, within X number of days, purchase coverage under that existing plan when you go back to private life. Would this proviso that we're talking about here retain that aspect of it?

MR. McPHERSON: Yes, Mr. Kowalski. Nothing would change within the contract except that specific increasing of nonevidence limit for the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MRS. MIROSH: What about that transferable clause? When you're no longer an MLA, can you transfer this to private . . .

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: That's what you're saying?

MR. McPHERSON: No. There are two issues. Let's set aside for the moment the increased maximum limit, the \$150,000 to \$300,000. Mr. Kowalski was just on that point. When you leave the service of the government, you may convert your group term insurance to personal insurance without evidence of insurability, with the same carrier.

MRS. MIROSH: That's without a medical?

MR. McPHERSON: Without a medical. You can convert up to the maximum — the amount that you have. How much insurance one has depends on one's earnings, but they may convert that, and that wouldn't change.

Should I talk about the retired employee's benefit? No? Yes, this one can be converted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's complicated enough as it is. Okay.

A call for the question. All those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? The motion is carried. Thank you.

Section 3B on page 9 of the document as originally circulated: Accidental Death and

Dismemberment.

MR. McPHERSON: Just quickly on that, Mr. Chairman, basically we're suggesting that if you're increasing the nonevidence limit for the life benefit to \$300,000, the accidental death benefit should be lockstep with that, so that one may purchase \$300,000 of AD and D as well. So it would be included.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by the Member for Barrhead that approval be given. Is there a call for the question? 3B: all those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Motion carries. Page 9: the matter of 3C, voluntary life. Recommendation here: increase from the present one times salary to two times salary and that the suicide exclusion that presently exists be eliminated.

MR. HYLAND: Are you thinking about it?

MRS. MIROSH: I'll make the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Approval of the recommendation moved by the Member for Calgary Glenmore. A call for the question.

MS BARRETT: I actually do have a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry I can't remember this. Does this increase the overall cost as well, or is this paid for by individual MLAs when you get that kind of increase?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Maybe to answer that question, Ms Barrett, I called Mr. McCrae, who is one of the associate managers of the group department with Great-West Life, and asked him whether it would be possible to increase, through the direction of the government, the maximum nonevidence medical limit from \$150,000 to \$300,000, and he said, yes, it would be considered by Great-West Life and felt there would be no problems in having that amendment to the contract approved.

With regard to the voluntary life, we also asked that the stipulation that the voluntary

life benefit not being paid if the member dies as a result of suicide be taken out as a restriction on voluntary life, and he agreed that that would be able to be provided within the contract with Great-West Life at no additional cost.

With regard the situation of a member who chooses two and a half times annual salary as the regular life insurance coverage, if that individual is 36 years or older, he or she is only able to qualify for one time's worth of voluntary life insurance without medical evidence.

Great-West Life has agreed that two times annual salary for voluntary life insurance be approved without the restriction of being age 36. We're simply increasing the nonevidence medical limit or the amount of insurance that you'll be able to qualify for without providing medical evidence limit to the insurance company at no additional cost, without any derogatory situations happening to the total group by providing the additional coverage or the lack of providing medical evidence to the insurance company for the smaller group.

MR. WRIGHT: These are sums in excess of the coverage under A? Is that what you're talking about?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Are you referring to voluntary life?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a call for the question.

MR. McPHERSON: It's paid for by the employee, Ms Barrett.

MR. STEFANIUK: Or the member.

MR. McPHERSON: The member.

MR. WRIGHT: Employee.

MS BARRETT: Right. Yes.

MR. McPHERSON: One may choose to purchase voluntary life, and if one chooses to purchase that voluntary life, that person pays for it.

MS BARRETT: I guess that should be a sum that they can pay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the major advantages about the nonmedical aspect which will help some members . . .

MR. BOGLE: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's nice to see these acts of tenderness going on.

MR. WRIGHT: It's actually concern, not tenderness.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Motion carries unanimously.

With respect to 3D, dependent life, this would be to increase the coverage to \$10,000 on spouse and \$5,000 on each dependent child.

MR. KOWALSKI: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion by the Member for Barrhead.

MR. CAMPBELL: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. The motion carries, might I say unanimously?

Item 3E, supplemental health care.

MR. HYLAND: I would move that we move on the recommendation made under supplemental health care.

MR. CAMPBELL: Question.

MS BARRETT: Just hang on a minute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Surely; we're holding.

MS BARRETT: That's the one where you get the 100 percent reimbursement on drugs and

you do pay a higher premium. Do we have any solicitations from any caucuses about whether or not the members -- it doesn't really amount to very much difference, but on the family one it would a bit. Were there any objections raised to doing that? The question being asked for right now is to approve going for the alternative of 100 percent reimbursement on drugs, isn't it?

MR. McPHERSON: Yes, we're recommending that you go to 100 percent on drugs.

MS BARRETT: And at marginal increase in the premiums.

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MS BARRETT: I can't see any individual member not liking it, given the few bucks or the few cents, but that's okay with . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've only received one representation, and it was a representation done by myself to myself because of the horrendous drug bills that I have to pay in my house.

MR. McPHERSON: Ms Barrett, I think it should be spoken to very briefly. If you'll turn to page 3 of our original brief, you'll notice in there a considerable improvement in the benefits in the overall package over what the government now provides for members. We have recommended a 100 percent reimbursement on drugs. Just for the record, the premium will be \$8 a month single and \$20.50 a month for married MLAs, as opposed to the existing plan under an 80 percent reimbursement, \$9 single and \$18 married. So we're going from \$18 to \$20.50 a month, and that's coshared by the employer, so it will increase a married MLA's out-of-pocket cost by \$1.25 a month.

MS BARRETT: That's great. All the benefits on the right column on page 3 of the original document are what would accrue under this new package?

MR. McPHERSON: There are more benefits, Ms Barrett. These are the benefits to which there is a distinguishing difference between the current plan and the plan we're recommending. There are other benefits, but they're the same in both plans.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: With one difference from what is listed on page 3. On page 3 the current coverage provides for psychologist fees of \$30 an hour with a maximum of \$500 a year.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: In our initial solicitation to the marketplace, the carriers were prepared to provide \$250 per year per person. We've had that increased by the proposed carrier to \$500 per year, which is equal to that specific benefit under your current coverage.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. So that is changed then?

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: We've had it increased from what we originally listed.

MR. McPHERSON: We felt that was an important benefit for MLAs.

MS BARRETT: I guess you should know.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously.

With respect to page 10, item 3F, dental. Mr. Bogle, motion to accept the recommendation. Thank you. It's been moved. One question on retroactivity. Is that possible, or it really has to wait till the thing is passed, right?

MR. HYLAND: We'd better take it from now on.

AN HON. MEMBER: I think so.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: We did not address that with the adjudicator of claims, the reason being that because the plan is self-insured, it's simply a matter of the adjudicator receiving direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it would be better,

ladies and gentlemen, if we have it for the date on which the plan comes into effect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would that one change show up in the minutes please, Louise?

MS BARRETT: May I have another question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MS BARRETT: I remember when this came up the last time, I had inquired about the people who worked for the public service in Alberta. Do they have options that they could go for this? Is this an acceptable option within even the bargaining units or the opted out units? Do you know?

MR. McPHERSON: The opted out units. I'm not sure of that one, Ms Barrett.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: I'm not sure I understand your question.

MS BARRETT: When you're in the public service in Alberta, there are kind of two divisions: one is unionized and one is opted out. The opted out isn't necessarily a voluntary thing; it goes with the category of employment. But what happens is that in the master agreement certain provisions are made, and those provisions are extended to the group which is called opted out. I wonder if this option of 100 percent reimbursement on basic, 80 percent on major dental, and 60 percent on orthodontic is available to ordinary folk in the public service.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: It would certainly be available provided that the bargaining unit was successful in receiving that benefit for their members.

MS BARRETT: I feel awkward about that.

MR. McPHERSON: Ms Barrett, the plan that we're comparing to I would expect is an opted out group; it's the management and excluded staff of the government of Alberta...

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. McPHERSON: The MLAs participate in that plan. It is a self-insured plan. It's insured by the government of Alberta and has an adjudicator which, I believe, is Mutual Life. The adjudicator simply is an office that brings in claims, pays out claims: wears the black hat if you will. Those employees now have a dental plan under two benefits: the basic benefit, yourselves or MLAs included, and an optional benefit. If one chooses the optional benefit, it happens to be a very, very exceptionally good dental plan.

What we're proposing is that the MLAs have the optional and the basic benefit lumped into one so that there is no decision. They have the optional benefit in its entirety as enumerated I think on page 10 in the recommendations and also on page 4.

MR. WRIGHT: To sum it up then, what you're saying is that we have a version of what you are talking about already, and what you propose is something we will pay the extra for if there is any extra to be paid.

MR. McPHERSON: There's not likely to be any extra.

MS BARRETT: Because these are completely employer covered. Is that correct?

MR. McPHERSON: It's self-insured, so what you really have is 83 members of a very, very large group who are going to be . . . The only increased benefit to the MLAs in this scenario is that we're going from an 80 percent reimbursement on basic dental to 100 percent reimbursement. For the 83 or 86 members who are going to get that extra 15 percent covered over a very large group of excluded staff, I would not expect there to be an increase in costs. There may be an increase in costs, but it may not actually surface for that small a group.

Did I hit it all right, Gary?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I understand.

MR. HYLAND: The other thing I think I brought up last time is that if you registered under this plan and you did like me and probably some others around here -- when I registered under this plan, I wasn't married. I didn't have any kids, so I figured, well, you take the cheapest one. Once you register in it -- under

any other job, if you change jobs, you could reregister under the plan. Once you registered in this one and didn't take the one with the option, you couldn't get back in. Even though an election effectively cuts you off when it is called, it didn't make any difference under this plan; you couldn't change it. At least this way, those who did that will automatically come under it now with what's available. You won't have to worry about making your choice of which plan you want; it'll all be the same.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. Right now, a number of us are penalized.

MR. CAMPBELL: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a call for the question. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. I can show it's unanimous.

Item 3G on page 10, long-term disability. Remember, even though we get these things passed today, it takes us a little while to get them into effect, with regard to all these items. This is one that's been concerning me a bit. What are your wishes with regard to this matter?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to bring to the attention of members of the committee that after the last meeting we were in contact with the proposed underwriter, Mutual Life, because of information we received at the last meeting that the Speaker would be prepared to continue indemnification to a disabled member until such time that an election were called, if he qualified for medical purposes. We relayed that information to the underwriter, and because of a better definition of what the exposure might be to the insurance carrier, the insurance carrier, Mutual Life, has come back and provided us with a new quote. The new quote for the premium cost for the five-year own occupation clause, with a 5 percent COLA and with waiver of premium on the plan, would be approximately .86 percent of payroll, down from the 1.19 percent of payroll we originally provided the Members' Services Committee as a rate. So there has been a

decrease of approximately 30 percent in the premium cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for doing that.

MS BARRETT: It sounds like a "come on down" thing. I want to ask if we as members cost share in that premium. Someone currently pays 1 percent of payroll to get the benefit package . . . Well, forget it. I just want to know if we as members pay for part of the premium.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chairman, that hasn't been determined. Mr. Kowalski hit on the point — a year and a half or two years ago this committee approved an LTDI benefit for its members. I guess they felt they would purchase the plan available through the government, the same plan we've been discussing. That budgetary allocation, provided to us by Mr. Stefaniuk, was about 1 percent of payroll. I have never read anywhere in any of the minutes of past Members' Services how that cost was going to be shared. I think that's up to the committee as to whether or not it would be fully funded by the employer or cost shared by the employer and the employee.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: A point of taxation that members may wish to be apprised of is that if an employer who provides the benefit of a long-term disability benefit pays any portion or the total portion of the premium cost, the benefit the individual would receive if the individual became disabled would be taxable. On the other hand, if the member were to pay 100 percent of the premium cost of the long-term disability plan and were disabled and started receiving benefits, the benefits received would be nontaxable.

MR. McPHERSON: And that brings us to a point, Chairman, of ongoing evaluation of the plan. It may be that Members of the Legislative Assembly would be advised to pay for themselves some of the other cost-shared benefits: have the employer pay for those benefits and have the employee pay the full LTDI premium. Those are taxation matters that really have to be developed over time.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. McPherson, just give me an example. If we go ahead with this proposed plan, because it seems the MLAs do not have a

plan today, and the plan came into effect today, and next week, unfortunately, one of the Members of the Legislative Assembly was struck with something and had to go on long-term disability, what would happen to kick it in and what would the individual then receive?

MR. McPHERSON: There would be a 90-day waiting period. If that individual were still disabled after a period of 90 days, the LTDI plan would kick in. No, that's not correct. Just a moment. If an individual became disabled today and was able to provide a medical certificate from a doctor, the Speaker would continue that individual's regular remuneration until the next election. If that individual were still disabled at the time of the next election, that individual would then have served the 90-day waiting period. The day after the election, when that member's services are no longer required, he or she would commence receiving 70 percent of their former income as an MLA.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: In arrears.

MR. McPHERSON: Yes, 70 percent of their former income. There would be a one-month wait. They pay at the end of the month, Ken. So one would receive 70 percent of one's income after that.

That speaks to the very real problem with the LTD plan that is available to members through the government service. It states in that contract that once a person does not receive their regular remuneration, they're no longer covered under the plan. What can happen is that a person can become disabled on November 14. As circumstances unfold, there is an election 28 days later. That person has not had time to serve a 90-day waiting period, and that person's services are no longer required the day after the election. That person doesn't qualify for benefits. In our view, that would create a travesty in this province.

So there are circumstances that can arise under the plan that would be available through the excluded and management staff of the government of Alberta that would not pay a claim to an MLA.

MR. KOWALSKI: Which is something we tried to correct several years ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Presently, the best I could do

would be to keep paying that person until such time as a by-election was called or until the general election? It might be that the by-election would have to result because of the nature of the disability. But at the moment the only protection we can give to that happening, if it happens before all this gets passed, is to give them pay until the time of a by-election being called.

MR. WRIGHT: But you can't give any protection if the accident occurs within that 90-day period before a general election or by-election.

MR. McPHERSON: Sir, he could pay that individual his or her regular remuneration until the date of the election. Then, I think it should be said that I expect what might happen is that there would be an order in council.

MR. KOWALSKI: I would push for it.

MR. McPHERSON: Now, if there were an order in council to pay a disabled member a disability benefit for as long as that disability might extend, even to age 65, I'd like you to have some idea of the kind of money that would cost the government of Alberta. If a male aged 40 became disabled and that individual happened to be a member of Executive Council and was receiving an annual income of \$71,930, the reserve established by an insurance company to guarantee that payment over only a five-year period is \$702,000. That is what a life insurance company would establish as a reserve to guarantee that risk of \$4,196 a month for that individual. It's an enormous amount of money. The reserve that would be required for a 50-year-old is \$830,000 just for five years.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Based on the five-year own occupation to age 65.

MR. McPHERSON: Okay, based on the five-year own occupation to age 65. And that's at 70 percent of one's income.

I think it's pretty scary stuff for an order in council to come in for a member who became disabled, when members should have insured that benefit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can redo the Assembly for that amount. [interjection] Sorry, I have a long

list here: Milk River, Calgary Glenmore, the Clerk, Rocky Mountain House, Barrhead.

MR. BOGLE: Taber-Warner.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry. Well, I know where you live.

MR. BOGLE: You never come to visit. Lois tells me we'll correct that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put that down on the record. You don't come to visit me either.

MR. BOGLE: At the present time, once a member has been elected in two elections and served a period of time, they're eligible for a pension. Of course, the pension benefits are based on the number of years of service. In the long-term disability benefits, do pension benefits come into play at all?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: With regard to the benefits you would receive from the long-term disability if an individual were disabled, the current proposed plan we have through Mutual Life provides that an individual is able to receive 85 percent of his predisability income from all sources, and your pension income would not be considered as income that would exceed the 85 percent rule. Maybe to clarify that, if an individual were earning \$71,900 a year prior to his becoming disabled and being able to qualify for a \$4,196 monthly benefit, the insurance company would limit his postdisability income to 85 percent of \$71,930. The 85 percent rule or parameter would not be affected by a Canada Pension benefit received for dependants. It would be reduced by the Canada Pension benefit received as an individual.

MR. BOGLE: I'm speaking strictly to an MLA's or cabinet minister's pension, which is a private pension plan.

MR. WRIGHT: But they don't start until 65.

MR. BOGLE: Oh yes, they do.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Maybe I can give an example. Under the proposed LTD plan -- I'll refer to it as the government plan -- an individual would not even qualify for long-term

disability benefits unless he were receiving the pension or could qualify for receiving the pension benefit. Under this plan, the long-term disability benefit is not tied to the individual being able to qualify for pension benefits.

MR. McPHERSON: If I may, Chairman, I think the question is whether or not the individual's contribution to that pension plan is covered during disability.

MR. BOGLE: Let me give you an example. We used a figure of \$71,900. I understand that the long-term disability benefit would be approximately 85 percent of that figure.

MR. McPHERSON: No, it would be 70 percent.

MR. BOGLE: All right. It would be 70 percent of that figure?

MR. McPHERSON: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: All right. If the member had served long enough to qualify for a pension, the member may be entitled to a pension equal to 50 percent of that salary. The question is, would the member be receiving, in aggregate, 120 percent of the salary?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: No, a maximum of 85 percent.

MR. BOGLE: And who benefits?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: The insurance company would benefit by paying a smaller amount of benefit.

MR. BOGLE: So you deduct the benefits you're paying from any pension the member would receive?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you. That was the question.

MR. McPHERSON: Just to be clear, that's calculated in the risk and vice versa.

MR. WRIGHT: The LTDI is reduced?

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: That was the question. The comment is that the long-term disability is more important for newer members of the Assembly who have not yet reached a position where they're entitled to a pension. Even under the present system, a member who has served for two terms, even though he may not receive any long-term disability, is at least entitled to a pension based on his years of service.

MR. McPHERSON: That's a fair comment, Mr. Bogle, except that in any circumstance the member will receive no more than 85 percent. So you're correct. A pensioned member could actually be receiving 85 percent of his predisability income, whereas a new member might only be receiving 70 percent of his predisability income.

MR. BOGLE: My point was that a newer member is more vulnerable because he can't qualify on either side under our present rules.

MR. McPHERSON: Correct.

MRS. MIROSH: I want to just back up to a previous example regarding overlap time during an election. There are these gaps. Should we be suggesting to the MLAs that they require individual disability coverage as well because of those gaps, or are there areas that insurance companies can evaluate to close the gaps?

MR. McPHERSON: What a question to ask of an insurance salesman.

MRS. MIROSH: I used to be a paramed nurse for an insurance company.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Because you were not at the last meeting, I'll just give a little bit of information to give you a major difference between the two plans. I'll refer to the mutual plan, which is the plan that we're proposing, versus the government plan. If an individual were disabled on June 30 and an election were called or the writ came down on July 1, under the government plan an individual would only have served one day of qualified disability period and he would not qualify for the plan unless he were re-elected. If he did not win the election, he would have served his qualifying

period of one day and he would be out on the street and on his own even if he continued to be disabled. Under the plan we're proposing, if an individual were disabled on June 30 and an election were called on July 1 and the individual were not re-elected, if the individual were still disabled 89 days after July 1, he would qualify for benefits and start receiving benefits even though he's no longer a member. That's one major difference that we felt was very important to be able to provide for.

MR. McPHERSON: Specific to your question, the maximum qualifying period would be 90 days. After 90 days -- that's the risk that an MLA will take, the maximum of 90 days that there will be no benefits. It would only happen under the circumstances Gary describes. If a member becomes disabled two years before an election, the Speaker will continue to pay that MLA's full salary. The plan won't even kick in at all. The maximum exposure for the MLA is 90 days.

MR. KOWALSKI: If you get elected and you get disabled in the first 90 days, you're not eligible? Or am I confusing things?

MR. McPHERSON: If you get elected and you get disabled in the first 90 days, then Dr. Carter would continue paying that member for the balance of the Legislature, three and a half years. Then if you couldn't be re-elected because you were in the hospital or a paraplegic or whatever, it would kick in.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: Thirty days after you received the last cheque from the Speaker.

MR. STEFANIUK: Two questions. For purposes of establishing the amount of long-term disability at 70 percent of income, would income in this case be considered to be both the indemnity and the tax-free allowance or only one of those?

MR. McPHERSON: We've asked the carrier that. It will be total remuneration from all sources, the duties of an MLA. It would include the regular indemnification and the tax-free benefit as well as indemnification for a chairman or a member of a committee.

MR. STEFANIUK: All right. Relative to the

earlier mention that was made of the disability kicking in, in the case of a member who has been permanently injured, on the calling of a by-election, in order to call a by-election a seat would have to be vacant or declared vacant. The seat could be declared vacant in one of two ways if the member continued to live: one, if the member were forced to resign by the House or, on the other hand, if the member voluntarily resigned. If the member voluntarily resigns his seat as a result of a disability, does that or, indeed, a forced resignation disqualify him from further coverage?

MR. McPHERSON: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: My question was raised by the Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. KOWALSKI: Just an extension of the question that Mr. Bogle raised. It dealt with the income one might receive under a pension plan, recognizing that the MLA pension plan is an optional plan: you choose to take it or you choose not to take it. I want to make sure that you both understand that, because the way it was coming back was that you would automatically get it.

To further clarify the question, if an individual -- let's use Mr. Bogle as an example. He's got X number of years in place. He could in essence make application to get X amount of pension plans if he had chosen to get into it and is, of course, actuarially reduced down to the age he's at. He would qualify for X number of dollars per month. Should he become disabled tomorrow and we were to move on this, he would then be eligible to receive 70 percent of a certain amount of dollars. The maximum he would be able to receive is 85 percent of the two or 85 percent of what?

MR. McPHERSON: Eighty-five percent of his prior earnings.

MR. KOWALSKI: His prior earnings are the earnings he makes today?

MR. McPHERSON: Prior to disability; right.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: I can maybe give you an

example.

MR. McPHERSON: So they'll reduce the benefit . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: It is not inconceivable, say -- just for the sake of this example -- that the pension he might be eligible to draw would be higher than that 80 percent of his current salary.

MR. McPHERSON: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: So this would not apply to him at all then.

MR. L'HIRONDELLE: He may choose to defer his pension until such time that circumstances warrant that he start drawing pension funds.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chairman, what the member would do is only take enough -- I don't think a member is required to take a pension. He could leave that pension and continue to build on his pension fund. This is the disabled member. He would only draw down enough pension so that he could qualify for maximum benefits under the LTD and enough pension to make sure that he wasn't earning more than 85 percent of his prior earnings and let the pension continue to build.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's based on his earnings in the period just before the accident. It's based on that month before the accident, for example, not -- forgive me, my friend; you were in cabinet. It's not based on what your cabinet figure was. It's based on what you're being paid today, if you have that accident driving home tonight, right?

MR. BOGLE: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that's the difference. It's not like our pension, which is averaged on your best three years. It's on what your salary was in that period of time immediately before the accident.

Any other questions? A call for the question. Who moved this motion? Mr. Campbell?

MR. CAMPBELL: Yes.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

MRS. MIROSH: I have a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair reads that it passed unanimously.

MRS. MIROSH: Is there anything in our contract regarding short-term disability, the first 90 days that were not covered?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just your MLA salary.

MR. McPHERSON: You'd get your full salary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the eyes of the general public one or two of us who are sitting here right now are getting that [inaudible].

MR. WRIGHT: Why wouldn't you [inaudible]?

MRS. MIROSH: Pam should go to bed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, are you okay?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, the total package has been passed. On behalf of the committee, we thank you very much for all of the work and for having come to see us twice.

MR. McPHERSON: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, all the life benefits, the dental benefits, are in-house changes that have to be made by the government. We would be pleased to assist in that regard if you feel that our services can be of some benefit in that, but those are things that have to be changed by the government with their existing carriers. We will seek, I suppose, the Chairman's direction relative to start-up time and those kinds of things, and we're prepared to assist or answer any questions any Members of the Legislative Assembly may have at any time.

Thank you very much for having us with you. We look forward to a long and fruitful mutual business arrangement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. In light of the motions being passed, I will instruct the necessary paperwork starting on Monday. With the knowledge and, I trust, the consent of the committee, I'll instruct that you indeed help to carry it forward with the necessary department of government.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

L'HIRONDELLE: Thank you for your consideration today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, at least a three-minute break to stretch.

[The committee recessed from 1:29 p.m. to 1:35 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. Let's see if we can push on with this. I'd like to suggest to you to deal with item 11.

Our next meeting of Members' Services is Monday, November 24, at 1 o'clock.

MRS. MIROSH: Pardon? One o'clock, Monday, November 24?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I knew you were listening closely, my MLA.

MRS. MIROSH: Gee, I even recited it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I hear you're going to have Gordon Shrake phone you to make sure you were there, like you were going to do to him.

MRS. MIROSH: Yes, but he was there, wasn't he? It worked, didn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Monday, November 24, at 1 o'clock. No lunch.

MRS. MIROSH: No lunch?

MR. HYLAND: One o'clock, no lunch. Depending on how long it goes, we'll be with the heritage trust fund.

MR. CAMPBELL: I won't be able to be in attendance, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would expect we can be done within two hours, but it's a matter of making sure we've got everything tidied up before the end of the year, okay? So if there is anything else that needs to be sent on to Executive Council for their action, for ratification, if anything needs to come into effect for January 1. All right?

Mr. Hyland, item 6 on the agenda: amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act. I don't know what all this refers to. Is this per diems and so forth?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, there is one item I would suggest we wait on until Mr. Stevens arrives, because I know he has been working with legal counsel on the wording of a motion on the per diems. So if we could set per diems aside.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. My understanding was that he was going to arrive at 1 o'clock.

MR. BOGLE: That was what I understood. But there is another part of that that we could move ahead with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. BOGLE: When the Legislative Assembly Act was amended this summer, we transferred certain responsibilities to the Members' Services Committee. Those responsibilities include setting the per diem rates for members, both the amounts and the amount of time a member could claim for when the House is not sitting, the tax-free allowance, which is a portion of the basic indemnity, and also the remuneration paid to members who serve on select standing committees of the Legislature. On this latter point I think some work needs to be done by a subcommittee of the Members' Services Committee, reviewing the rates that are allowed by order in council for other committees that involve members of the Assembly and the like.

Therefore, I would like to move that a subcommittee be established consisting of members Hyland, Barrett, Taylor, and Campbell to review the appropriate orders in council to determine what rates are now applicable and to report back to the committee by our next meeting with some recommendations either to leave the rate where it is now or to alter it in

some way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have a motion now. For clarification, this would also apply to the Members' Services Committee as to whether it's to be -- what? One hundred dollars a day, or something different?

MR. BOGLE: That's correct. Mr. Chairman, the forms that we fill out list all the various committees, ranging from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Law and Regulations, Legislative Offices, Members' Services, Private Bills, Privileges and Elections, Public Accounts, Public Affairs, and special committees, if any. The current rate is \$100 per day. That responsibility has now shifted to this committee, so the purpose of the subcommittee would be to review the rates relative to those prescribed by order in council and cabinet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For both daily allowance and living expenses, or just simply for daily allowance?

MR. BOGLE: Just the daily allowance. That was the intent of the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One further question. In the interim, while various committee chairmen, including myself, are signing these chits, we're working on the theory that it's \$100 a day.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Even though we haven't formally passed it.

MR. BOGLE: That is correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: Isn't the \$100 a day the existing allowance?

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is and it isn't. It is, because that's what we have all been doing, but because this committee hasn't yet decided under the mandate as given by the amendment to the legislation, it isn't.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, I just presumed. In fact, I

would be surprised if it wasn't the case in law that the previous rate . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is still in effect.

MR. WRIGHT: . . . carries on until we do something about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's the theory I'm working on with the ones I've been signing, and so I appreciate that interpretation.

We have a motion with respect to setting up the subcommittee to be comprised of members Hyland, Barrett, Taylor, and Campbell to report back at our next meeting.

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Chairman, seeing that I will not be there, maybe it might be more convenient to have someone else on that committee.

MR. BOGLE: I'm assuming that the committee would be reporting back. It's the work to be done between now and that meeting date, if you're available.

MR. CAMPBELL: Yes. I will not be available between now and this date.

MR. BOGLE: You are not available during those dates at all?

MR. CAMPBELL: No.

MR. BOGLE: I see. Is there another government member?

MR. CAMPBELL: I'll be away, Bob.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Stevens?

MR. STEVENS: I feel badly, Mr. Chairman, because I'm just trying to catch up to where we're at. If you could help me understand where we're at, I'd be happy to.

AN HON. MEMBER: Just say yes, and you'll help us out.

MR. BOGLE: I made a motion that we appoint a subcommittee to look at the \$100 a day rate that standing select committee members are paid, to review that rate with what is prescribed by order in council through

Executive Council for other committees and report back to this committee as to whether or not the rate should remain at \$100 or be altered in any way. The reporting back would be at our next meeting, which the Chair has called for Monday, November 24, at 1 p.m.

MR. STEVENS: Could you tell me, Mr. Chairman or Mr. Bogle, when you expect the committee to meet, sometime between now and then?

MR. BOGLE: That's up to the four members.

MR. STEVENS: Okay. I'm here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that okay? Thank you.
All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

That's with respect to the daily allowance figure.

MS BARRETT: Who is on that committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hyland, Barrett, Taylor, and Stevens.

Pam, would you be good enough to chair that, in your weakened condition?

MS BARRETT: Actually, if that means organizing the meeting, no, I'm afraid not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. You're a touch frail. Perhaps Mr. Stevens could look after that.

MR. STEVENS: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
We're still dealing with item 6 on the agenda. There were some other matters to be dealt with, and we were waiting for Mr. Stevens, I think.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, would you like me to start off on this? I apologize, Mr. Chairman and everybody. I had another meeting and I was not able to be here until now.

If we recall, members, Bill 54, approved at these last sittings, provided direction now to

the Members' Services Committee to prescribe expense allowances and the maximum numbers of days for temporary residence allowances for those members who are required for official business to be here or near Edmonton when the House is not in session and so on. As I read the Act as now amended, we have four responsibilities. I thought we could discuss those responsibilities today, and I've suggested an order in doing that.

First, for those of you who may not have the Act with you, pursuant to the Act as now amended, sections 41(1) and 41(2)(b) -- and I'll let you know what those sections mean in a second -- provide for the rate established in the Act formerly, before Bill 54, at \$75 a day. That is for members who are here on official business outside the normal session to attend to their duties. That is for their temporary residency requirement.

I think there are a number of arguments that could be presented for changing that rate. I just want you to bear with me for a minute, Mr. Chairman. Certainly from my experience -- and probably every member who is here both during session or outside of the session and finding temporary accommodation will experience the problem of changing hotel and living costs. I've checked into this, and the public service rates for meals alone are \$24.65 a day; that is, \$5 for breakfast, \$7.15 for lunch, and \$12.50 for supper -- that's already established in the public service -- plus \$4.50 per diem, which is for laundry and other problems. That's exclusive of the hotel costs, and hotels usually are stayed at government rates, anywhere from \$69 and above. So even for the public service there has been recognition of these things, and you could argue that. But I don't propose, colleagues, to propose any change in that. In establishing the rate in those two sections, I think we should consider that we should leave it at \$75, and we should so describe that, Mr. Chairman.

That's the first part of my presentation. I know there are other things that we have to discuss as well. Would you like to have a discussion on those areas? I'm talking there of the rate that is fixed in the Act but which now must be prescribed by the Members' Services Committee. It is currently, or was, at \$75. I think there are arguments for changes, but I would propose no change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member, is this concluded? Thank you. Would you like to raise it again, please? Sorry.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. I haven't had the opportunity to discuss this with all of the members of the committee, but my feeling is that although changes could easily be justified -- these rates have stood there for some time now -- I don't propose that we consider a change. I would like to see us prescribe for those particular sections of the Act, which are, again, 41(1) and 42(1)(b) -- and I can give you more information on what those mean -- to leave them and set them at \$75. That's two sections.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the substance of this being a motion would be that we would just reaffirm what the present practice is and which, in the legal opinion of Mr. Wright, continues on at \$75 a day until such time as we as a committee reconfirm it.

MR. STEVENS: If that would be another way of handling it, because now that we have a subcommittee looking at other things, it may be that you want to leave it that way. I am happy to do that. But we need to have a rate, because there's no rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And you're saying keep that \$75? Okay. Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we're now on a subject matter, but a few minutes ago we approved to do something, and something twiggled in my mind. This committee -- and I think it's just been checked here in the last couple of minutes with the Clerk -- does not have the authority to amend the \$100 per day.

MR. STEVENS: We're back to something else.

MR. KOWALSKI: You know, but it's part of this discussion as well, if you bring it into it. The motion that was just approved a few minutes ago basically asked Members' Services Committee to take a look at a possible change by way of a subcommittee, to come back to it, to look at the \$100 per diem. When we made the changes to Bill 54 this summer, authority was transferred to the Members' Services Committee to look at the \$75 per day item but

not to look at the \$100 per day item. The Clerk has picked up the Bill here in the last few minutes and has confirmed with me that that was my thought, or now have you confirmed that it isn't my thought? The legislation is very clear, in my view.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, 42(1)(a), which deals with the \$100 a day allowance, is not within the jurisdiction of this committee to amend. That would have to be taken back to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BOGLE: I relied -- going back to the Speaker's office, the advice I was given was that that was one of our responsibilities. That is not part of the motion that's being discussed today at this moment. I think that should be set aside. If we find that there's no need for the subcommittee to function because it does not have the legal right, that's a separate matter. But I think we should proceed with the motion that's before the committee.

MR. WRIGHT: Just a question for clarification. What was the enlarged mandate, then, with regard to expenses? I know the tax-free allowance was one of them.

MR. STEVENS: Maybe Mr. Chairman would help, because we don't all have the Act in front of us. Very clearly, this is what we have done with Bill 54. There are four responsibilities. Would you like me just to refer to what they are?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Read what the passed amendments are, please.

MR. STEVENS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Give us what the amendments are.

MR. STEVENS: The amendment provides as follows -- and I'll pause for each one. There are three subsections.

The Members' Services Committee shall by order prescribe:

(a) the expense allowance referred to in section 39(1)(b).

Let me pause for a minute, Mr. Chairman, and

turn to the Act and describe what that is. 39(1)(b) is the expense allowance which at one time, before Bill 54, was set out at \$7,150 per year. That is one thing that has now been removed from the Act and given to this committee to prescribe. Okay? And I haven't discussed that yet today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, but that's the order we confirmed earlier in the day.

MR. BOGLE: No, we haven't touched that.

MR. STEVENS: No, I was going to come to that, Mr. Chairman.

The second thing that has been provided to this committee as direction is the allowances referred to -- and that's what I'm talking about, earlier -- in sections 41(1) and 42(1)(b). Those two sections provide for temporary residence costs or allowances of, at one time, \$75 per day for non-Edmonton MLAs to do official business here. That's what I'm talking about. That (b) has two different sections in it, if you like.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, 41(1) and 42(1)(b).

MR. STEVENS: 42(1)(b) has to do with a living expense prescribed by this committee for days of legislative committee work.

The third matter, (c), the maximum number of days referred to in another section. That was 24 days. That 24 days does not exist anymore. In fact, the new Act reads:

A Member is not entitled to receive a payment [under section so-and-so] in respect of more than the maximum number of days prescribed by [this committee] in any year.

That is a matter I haven't come to yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have we got a subsection for that one in this Act, where that's referenced?

MR. STEVENS: Yes, that subsection is 41(3) of Bill 54.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate Mr. Bogle's comment, if we might come back to the other matter. What I was suggesting is that under the three matters given to this committee, I propose that we look first of all at

41(1) and 42(1)(b). Those are the formerly \$75 temporary residence allowance. That should now be prescribed by the committee. I think there is justification for an examination of change. I would like to put before the committee that we reaffirm it at \$75. And I pause.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's easy to understand all the confusion.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, would it help if I went through the entire area and then we came back?

MR. BOGLE: Why don't we deal with it? There is a motion on the floor. Let's deal with it. It's very straightforward.

MR. KOWALSKI: It's a very simple issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got the motion on the floor to reconfirm it at \$75 a day as being the rate for expenses, and you gave good examples of how much the public service is getting and so forth. All those in favour of the motion that the expense allowance be \$75 per day?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? One is opposed.

MS BARRETT: So it would change nothing.

MR. STEVENS: We have prescribed a rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion has carried, and that is with respect to 41(1) and 42(1)(b). That looks after those two areas. The \$75 per day is reconfirmed. Thank you very much.

MR. STEVENS: Secondly, then . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just thought maybe we would all take a collective two deep breaths and then . . . Now go on, please.

MR. STEVENS: Okay. Secondly, going in this order, I propose 41(3), which sets out the maximum number of days in any year during a period when the Assembly is not in session that an MLA is required to be in or near Edmonton to carry out official business and needs a temporary residence. That was set out in the

Act at 24 days, or about three days a month if you consider that we normally sit for three to four months in a year, depending on whether it's one session or two. I think it's been about that average in the past. There are obviously exceptions.

In my own case as an MLA travelling back and forth from Banff-Cochrane, since we rose in the House on September 19, about two months ago, in the claims I have submitted, I have spent eight days on MLA duties other than my duties as a member of this committee or as a member of any other legislative committee or in my other capacity as appointed by Executive Council to the chairmanship of AADAC. At that rate myself, I am now approaching probably three days a week, or about 10 days a month. So I raise that. I don't know how each of you have found that.

What I'd like to propose is a change in this for the committee to discuss. I'd like to propose that we limit members to a maximum of 10 days per month when the House is not in session and according to the statements they make to the Legislative Assembly through the Clerk's office that they are on official business in or near Edmonton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ten days per month when the House is not in session.

MR. STEVENS: There might be one day, there might be three days, there might be 15 days in a month, but it would be a 10-day maximum in a calendar month in the year.

MR. WRIGHT: There might be an unfair anomaly there, in that you might be obliged to be in Edmonton for all of the month of January but none of the month of February, yet you'd be limited to 10 days. That's intended, I guess. If so, what's the fairness of it?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I've considered that, but I have to assume that the duties -- in my own case, for example, I assumed that there are times when I have been here for two weeks at a stretch, and it's been hard. But I've assumed there are other times when the House might rise or sit in the middle of the month. I thought it would balance out, over three and a half to four months not able to be claimed because we're in session, that 10 days a month the other times would probably be on average

the kind of time many members would need to spend here. So I don't know how to answer your question, Gordon.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the member proposing the motion would consider an amendment that would see this matter automatically reviewed in, say, six months' time so that we can determine whether or not the kind of point the Member for Edmonton Strathcona has raised needs to be addressed in some other way. I don't think we can phrase a motion to cover all the possible problems, but if we could come back after a period of a few months and review the matter, and if any other adjustments needed to be made, they could be considered then.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy with that amendment.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, as it sits now it's 24 days, period.

MR. STEVENS: There is no setting. It was 24 days, and this committee has now been given the responsibility of setting it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But until such time as we act, it is still legally -- in the tradition it's 24 per year.

MRS. MIROSH: Further to that, you would consider adding to that maximum, not reducing it to so many days per month?

MR. STEVENS: Could you explain that?

MRS. MIROSH: Raising it from 24 days to 50 or whatever 10 days a month would be.

MR. STEVENS: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. When I developed this, I didn't know what each member is faced with. In my view, I have a very busy constituency. Someone else has a very busy... I just said to myself, "If I'm going here two to three days a week, I can't afford that; what would cover that in some way?" I suggest a maximum of 10 days a month would at least help out in the residency thing, but I haven't covered your concern. Maybe the amendment would do that, would allow the committee to wrestle with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So on a quick figuring basis, if the House were in for four months of the year, you would then have about an 80-day thing. You've got all sorts of variations under this formula.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, that would be on the basis of the member submitting the normal claim, of course.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, and not everyone is going to use the maximum. Maybe they are; I don't know.

MS BARRETT: My question is about the kinds of forms out-of-town members submit on this. Do they state the purpose for their being in Edmonton? If not, I'd like to know why it is that I keep getting my claims when I travel outside Edmonton referred back for specifics. I'd like to see consistency in the application.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you mean an overnight accommodation claim?

MS BARRETT: I don't even charge for that, because I always stay with friends. But I do charge for the per diem when I'm invited, as I was three weeks ago to Lethbridge. I put on my claim that I was invited to speak at the university and this is the cost I incurred. As has happened every single time, the stuff comes back wanting more information. I figure that if I'm going to have to comply with that, then by cracky I want every member to comply with that on every claim submitted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, on this plight.

MR. BOGLE: The questions are: who are you submitting a claim to, and where is payment coming from for a visit to Lethbridge?

MS BARRETT: Well, it goes to the eighth floor in the Annex.

MR. STEVENS: That would be a surprise to me.

MR. BOGLE: I'm not aware that I, as a member -- I may be going to Fort McMurray to speak to heavy oil people, and I'm not going on behalf of the minister; I'm going as a member. I'm not aware that I can claim anything other than my gas mileage for travel within Alberta if I travel

by car . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or you could travel by credit card.

MR. BOGLE: . . . or by airplane, I guess. But in terms of claiming for meals or other out-of-pocket expenses . . .

MR. HYLAND: It's your problem.

MR. BOGLE: . . . I don't think I can claim anything.

MRS. MIROSH: This is only for members coming to the Leg. Building to work. This is our place of work.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, could I respond to that? I think there are three kinds of trips. There may be more. There are kinds of trips we would never be discussing in this committee, for example, and that would be working for our various caucus party approaches. Obviously, those are things that are not Legislature funds. There would be trips that any member might be asked to take by the Speaker, for example, if he chooses to ask, to represent the Legislature. That's covered in different ways. There are trips, as Mr. Bogle mentioned, where a minister may well ask any member of the Legislature to represent the government or to be at a function to represent the government. Again, those things are covered by the minister's normal, departmental function.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not by this one.

MR. STEVENS: Not by this committee.

The fourth kind is what we are talking about, where you are required to be here, you are not a resident of the Edmonton or near-Edmonton area -- I think that's how it's described in the Act -- and you must be here. We're not talking about the caucus/party types of trips, we're not talking about the ministerial requirement trips, we're not talking about the Speaker's trips; we're talking about the requirement to be here outside the session and not on any committee of the Legislature duties.

I'm sorry; there's a fifth one. You might be here as a member of a committee. We're not talking about those kinds of things. It's MLA duties.

What I normally do, and I think we probably all do it in different ways -- and I've had claims come back to me too, Mr. Chairman. I must indicate that I'm here on official MLA business, whatever that may be. I'm attending a meeting of the so-and-so, I'm acting on behalf of my constituents and arranging a meeting with the minister, I'm doing correspondence, or whatever. As long as it is MLA-related functions, then normally the claim is accepted, as it should be.

Does that clarify it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: After all of this, Pam, you and I could talk about that to see which are falling into which category. I could try to help with it.

MR. HYLAND: To complicate it more, there's one more. There are four trips a year -- and it doesn't say to the capital -- for you and your spouse when you've been invited to act on behalf of your duty as a legislator.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Four per year, and then we would cover the overnight accommodation plus a per diem.

MR. HYLAND: No, it's airfare and accommodations. I'm not even sure if it's our accommodation, but it's our spouse's accommodation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it's four per year for a spouse, not for a member.

MR. HYLAND: Right. Because a member is covered anyway, but not your hotel.

MR. STEVENS: I can't go to Lethbridge unless I fit into one of those other categories under members' services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that example.

We've got a little bit out of our speaking schedule. I apologize. Gordon?

MR. WRIGHT: I don't -- I could say something if you want.

MS BARRETT: Gordon, you giggled.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We noticed that Pam giggled first. Taber-Warner, you wanted in on this?

MR. BOGLE: There were two quick questions. Was there an effective date on your motion?

MR. STEVENS: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I hadn't considered that, because we just met today. I assumed we would use a normal date of any decision we make in this committee. Is it usually forward looking?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: I hadn't developed a date.

MR. WRIGHT: I do remember. It was relating to our earlier discussion. It seems to me there might be some virtue in the 10 or X days a month, in that it would encourage members not to be absent from their constituencies.

MR. STEVENS: That's what I was thinking of.

MR. BOGLE: Since we're basing it on a monthly basis, why not start it December 1? We are covered at the present time under the existing 24 day per year basis, so members should have -- considering that by the end of this month we will have been about two and a half months from the last sitting of the House, it works out to about the same thing, and it would be cleaner and neater for you people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So for clarification, what we're talking about in the motion-building process is 10 days per month commencing December 1, 1986, and subject to review within six months by this committee.

MR. BOGLE: I really hesitate raising one more point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's all right.

MR. STEVENS: It's a terrible motion, isn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no.

MR. BOGLE: It's a partial month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; here we are.

MR. BOGLE: My understanding from the discussions we had earlier, Mr. Stevens, was that you were going to cover in your motion when a House commences its sittings or rises

part way through a month.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I developed a strategy for . . . It's so complicated.

MR. BOGLE: It doesn't need to be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could it be made in a separate motion?

MR. STEVENS: No, it doesn't need to be. Let me just discuss it with you, and probably the great lawyers around this table can help me. Let me tell you the strategy I was going to discuss with you and show you why it's complicated, and I think it can be easy. You can say this: where the House rises or sits in any month, the maximum shall be five days. That's the simple way. The problem Mr. Bogle raises is this: the House could, let us say, sit beginning February 27 or it could sit on February 3. We could have a maximum in those partial months.

I finally decided in my own mind that I wouldn't even bring that up. Obviously, if the House sits in the first two weeks of a month, the member is going to either have two or three days here — never can exceed 10 in any event. If the House rises on the first day of the month, that rest of the month — there is a 10-day limit. But it's the same problem Mr. Wright raised earlier. I thought the complication was too much of a complication. Maybe in the review process, Mr. Bogle, that would be appropriate to develop, but it's a complicated wording.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What you are saying is 10 days maximum per month.

MR. STEVENS: Or as may be claimed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I ask for clarification? A Members' Services order will have to be drawn up for purposes of embodying this decision. Is it intended that this 10-day allowance apply to every month during which the Assembly does not sit?

MR. WRIGHT: No, it applies to every month.

MR. STEVENS: It applies to every month.

MS BARRETT: No, no.

MR. STEVENS: The way I understand it, Mr. Chairman, is that it says in the Act . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hold it, folks at that end of the table. We're going to go this way. We're going to listen to Mr. Stevens; then we're going to Strathcona, Highlands, and then to Hyland.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was thinking of the far east. The Member may claim and be paid an allowance at the rate prescribed by the Members' Services Committee for a period when the Assembly is not in session. So that doesn't matter whether there is a . . . To me it's not a relevant question. If the House is in session, you don't claim, obviously. But up until the House is in session or after the House is in session, under my motion one may claim up to 10 days if that person is in fact in Edmonton or near Edmonton on official business.

MR. WRIGHT: That was my point.

MS BARRETT: This could end up complicating the motion, but it seems to me that the obvious way to take into consideration the points made, I think by Bob, about partial months when we commence our sitting in the middle of the month or conclude a sitting in the middle of a month or what have you, is that we simply prorate the 10 days on the basis of the month in question, as to whether or not we were sitting. That's the way around it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could add "or on a prorated basis."

MS BARRETT: Sure. "On a prorated basis for months in which a sitting might commence or conclude."

MR. STEVENS: In fact, Mr. Chairman, would that be part of this committee's review of responsibility? Because that would occur twice a year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but we'd better build it in from the beginning and add it into the process so it will do both. In a moment I'm going to have you and Pam look at the exact wording of the motion, for the sake of the

secretary as well as the members.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, my question is — maybe Gordon can answer it — if we set December 1 as the date for this, the 24 days as well as the \$75 in the other motion, are we covered for the time from December 1 back to when session was over, when we passed the Bill that took it out? So we've got to have a date other than December 1 for it to be effective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No one can start to collect on this until December 1. They're presently able to collect what is there.

MR. KOWALSKI: To a maximum of 24 days.

MR. HYLAND: Then we're going to assume that we understand that, because it's not in any Act anywhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I see. Is a separate motion justified for absolute clarification? Okay then, at this coffee break, which is now being instructed to happen, Gordon, you're going to meet with Mr. Hyland about that point.

MR. WRIGHT: Is it the calendar year or the financial year?

MR. STEVENS: It says "in any year."

MR. WRIGHT: "Any year" in an Act means calendar year unless the contra is indicated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The payout has to be on the basis of the fiscal year.

MR. STEVENS: That's the interpretation I would take, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When our funds are expended. The committee stands adjourned for five minutes. Highlands and Banff-Cochrane — the Rocky Highlands will talk to each other about the motion; the other two are already in part.

[The committee recessed from 2:12 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.]

[Mr. Bogle in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stevens, would

you read your motion, please.

MR. STEVENS: I was just waiting for the other members to listen.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's all right; they're listening. Go ahead.

MRS. MIROSH: We're listening; we're just cleaning up.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Members' Services Committee, pursuant to section 41.3 of the Legislative Assembly Act, prescribe for payments made under subsection 1(b) a maximum of 10 days in any month and that this order be effective December 1, 1986.

MR. KOWALSKI: A clarification. A maximum 10 days in a month: the assumption here is "when the House is not in session."

MR. STEVENS: It's clear anyway. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. Under subsection 1(b) it is when the House is not in session and when the House is not prorogued for more than eight days and there must be a claim submitted.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Clerk, are you satisfied?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, I am.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All members are clear?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? Let the record show that it was carried unanimously.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: The next part is a committee minute that we review this in six months. That doesn't need to go in the order.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: I so move.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wright has moved that there be a review in six months' time.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question has been called. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed if any? It is carried unanimously.

Could we back up to the motion I made earlier requesting that a subcommittee be struck? We have learned since that that motion was indeed ultra vires. This committee does not have the right to review the daily allowances for the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly; therefore, if there is unanimous consent, I would request that the motion be struck from the record.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? It is agreed.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if you would like me at this point to go to the third matter that the committee is prescribed to do. I was going to lead off a discussion -- I presume that we might have a discussion -- and then refer it back for future discussion. We have one other matter. The first item I mentioned to Mr. Wright. The other matter that has been referred to our committee to prescribe is the expense allowance, which was set in the Act before Bill 54 at \$7,150. In my absence earlier was that discussed at all?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, it was not.

MR. STEVENS: I wonder if I might introduce a discussion item and then we can leave it for another time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. STEVENS: Bill 54 amended the Act to give this committee the responsibility of establishing the expense allowance referred to in section

39(1)(b); that is, an expense allowance prescribed before Bill 54 at \$7,150 per year. That expense allowance is tax exempt. It is for expenses that an MLA incurs in carrying out official duties. In fact, in the majority of cases across this country that is set by the provincial Legislatures at 50 percent of the indemnity. Ontario is an exception. I think theirs is set at 33.3 percent of the indemnity. I believe one other province, for some strange reason, is at 49 percent, but they are basically all at 50 percent. Whatever, Alberta's position is that we are nowhere near that. We are, of course, at about 25 percent.

I thought we should probably discuss this in our various caucuses and perhaps come back to this item, Mr. Chairman. As I think you discussed earlier, Mr. Wright, at the current time the members' salaries and expense allowances are being paid through the Legislative Assembly Office on the basis of the former -- the new numbers for the indemnity but the former expense allowance. We do not have a number now. This committee must prescribe some number. I raise that, Mr. Chairman, because I think we probably should discuss that in our caucuses.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. There is no motion for any further discussion on this matter.

MRS. MIROSH: Since we have no number, do we just carry on with the existing number in the meantime?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's a matter to be referred back to the various caucuses for some further discussion.

In light of the fact that our chairman is not here, I'm going to suggest that we not go into budget estimates at this point. We'll wait for his return. Could I go down to 9, meetings with other Legislatures.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we've talked about this on previous occasions. I recall that in a Members' Services Committee going back a year or two ago discussion was held with respect to this matter. I understand as well that some members of the committee recently visited Saskatchewan and looked at a variety of things. I also recall conversations we've had around the table that in all likelihood it will not

require participation by all members of the Members' Services Committee to visit other Legislatures to ascertain what's happening there. I think it's important that several members of this committee have an opportunity — of course, at the will of the committee — to in fact visit other Legislatures across the country. I'm not sure we need all members of the committee to go, but some should go to see what's going on.

By way of moving the discussion with respect to this matter, I would like to move that a subcommittee of the Members' Services Committee, composed of the chairman of the committee, the vice-chairman of the committee, Mr. Hyland, Mr. Wright, and Mr. Taylor, be appointed to undertake a review of activities in other Legislatures across Canada.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. Could you repeat the names, please?

MR. KOWALSKI: The chairman, the vice-chairman, Mr. Hyland, Mr. Wright, and Mr. Taylor.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any questions?

MS BARRETT: The motion basically calls on that subcommittee to take a tour of other Legislatures?

MR. KOWALSKI: To determine basically the next step, to set up the mechanism to advance it if the subcommittee comes back and says, "Yes, we feel there is need to go to two or three or four."

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We'll come back to this table first.

MR. WRIGHT: It must come back here before we start off. Very good. I just say that, Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence, because I was a little dismayed at the large number of people who went to Regina. I think perhaps there was good reason for it because it's a major expense of the Legislature and all that, but I think we should know exactly what we're getting into before we go out on one of these trips.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Fair point.

MR. KOWALSKI: This just sets it in the process

to go.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would say this in the absence of our chairman who wanted to ensure that we had a good number of audio/visual technical people in Regina, that by using the government aircraft and going to that size, we had seats available to include people right down to and including the caterer for this building who, I understand, was able to pick up some ideas as to the catering system in Regina that may be helpful here.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, you don't have a chance to do this very often, but I would like to say how pleased I was that the chairman was able to write a corrective letter and see it published in the Calgary Herald at least which noted that that particular newspaper indicated that 36 MLAs went on that trip when, of course, it was clearly indicated at the meeting that there would be, I think at the maximum, six members of this committee able to attend. I was very glad that he was able to write, and they published that letter correcting that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All right. Are we ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? Let the record show it carried unanimously.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I have a concern which relates back to item 6 relative to the expense allowance. Bill 54, as passed by the Legislature and given Royal Assent, provides that the number \$7,150 be struck, and that Act came into force on October 1. In light of that — and perhaps Mr. Wright could assist here with a legal opinion . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I thought he did earlier.

MR. STEFANIUK: . . . I wonder if indeed the Assembly is in a position to pay anything in the way of an expense allowance.

MR. WRIGHT: No, I wasn't aware that they had actually struck the figures.

MR. STEVENS: Yes. I mentioned that.

MR. STEFANIUK: The figures were struck, and I wonder if this committee would, in light of that and pending a final decision, care to reaffirm \$7,150 as being the numbers in place.

MR. WRIGHT: No, there was a 5 percent increase, wasn't there?

MR. STEVENS: But that number was struck, sorry.

MR. STEFANIUK: Or without referring to numbers specifically, pass a motion confirming that the present amount of expense allowance be paid from October 1 to such time as an amendment is passed by the committee.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: To be clear, our Bill came into force on October 1?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So we are discussing November's expense allowance?

MR. STEFANIUK: No, October's as well, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, we've been paid October's.

MR. STEFANIUK: I know, but you may have been paid illegally unless we have a motion.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We're meeting on November 24, which is before the end of this month. The motion we passed was that members report back to their respective caucuses and then come back so we can address that issue. We're looking at a week and a half.

MS BARRETT: Ten days.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So what is the problem? We're not passing a period when a cheque will be issued.

MR. STEFANIUK: No, but we have already gone through a pay period, Mr. Chairman, and I

suggest that to validate the amount that was paid in October and possibly the one that will be paid in November because the November payroll will be made up prior to the committee's next meeting date, this committee consider passage of a motion which would confirm the present amount of expense allowance being payable from October 1 until such date as the committee decides otherwise.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair is at the pleasure of the committee.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move that the expense-free allowance as it stood on September 30, 1986, remain and be paid from that time onward pending further review.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All members are clear on the intent of the motion?

MR. STEVENS: Pending further review by this committee.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That goes without saying.

MR. HYLAND: May I ask a question? Does that mean just for this short period of time that we'll have to do a Members' Services order to cover this?

MR. STEFANIUK: We may. I'm concerned here, Mr. Chairman, about the legality of the process. As I read the legislation, there is no number provided for at October 1, 1986. Consequently, in a legalistic sense I wonder whether the Assembly is authorized to pay anything in the absence of any numbers.

MR. KOWALSKI: Not being a lawyer and not being a distinguished member of the Bar, perhaps Mr. Wright would be able to advise further in this regard. It's my understanding that when there are changes, there is a concept in law known as the continuance clause. By the very nature of that continuance clause, there is an assumption that certain things will happen. We have a motion that basically covers the same thing, and if it would make the Clerk more comfortable, I think we'll all agree to the motion, understanding that the continuance does exist. I think by custom in our framework of getting business done, that continuance

clause does mean something.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I think it's arguable certainly, but what's unusual here is that the actual number was struck out. It doesn't simply transfer the jurisdiction.

MR. HYLAND: Then that falls right back into what my question was about the other two motions. Are we going to need to go back to the other two motions and change them? If continuance meant something in those two motions on the per diem in that time . . .

MS BARRETT: The number wasn't struck out.

MR. HYLAND: Yes, it was struck out of the Act. How come continuance doesn't mean the same thing now?

MR. WRIGHT: That's a good point.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is a motion on the floor that the rate provided to members for an expense allowance as of September 30 be in existence until otherwise modified by this committee.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? All right. Now we can go to your point, Mr. Hyland, which is: do we need motions re the other matters that were struck from the legislation and are now the responsibility of this committee?

MS BARRETT: I move that we refer it to the review of the Clerk during the remainder of this meeting to determine if that's necessary. I take it, Bohdan, that you have the Acts in front of you?

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: Was it struck the same as the other? The numbers?

MR. WRIGHT: What does this say again, Bohdan?

MR. STEFANIUK: The \$75 dollar a day, which

has already been confirmed as continuing, I don't believe needs to be retroactive because it's shown as a continuance in that particular motion. In the matter of the 24 days and the substitution of that with the 10 days per month, I believe we may need a motion to provide for the continuance of the 24 days until today.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, then you would leave a void from today until the end of the month.

MR. STEFANIUK: Or till the end of the month; I'm sorry.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So you'll need it to the end of November. The Chair will entertain a motion to reaffirm \$75 per day, 24 days, from the time the House rose in September until the end of November.

MR. KOWALSKI: I would move.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Kowalski.

MR. WRIGHT: I second it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I don't think we need seconders.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, if you'd like to resume your chair?

[Dr. Carter in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is everything tidied up under item 6 with the amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act, as far as you know?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the Clerk was asked to review the legislation to determine whether or not any other motions need to be made to safeguard members because of numbers that were taken out of the Act. For instance, we've reconfirmed the expense allowance at the

present rate. We've also requested that each of the caucuses be asked to review the expense allowance to determine whether it's the appropriate number. Have I missed anything?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we'll have that together for the next time. All right.

Item 7 is the matter of the '87-88 budget estimates. The first matter is that we really should deal with the estimates of this committee — a subsection somewhere or other in here.

MR. STEFANIUK: Seven. They're in the main meeting books under tab 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Rod, would you like to . . .

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, for clarification, may I ask what your intent is today? Is it to review this in a very general, preliminary way and come back at a future date?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be my -- if that's the pleasure of the committee.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we might deal with page 63, which is under tab seven in your document for today. That's your gold-covered books, and we're looking at a white page. Have we now all got the same page?

MR. WRIGHT: What's this first line, then, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to cover that in just half a shake, Gordon. I want to make sure everybody has the same page first. I'm seeing a great deal of confusion. We've got a blank in one book. Pull that page out of Mr. Kowalski's.

MRS. EMPSON: I gave it to your secretary yesterday. It was separate from the binder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rod, would you like to explain page 63 for the members?

MR. SCARLETT: Basically, the first code, as footnoted there, now comes under 515A99, and that's the reason for the 2.5 percent increase in that code. In order to go along with guidelines

that have been generally set out by the government, we were looking at a 10 percent decrease in the budget, and I felt that the place to take that out was travel expenses. That's up to the wish of the committee, whether you want to budget that much money in the committee's budget for this '87-88 fiscal year, if you see fit. I think I recall last year's committee put aside \$18,000 for this year for the members of the committee to do their travelling to other Legislatures. If that subcommittee decides that they want to delay it into March or April or something, you may want to keep that money in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. STEVENS: I'm sorry, Rod. You're on the second line, travel expenses?

MR. SCARLETT: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: You quickly went by the first one? Okay.

My understanding from your comments is that you are looking at a 10 percent or some other kind of number. I understood from the Provincial Treasurer that his guidelines were not, nor should they be, provided to the legislative officers, and I'm surprised to hear you say that they have been provided to the Speaker. I just wanted to clarify that. The government . . .

MR. SCARLETT: They are not, no.

MR. STEVENS: Okay. You said that, though.

MR. SCARLETT: They're kind of set as guidelines. We try to follow by example.

MR. STEVENS: I just want to be fair, then, Mr. Speaker, because the comment was made that these were guidelines, and I do not believe there are any guidelines set by any government to the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. That's correct. It's me sort of encouraging the troops to knock it down and cut out the flab.

MR. STEVENS: Then my next question, Mr. Chairman, is: what is our estimate -- if we have not got it for this current year, because

we're only into it about four to five months. What was our estimate as compared to our forecast in, say, one of the years? We don't have that information, unless I'm not looking at it carefully enough. If we had forecast \$21,250 -- we may not be able to say what the expenditures of this committee are this year; we're only halfway through the year. But let's say the previous year: what was the forecast and what has been our expense experience?

MR. SCARLETT: I think the forecast was about \$5,000 total for the committee last year.

MR. STEVENS: And was their travel experience about what we estimated, or was it more?

MR. SCARLETT: It was the wish of the committee struck prior to the election that money be set aside for the Members' Services Committee to travel sometime during this year to other Legislatures. During our budget process of last year they decided that money should be set aside for travel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I may respond, Greg, that you raised an important issue, one that I've dealt with with my Assistant Clerk with regard to the preparation of budgets dealing with the committees. One needs to know as much as possible how much has been spent this year and how much was spent last year in terms of building these things for documentation. But it also relates to something else that came up at our staff meeting this morning that was a good idea. We want to pick up another piece of software to allow us to be able to get better performance here.

MR. STEVENS: Yes, it is hard.

Mr. Chairman, could I ask you this. Based on that estimate -- I have no quarrel with the number. That number would provide for up to a certain number of -- you see, there's a committee that's been struck today. Based on this budget, then, on these visits, the committee could make this travel either at your direction, Mr. Chairman, or at the direction of the committee. Is that sufficient? I guess I just have to ask you: your judgment is that what's...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe it is more than sufficient.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, just to briefly address one of the questions posed by Mr. Stevens relative to the differences or comparison of the forecast to the '86-87 estimate, I would suggest that the forecast is the same number as the estimate was, simply because at the time of year when these budgets are being prepared, the assumption is made that the budget will be used up, and so it's forecasted as such.

MR. WRIGHT: That was my question, but I have another small one. What was the employer contribution, or about?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, last year the provision was made for a contribution to pension based on the maximum amount of claims for meeting attendance that could be incurred by members, so that the expenditure of this figure of \$270 is contingent upon full attendance at all meetings by all members receiving the \$100 a day fee.

MR. STEVENS: That's not likely to happen.

MR. STEFANIUK: No. But considering the numbers, the difference is likely to be insignificant, in any event.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For example, Gordon, your and Pam's per diem here helps increase your pensionable base. Okay? Again, the forecasting is done there on the basis of \$100, \$75, and so forth.

A motion to approve the budget for '87-88 for this committee? Thank you, Mr. Campbell. All those in favour?

MR. BOGLE: Pardon me. I'm sorry. I'm remiss; I didn't catch the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to approve this page, the budget of this committee for '87-88. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: It's my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that we'll be coming back either on the 24th or at some other time to go over the

budget in a more detailed way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I see it, the 24th would be the time to do it. I'm really rather cognizant of the fact — I may be wrong; I should check that out first. I think that in times past the Legislative Assembly has been among the last to get its documentation together for Treasury. I know there are various legitimate reasons for that happening. We're building in some variables in terms of our meeting today and possibly at our next meeting. It's just that I'd kind of like us to be seen to be on the mark and try to get her done before Christmas to help the officials in Treasury. We could give one brief overview with respect to the documents you have. I know you only received them yesterday. Again, whatever the pleasure of the committee is as a whole.

Even reading down your tabs in the white-coloured book gives you the opportunity to see the various sections there that relate to whatever areas you want to put your questions in. You also see there whether your various sections are up or down in terms of the forecasting. What's your pleasure? I see that Pam is being sensible and disappearing from here. In view of all that, what's the pleasure of the group? Do you want to take your documentation away and come back on November 24? I mean, it's only fair.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Taylor isn't here. I'm sure there's a very adequate substitute, but he should be here.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's quite fine. Glancing at that, do you believe you have sufficient documentation? I know it's only a partially fair question.

MR. WRIGHT: If there's someone who would like to state a rationale for whatever the changes — I haven't looked through any detail whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What page are you sort of referring to?

MS BARRETT: He's on page 7, which is the Official Opposition budget, for example. Mr. Chairman, I don't see a change.

MR. WRIGHT: I see. All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pam.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, again, if we go through the same way, we set these numbers before, the breakdown on the four caucuses really doesn't matter to us. We look at the bottom line, and that's the way we're satisfied. We wouldn't be going through line by line, if we follow the same thing that we've done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just to underline that is the fact that when we did the approval for the increased funding, you all agreed to do that on a bottom-line basis.

MR. STEFANIUK: I was just going to add, Mr. Chairman, that the details which are given here for each caucus are a breakdown as provided by that caucus to arrive at the bottom line which was prescribed by this committee.

MR. BOGLE: On that point and further to Mr. Hyland's, I note that different caucuses have come in with different budgets, and our formula that we worked so hard to establish would be thrown away if we accepted these. So I think it's important, and I hope Mr. Taylor is made aware of this as well, that our primary concern will be to set a global figure, but it will be based on the formula and how the caucuses want to use their funds.

MR. WRIGHT: This formula was put forward at the last meeting, was it?

MR. BOGLE: We had a formula of \$40,000 per private member and then an X number of dollars for the leader. I think it was \$300,000 for the NDP, \$240,000 for the Liberal . . .

MR. WRIGHT: I'm not talking about what we fixed before; I'm talking about for the next year. Is that what you're talking about?

MR. BOGLE: I'm talking about next year as well. It will be my intention, further to Mr. Hyland, that we stay with the principle. I think our committee has to decide: is the \$40,000 per member adequate; should it be higher, the same, or lower? And the other sums as well.

MR. WRIGHT: And then everything else would

stay in ratio. Is that the idea?

MR. BOGLE: How you divide up your budget -- for instance, you provide a substantial amount of money for travel; government members up to this point in time have not. The only concern I would assume that the table would have is that all of our caucuses are staying within the parameters prescribed, that we're not using money that's been approved for our caucuses as members in a partisan political way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that means not flashing your logo around no matter which political party you are. You've got to be careful with that, folks.

MR. WRIGHT: On that point, Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. Eliuk does a good job of making sure it's kosher. That's my impression.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One question I have, Greg, with respect to this. Have you already got too much information about each other's caucus budget estimates here that -- Member for Taber-Warner, am I hearing you say that all you really want is the bottom of the page? You don't want to see any of this other stuff that's in here?

MR. HYLAND: We've always had it that way, but we've never used it to make up the budget.

MR. BOGLE: I think it would be inappropriate for me as Progressive Conservative member to comment on how the Official Opposition decides to allocate its funds as long as they're within the general parameters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the general parameters are roughly \$40,000 per member plus the extra contingency.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, if this will assist you, on page 4, by the 24th you might wish to have your office or the Clerk assess the motion we've made today, because that will have an impact on the last line. I don't know what it will be. There's no forecast for it. It will be a number that has to be drawn from the hat -- 65 members, so many days -- but I just recommend that there be some number there. Since each caucus will be reviewing the other matter, there may or may not be a change by November

24 to discuss. I just don't know how we'll deal with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which other matter?

MR. STEVENS: The very first item, the indemnity and expense allowance, would also change, if there is a change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I do insert "which other matter" in terms of the day.

MR. STEVENS: Sorry. So there may be two other changes that will occur, maybe not by the 24th. One of them might.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll do our best.

MR. WRIGHT: I can't even see the tax-free allowance.

MR. STEVENS: It's page 4 under the first item, Gordon. That's why I didn't see it either.

MR. STEFANIUK: They're lumped together.

MR. WRIGHT: Which section are we looking at?

MR. STEVENS: Page 4.

MR. STEFANIUK: Under section 3.

MR. WRIGHT: I see. Okay. Right. My question, though, Mr. Chairman, was with respect to the Member for Taber-Warner's point that these budgets, as submitted by the various caucuses -- I gather the opposition caucuses in particular -- infringe the suggested guideline or quantities. I just wonder if he could be more specific on that. It's just the bottom line we're looking at, I guess. Is the Official Opposition's too high by that yardstick that you mentioned and the rest?

MR. BOGLE: I don't see how we can increase the support if there is a general reduction in departments and across the board.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I understand that.

MR. BOGLE: What I would hope we could focus on on the 24th is a repeat of the discussions we

had several months ago, when we came to the conclusion that \$40,000 per member was the right number and the amounts allocated for the leaders' offices in the three opposition parties.

MR. WRIGHT: Okay. So the suggestion is that they stay the same.

MR. BOGLE: No, I wasn't making any recommendation on it. It's just that that's what has to be discussed by this table.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Correct me if I'm wrong, but our basic position is that once we as a committee set the formula two months ago, that is really what we want to have in effect for the next year. That's our basic position figure. At that time, we said we weren't going to add any more to this. We thought this was very sufficient funding. So when you then take into account all the other factors, we should still be showing up with a basic zero, which means the same level of funding in terms of next year. No one is asking for a 5 percent increase or 7 or whatever.

MR. WRIGHT: That was my question, Mr. Chairman, that the basic numbers are staying the same then, and the increases are those that go with the increased mileage and other ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That gets covered out of our budget, though, the Legislative Assembly budget.

MR. BOGLE: I think we can make that assumption today.

MR. WRIGHT: I'm sorry; I'm at sea. I don't quite understand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you folks could have a little discussion.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other than that, are you happy with the way the information is presented to you with respect to your own caucus, for which that is the only thing you can answer at the moment?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: When the material was submitted, our staff were working under some deadlines. I think it's fair to expect there will be a number of changes that would be brought back by government members re our proposed budget.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, would you do me a personal honour and favour? Would you send me a copy of page 11, section 9, I guess it is, and draw to my attention as chairman of Legislative Offices the budget our committee has adopted, and I'll ask our committee to review that. I think our committee should review its budget. Could you draw that page to my attention? It might be useful. I'd really appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 11 or 10?

MR. STEVENS: Page 11.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Thank you very much.

MR. STEVENS: You see the reference to the various committees. If you could in your capacity write to me as chairman of that committee and draw that to my attention, I would ask the committee to reassess its motion. We'll have a good scrutiny of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the committee be kind enough to entertain the notion requesting that I do similar action with the chairmen of the other committees, except Members' Services?

MR. WRIGHT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Edmonton Strathcona. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you very much.

MR. HYLAND: There might also be one missing there. I ask this question because the Minister of Community and Occupational Health made some comment during the heritage trust fund meeting that there could well be a select committee for study of the Workers'

Compensation Act this year.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, it would be inappropriate to present a budget for a committee which does not as yet exist, and the decision of the House which would strike that committee would empower it to receive certain funding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under special warrant?

MR. STEFANIUK: That would be the normal process if it came in the budget year. Alternatively, it could be presented to the House as a supplementary estimate, or if the budget has not yet come down, an appropriate amount could perhaps be built into the budget at the very final moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the preferred process, even for government backbenchers, is not special warrants, but if push comes to crunch ... Okay. Thank you.

MR. STEVENS: Chairman, was there anything wrong, though, in my first suggestion, which is now expanded — and I appreciate that — to include this whole page to each of us? It might be useful for us to see the compendium, and it would be a challenge for each of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That had been my intention. I thought that was the intent.

All right. If various members would mention to those who are absent, for good reason at the moment, that we would be coming back to try to work our way through the budget at the next meeting.

Okay. Item 8, members' purchase of computer equipment. Mr. Clerk, do you have any more comments to offer on that?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, one of the difficulties that has been recognized in administering the whole matter of acquisition of computers/word processors is the ability of individual members personally to select equipment for placement within their respective constituencies. The ensuing departure of certain members who acquired equipment of their personal choice through their various allowances has resulted in some serious administrative difficulties for the Legislative Assembly Office, in that some

question has arisen as to the rightful ownership of the equipment, the transferability of the equipment to the successor of the past member in that particular constituency, or the transferability of that equipment to a member in another constituency. In some cases where equipment was leased, it has been our experience that there have been no new members interested in taking over the leases and committing themselves and their current allowances to the funding which had been contractually committed by the previous member.

It would appear, therefore, that a desirable way of approaching the question would be to establish a policy by this committee relative to computer acquisitions by members for placement in their constituency offices. Ideally, such policy would guide the member as to the type and amount of equipment which could be acquired. Perhaps such policy development could take into consideration whether equipment placed in a member's constituency should be at the expense of a member's allowance, as opposed to another piece of equipment which is provided out of administrative support funds and provided uniformly, on the same basis, to all members of the Assembly who wish it.

Currently we provide typewriters, copying machines, and telephone answering equipment as part of a service to all members who wish that equipment in their offices. It would appear desirable to consider whether computers — word processors in the main — should be provided as well, and perhaps it would be worth considering whether computers thus placed in a member's constituency offices should have an ability to communicate with a member's equipment located here in the capital.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I think the Clerk has raised a very important issue. As a government member and going through the process in a former capacity, seeing departments argue one way or the other for particular equipment to meet their specific needs or the best salesperson that came along that month or the lowest bid or whatever, I think it reached a point where the government finally made a very difficult decision for itself. That was to establish very careful

parameters -- and not remove flexibility from departments to do their thing -- but very carefully designed policy parameters so that equipment and money are not wasted. The technological age is on us where the innovations are so incredible and the cost curve is decreasing so rapidly that we are, in fact, making -- probably each of us individually -- some pretty difficult decisions. There are some MLAs who are probably experts in the kinds of equipment they would like to have. There are others like myself who don't know how to spell "computer." I would look forward to a policy like that because I am very hesitant about purchasing anything right now, given the changes that are on us.

I think each caucus has to look at this carefully and work together if it's finally decided that we do it through Members' Services, through the Clerk's office, or however, because there are some problems with a common approach. The approach that I would be concerned with is the security between an office and a constituency office, the security that is necessary between different parties who may wish to have their own approach to this for their own appropriate reasons. But I believe that a policy approach would be welcomed -- I know, by this member -- and I would hope that I could help persuade my colleagues, because I think we are making some horrendous, expensive decisions right now. I didn't realize, for example, that we had members purchasing computers and the successive member is not obligated to assume that responsibility. I did not know that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just as an example, in my staff meeting with my managers this morning I discovered an horrendous horror story with regard to one of the constituencies in Calgary, where we're tied in at least until -- what?

MR. STEFANIUK: 1989.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nineteen eighty-nine. And what's the figure? Twelve hundred bucks a month?

MR. STEFANIUK: A quarter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Twelve hundred a quarter. And we can't unload the equipment anywhere. I'm going to go down and look at it

when I'm in Calgary Monday-Tuesday, and if push comes to shove . . .

MR. STEVENS: Could I have it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you want to assume it, I'd be only too happy to have you take it, because it's now stored in a government services' warehouse while we try to figure out what we're going to do with this thing. The reason I brought it up at the last meeting was to signal, to flag to everybody within your own caucuses, to tell them to hold on for a minute or two, and certainly on their leasing arrangements, don't get into long-term stuff. But we as a committee also need to have a small subcommittee to go out and try to wrestle with the knots of this problem for us. It may well be we have to engage some outside consultative help in terms of this whole process so that there is indeed a rationalization of what's going on.

MR. WRIGHT: Undoubtedly the constituency offices should be able to get computer services, and particularly word processing services. Nonetheless, it is a government purchase of the equipment for the constituency. That being so, and since it's government money, I think the government must come up with really good criteria for the sort of equipment purchased. Indeed, I would suggest uniform equipment so you can switch it around between constituencies and so on, and that it be able to communicate widely with the library or information services, as well as with one's own caucus and office in Edmonton. Obviously, these things can't be done all at once, but that's the first thing.

The second thing is that gone are the days, it seems to me, when we can be really liberal with our spending in this respect, or any other respect for that matter. Therefore, rather than any purchase being made by the government for the constituency and this being constituency property, so to speak, it would be purchased by the government, if that's the most economical way of doing it, and then leased, as it were, to the constituencies. So out of the constituency allowance, a reasonable lease rate is paid by the member. That will give the particular member the option of not having this stuff if he or she wants to and spending the money in some other way.

The trouble of its being like another piece of

furniture which you get is that if you choose to not have the service, you aren't gaining anything. If it doesn't come off your allowances, then you are going to be getting that anyway. So your forbearance would not be rewarded, so to speak, and that has the further advantage of not increasing the sums of money that the members are asking for to have their office equipped.

It's all very well to tut-tut about the improvident leasehold arrangements entered into by, I presume, a former member — but at least formerly in a constituency. Nonetheless, it was a government lease, and the government — whatever the department is — must bear some responsibility for such a contract. In future, though, we should ensure that any such continuing contracts are severable, at least if there's an election. The computer business being what it is and, in fact, most such businesses being what they are, they'll be only too glad to put out a contract that has that clause in it, because it's very special just to Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You mean there are a lot of people out there who would want to put out a contract on a member?

MR. WRIGHT: There are, yes. That's very good.

That's what I would say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I just want to add that we have learned from consultations with other Legislatures and Parliaments that where extended services have been contemplated, a group of members have volunteered to participate on an experimental basis and report back to their colleagues the successes or failures of a given experiment with given equipment supplied by a manufacturer who is interested in the business, and a decision has been reached following the experimental stage as to what equipment and what related software will in fact be provided to all members on a uniform basis. It seems to me the uniformity is a desirable feature, because it allows for exchange or succession of the equipment, regardless of who is elected in a given constituency. If, on the other hand, it were to be determined by caucus or by party

which equipment were to be installed for members of that particular caucus, the interchangeability feature would be nonexistent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just briefly on this, when we were overseas and the Clerk was with me when we went into West Germany, we spent a large amount of time meeting with them about how they were handling their own equipment and back into the members' offices. As pointed out, I think there were 50 members in that test process. They have both Siemens — and what was the other one? There were two manufacturers involved in terms of this testing thing. That would be very useful in terms of the long run. As a consideration, maybe we should entertain it as a project.

I think the real flagging notion, though, back into each caucus is: don't go holus-bolus out there right now because we need to strike a subcommittee here to try to come up with a rational approach, and I hope members might think about striking such a committee today. They wouldn't have to report by November 24.

MR. BOGLE: I merely wanted clarification on what you are seeking of us today. My understanding was, as a short-term first step, the request to our respective caucuses to refrain from making commitments on equipment, and you mentioned that we'd be moving with a subcommittee to try to develop some parameters and then build those in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And ask for any kind of input.

MR. BOGLE: Okay. That sounds fair.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, perhaps with that sort of commitment from caucuses, this thing for equipment in the constituency offices and before the tie-in, et cetera, could be one of the things if we decide to look at other Legislatures. How they do it and how they've done it is obviously going to be one of the important things we'll look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's certainly an horrendous challenge, and it's not something we're going to put together in a hurry. I've had Rod make some initial inquiries with a computer consultant about this thing. I mean, we're

talking about a bit of a rat's nest, although I suppose the coils in Medusa's hairpiece would be much closer to it.

Could I ask for a couple or three volunteers to try to determine what our parameters really are and what might be a way out of it?

MR. STEVENS: I was going to offer to be one of them, Mr. Chairman. I think the Clerk just gave us a very important reminder. He used the word "software." I should have said that. If we as members are buying equipment and don't know what we want to accomplish, we are being very foolish. We have to know what we are going to do with the equipment. We have to know what software we need, what is available, before we even decide on hardware. I think many of us haven't done that.

Can I ask you this, Mr. Chairman, as you're looking for volunteers? Could we do this: if you have a subcommittee — and I like Bob's and your exchanges — maybe we augment the committee from within our own caucuses with anybody who is already into the computer systems approach. I don't know the experience of any of us here. Would that help us? I don't know, Bob. Is that reasonable to ask, Mr. Chairman? I don't use a computer in my office; I use it at home.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With due respect, this committee can't co-opt nonmembers to be on a subcommittee, but I would hope that if Gordon is it for the NDP, he could delegate that information flow to other members. But he would be the focus.

MR. WRIGHT: We do have in our caucus — and I'm sure it's the case in government caucus; it has to be nowadays — one chap who is good on computers. At least he says he is. It seems to me there aren't any rules about subcommittees, really. What I would like to do on the subcommittee is substitute my membership for his. He's still a member of the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I think you have to be a bona fide member of this committee in order to be a member of a subcommittee. But you can take whoever you wish to be a consultant, because I don't think I could legally do otherwise.

First, could I have a motion to say that we appoint a subcommittee to look into this

matter?

MR. CAMPBELL: I so move, and I would suggest that probably we have the three caucuses represented — Gordon and also Nick Taylor on that subcommittee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gordon Wright and Nick Taylor. And from the government?

MR. CAMPBELL: Greg Stevens.

MR. STEVENS: I don't use one.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's a good guy to have on.

MR. STEVENS: I'd be happy to, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CAMPBELL: You'd bring some balance to it.

MR. WRIGHT: At least you can fly an airplane, Greg.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have Stevens, Wright, and Taylor to be the subcommittee with respect to the matter of computers. In that regard, Gordon, would you act as chairman of the subcommittee, please?

MR. WRIGHT: All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In that regard, I would like you to have the ability to liaise both with the Clerk of the Assembly and also with Rod Scarlett, please.

MR. HYLAND: That was my question, that some one or two staff would be on it.

MR. STEVENS: Okay on that, Mr. Chairman? It may be prudent to you, Gordon, as chairman of the subcommittee and to the Clerk, but is it possible that there is expertise available that we could draw through the Clerk's office? Within departments — they've gone through this process very heavily in Treasury, for example, or in Public Works, Supply and Services. Can we co-opt help from them through the Clerk if we need that? It may be useful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a good point for you and your committee to raise and to attempt.

MR. WRIGHT: I had understood that the previous Members' Services Committee had some people looking into this. It wasn't so?

MR. HYLAND: We talked about doing it, but we never did. Then the election came along. But we had talked about it a couple of times, especially when it gets near year-end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's probably sufficient for today on that topic. A call for the question with regard to the motion appointing the subcommittee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you very much. We realize that's going to take some time.

Item 10, Other Business. Number 1, MLA credit card.

MR. BOGLE: I raised that, Mr. Chairman. At the present time, within parameters we are allowed a gas credit card of our choice to use as private members. I'm not sure if anyone else has the same experience I do, but I find that primarily within the constituency, I like to stop at more service stations that just, say, the Gulf or the Texaco or the Esso. I think it's part of being a good member to be as accessible and as visible as possible. Therefore, when I'm in Taber, I have six different service stations I stop at periodically. The same is true whether it's Coaldale, Warner, Coutts, or Milk River.

My difficulty at the present time is that in order to stop at all those various service stations, I have to use my own personal MasterCard, and then I have to claim back through the Leg. Assembly for those gas purchases. I'm finding that that's an incredible amount of paperwork for me. I have checked with Rod to see whether or not we could have a credit card, either MasterCard or Chargex, issued for Legislative Assembly purposes, limited to gasoline purchases. In other words, we'd use the card the way we would a gasoline credit card. I think a very strictly worded letter would have to go out to the member from

the Speaker or the Clerk or someone, offering the use of this card, with a signature from the member, and have it returned, so that there's no abuse. I'm not in any way looking for a system that's going to allow for abuses. I am looking for greater flexibility for private members so that our role is enhanced rather than bogged down in paperwork.

As I said, I've done some preliminary work with Rod on this. I leave it open for discussion first, Mr. Chairman. Unless there is some major opposition to it, I'd like to make it a motion and move with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other alternative, though, is to have to lug around six different credit cards for those producers.

MR. BOGLE: That is correct. I've thought of that, and I really dislike — my wallet is already loaded down with cards. The thought of having five or six — and I think I counted out that I would need at least five cards to cover the service stations that I currently do business with.

MRS. MIROSH: I agree that hauling around four or eight or 10 cards is not very convenient, but I think that by going to Chargex or MasterCard we're leaving ourselves wide open and very, very vulnerable. Some members could use it for other things accidentally or on purpose, and I think it makes it a difficult job for the Clerk of the Assembly to keep track of and make sure that these are audited or whatever. I think it leaves it open to be used for purposes other than gasoline.

MR. BOGLE: May I expound on that, Mr. Speaker?

MR. STEVENS: Not fair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Save them up in rotation. We've obviously got something going here. It's a bit of a poker game over there.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I just said "not fair" to Bob because I'm so supportive of what he has proposed. In my right hand are four cards — and I thank the Clerk and the Legislative Assembly and Rod and everybody for the En Route card, which gives us life insurance when we travel. But I agree with Bob

for another reason. I have these cards, which are me, and these cards, which are AADAC. Those are AADAC expenses, and you try to get them on, but I can tell you that it's really difficult for another reason. Bob mentioned one about being able to go from point to point and visiting different constituency businesses. The reason I have three cards now, one of which I don't want to have anymore because Gulf Canada doesn't exist . . . The problem is this: some of our stations close, so you go to another station that you don't have a card for, and again we go through that process.

May I just describe this? Rod, you may have found this out. The federal government of Canada has a card for its public service. I think we could get a card. I'm sure it can be — it doesn't necessarily have to be . . . If that takes care of the concern that the Member for Calgary Glenmore raised, there is a government of Canada gasoline credit card. In fact, that's really what Mr. Bogle has asked us about. So I don't know if we could find something like that. But I have no trouble with having an American Express, Visa, or MasterCard, because those are accepted by all the service stations I visit.

MR. HYLAND: I should just say I don't carry quite as many as Greg, because I put my Gulf one away.

MR. STEVENS: I should too.

MRS. MIROSH: Use it at Petro-Canada.

MR. HYLAND: You what?

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, please, continue with your remarks, Cypress-Redcliff. Do not be distracted.

MR. HYLAND: I asked if this could be done some time ago, only the thought never came to mind of going to a MasterCard, Visa, or that type. I asked if we could get a single gas credit card. Some work was done on it, and there is no organization that handles billings from all companies like En Route does for all airlines. There is no organization that handles all billings for gas companies. One of the things I asked Chuck to try — he did it a few months ago —

was to see if an outfit like AGT would handle the billing procedures. I could be wrong, but I thought the answer came back that they're now going to a different system, either billing directly from gas stations or something else. They don't have the single card like they used to.

I know the federal government still does because I've seen the Mounties use theirs, except they tell me it takes them a year and a half to get a replacement even if your card's worn out. But I would totally support that, because you get into places where the service stations, even though you may carry three or four cards, are closed or they don't have that particular type of service station in town, not the brand names but the smaller — Tempo or whatever else.

MR. BOGLE: I want to respond to Dianne's comments. If I have a Shell credit card, I can use that credit card to purchase many items that are beyond the list that are approved by the Legislative Assembly. I can go into a service centre, I can purchase tires or batteries, or I can go into the restaurant and have a meal. The key thing is that my monthly statement comes back to me and I go through it. I determine then which items I can claim for and which I cannot. So what I'm suggesting is that the member would still do his own policing in the sense of . . .

MRS. MIROSH: You could use your own credit card for that then.

MR. BOGLE: I'm using my own credit card right now, but the point is the amount of paperwork involved. If we had a card that we could use — I use this MasterCard as an example — we know and we have agreed in writing that we're going to use it for a sole purpose. We limit ourselves. We police ourselves just the way we police ourselves — you could take your card that you received from the Leg. Assembly now and use it for more things than you're allowed to.

MR. HYLAND: For example, with your En Route you could go out of the province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's where the abuse came in last time. Other members of the previous Assembly did that, and in at least one case we

had a lot of problems trying to reclaim the money from the person. We ended up deducting it. There's the problem: one person will mess it up for everybody.

MRS. MIROSH: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the discipline of the card in the first place is: only put on the card what belongs on the card. Then if you're going to buy your battery or whatever else, that goes on a separate card. Then the stuff put on the original card just gets paid for by Legislative Assembly and doesn't have to go through your bookkeeping process, but the other part does.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I had the material brought up from previous discussions of this subject. The use of a Visa or MasterCard by members had been discussed as far back as 1983. The concerns expressed then were for the most part those which have just recently been mentioned, the other than authorized use of the card. But perhaps a greater concern was for the fact that Visa and MasterCard do not provide a copy of the signed chit. The statement comes in and lists only the establishment where the purchase was made and the amount that was charged. The Auditor General's office was concerned for a statement in that form since it did not provide evidence that only those items which are authorized by the Members' Services Committee have indeed been charged. There is no copy of the chit available. It's simply a statement listing the establishments and the amount.

MR. STEVENS: There's a simple answer to that.

MR. STEFANIUK: That concern was expressed by the Auditor General's office. Then the administration was asked to investigate the possibility of obtaining a universal gasoline credit card similar to the one that was in use by AGT employees at the time. It was determined that it was possible to develop that type of card following conclusion of negotiations for its use with all those oil companies where the card would be honoured. There was a statement, which I would like to read into the record, which is a repeat of what was said on April 7, 1983, relative to the government's reaction to that type of proposal. The statement is:

The Government has decided against

establishment of the universal gasoline credit card as the user must be totally responsible for the administration of the card. If the card was stolen or lost, the Government is financially responsible for any expenditure against the card until such time as it expires. The user must accept full responsibility for any card which is stolen or misused, and there is no right of recourse.

The committee felt that it is not in the best interest of the province to employ this system. Liability would have to be assumed and although there are firms in the private sector which provide this insurance, they were found to be too costly as investigated by risk management branch of Alberta Treasury.

MR. STEVENS: Could I respond? I think times have changed, Mr. Chairman. I keep all my slips on my government credit cards. I've never been asked for the originals yet, but I've got a pile of them. If anybody ever wants them, they're sitting there. I would be happy if I had a MasterCard or a VISA or whatever they are, to turn those slips in if the Auditor General requires them. I get them. When I finish picking up my gas, I get a copy of what I signed. I will be happy to turn that in, and somebody can create more bureaucracy, sit somewhere, and double check that I've done the right thing.

On the other matter of the liability, I think times have changed. If you asked me to sign a document that said I was responsible for all those expenditures that I didn't declare when I lost the card -- there's a \$50 limit on all of my cards today. As soon as I make the call, there is no more responsibility to me. That card is stopped and the notices go out. So I really think that can be covered, Bohdan, in today's world of credit cards. I think the government took a position then that may have been right in '83, but I don't see that today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll call for a check on that.

MR. HYLAND: To some -- maybe if you're not filling up that often, it doesn't seem like that much to be using your credit card, but when I do my preessional tour, for example, that lasts two weeks, it's \$400 bucks. To do it out of different service stations, you pay and by the

time you get the money back, the government won't pay any interest on your expense account.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You pay the interest on it. You don't recover the interest when it's on the personal.

What is your pleasure or lack of?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I understand the position taken by the committee, and I appreciate the advice from the Clerk that, in fact, the idea of a common gasoline card would be most difficult to secure, based on the federal approach. We're not big enough, thank God. We're not big enough to negotiate, but I do agree with the Member for Taber-Warner's suggestion that we explore any other kind of card and that if it needs a policy, a statement, or a signed document, I'm happy to sign that. I'll manage it for whatever policies we set. I think the benefits outweigh the problems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, so some more checking will take place.

MR. BOGLE: What may be helpful, Mr. Chairman — I would make a motion that we instruct the Clerk to come back with the pros and cons of a card and a draft statement that could be sent out that would require members' concurrence before they receive such a card, so that when we're dealing with this again as a committee, we're dealing with a more factual basis. All I wanted to do today was raise the issue, have a good airing — we've done that — and then come back to it. It may be that it's just not practical, but I'd like to take a look at it.

MR. HYLAND: When you're looking at that, also look and see if you can put right on the card "for gas and accessories" or something like that which would cure or cut down . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Basically, what we have before us now, Gordon, is a motion that the matter be further investigated by the Assembly office for report back at the next convenient meeting.

Question. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank

you very much.

MLA expense claim forms.

MR. BOGLE: Do you have a copy there, Rod? I raised a question with the Speaker of the House. I'm assuming that all members received, as did I, a proposed new form. No, the new form is not here, Rod.

MR. STEVENS: It's a double-sided thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Double-sided on the front page? Here comes one.

MR. BOGLE: This came out from Mr. Chuck Eliuk. My concern is that before staff members in the Assembly who are working under the Leg. Assembly send out revised forms to members, this committee should have an opportunity to review them. Quite frankly, I take great exception to the recommended changes on the form under part D in particular.

MR. WRIGHT: D is in the new one then?

MR. BOGLE: D on the new form.

MR. STEVENS: Not that one, Gordon, sorry. It's the other form we got the other day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you take these around please? They're coming, Gordon.

MR. BOGLE: Maybe the best way is to look at the old members' automobile allowance claim form which set out under parts 1 and 2. Part 1 allows members up to 52 return trips per year between the member's residence and the city of Edmonton. You're required under that form to state the date of your departure, the date of return, the trip in kilometres, the rate, and the amount. Under part 2, under the revised schedule we could claim up to 25,000 kilometres of general travel within the province per year. We merely needed to indicate the time frame of the claim, the kilometres, the rate, and so on.

Under the new form as sent out by Mr. Eliuk, under section D rather than part 2, the 25,000 kilometres per year, we have the dates plus a description of trips: more paperwork. I don't mind saying, Mr. Chairman, that I'm incensed that forms can be altered and sent out to all members without some consideration for the extra workload you're giving members. We just

went through one example in terms of filling out receipts for claim back on our automobile expenses. Now we have yet another.

I'm raising this for consideration by members of the committee. I know Mr. Hyland had a question he wanted to raise relative to the disclaimer, and that was as it related to the temporary residence sessional and temporary residence nonsessional sections of the old forms.

MR. HYLAND: That's [inaudible].

MR. BOGLE: No, it's now covering everything. If we deal first of all with the automobile allowance, I'd ask the question: what was wrong with the old form? Who decided that it needed to be emended and changed in that way?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk, respond to the question please.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, to provide a brief history of the form's revision, there were in use in the Legislative Assembly three forms to deal with claims. Some months ago I asked administration to consider whether or not the three forms could be consolidated to eliminate the variety of forms which were being presented to members. They, in fact, drafted a form and returned it to me. I in turn commented about various other changes I thought were appropriate and returned it to administration. That is where the breakdown began, because I learned via a copy of a memorandum dated yesterday to the Speaker's executive assistant that there were some questions being raised about that form. I had not been advised that the form had been published or distributed.

Normally that form with revisions or changes back and forth would have come back to me eventually until I was satisfied that it was a good form. In turn, I would have referred the matter to the Speaker for his approval, decision, or direction as to whether the form could be published under his authority or whether it needed referral to the Members' Services Committee. Most regretfully that process was not followed, and I apologize to the committee for that. I have since discussed the matter with the director of administration and have in no uncertain terms informed him that

no form is to go into production and use without my prior knowledge, whereupon I can accept responsibility for it. I regret to inform the committee that in this case that process was not followed.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the explanation given by the Clerk. From my point of view, I don't think we need to rehash what has happened. I do believe we need to address what changes, if any, the committee feels should be made to the present form.

MR. STEFANIUK: Might I just add, Mr. Chairman, that the statement which appears at the bottom of the form, which is a consolidation of two statements which appeared on two previous forms, was included as part of the earlier forms as a certificate because payments were being made without receipts or copies of invoices being required. That enabled administration to make the payments to satisfy the Auditor General and Treasury. Normally members are not reimbursed, nor is anyone reimbursed for any expense, without having submitted proof of purchase or proof of expense. That statement was, to the best of my recollection, drafted by the former Speaker in his capacity as both Speaker and lawyer.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if I'm going to help here except to say — and I appreciate what the Clerk has explained. I really liked the old approach. I'll tell you why. I think the documents we were signing and preparing served different purposes and fulfilled different needs. Sometimes by combining them we end up with more problems than we've ever had. My first use of this form — I've submitted it; maybe I haven't got paid because nobody can read mine. I can't fill it in. In other words, it has been developed as the Clerk explained, but perhaps no one sat down with the members and said, "How we can fill this in?"

I give you a perfect example, section D. No way is there enough space there for a quarterly report, so I'm doing it damn near on a weekly or monthly basis. There just isn't enough space. The old form had more space. You can correct me and say, "Well, it was buried on the bottom," but more description was allowed. I'm not sure we needed a change. I liked the sessional allowance form being by itself. I liked the temporary residence nonsessional being by

itself, and I liked the automobile approach being by itself. They are different sections of the Act, and I'm not sure putting them together has solved anything. I, for one, would go back to the old forms.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You make that a motion, to go back to the old forms? Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: It seems to me that in principle an economy of effort and of steps and therefore, I suppose, of money is achieved by having a combined form. But I too am really troubled about section D, because right in the rules about the automobile allowance is this reference to 15,000, now 25,000, kilometres per year. It seems to me that's based on some kind of a formula in which it made a difference as to the distance you travelled. But I'm puzzled about that, Mr. Speaker, because the main difference to one's expenses in point of the distance you travel is in oil and gas, which is paid for separately. This is to compensate you for your car, presumably. The car costs more or less the same whether you travel 10,000 or 25,000 or 50,000 kilometres a year, right? A bit more depreciation, perhaps, but in the blue book, for example, there is no difference at all.

So even with the previous form I had some trouble. You didn't have to specify, but you had to indicate that you had travelled at least one quarter of the 25,000 kilometres. I can't do that in my constituency because (a) I don't travel far distances and, secondly, I use my bicycle most of the time. Nonetheless, I have to maintain a car; it's impractical not to. So I've been puzzling out how to deal with it. This makes it all the plainer that the whole concept of linking the cost of the car itself to the mileage travelled needs to be revised. Therefore, it's not quite germane to the difference between the two forms because the same problem existed with the old form. Perhaps this is an opportunity to address the question of linking the cost of your car to mileage.

MR. HYLAND: Gordon, I can see that you look at it somewhat differently than I do because of where you live and the number of miles you travel.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. You have no problem complying with the mileage. It's just the

stupidity of writing down all the trips.

MR. HYLAND: If I had to write down each trip, hell, this page wouldn't be long enough. For me it wouldn't work just because of the number of trips and where you go.

MR. BOGLE: I'd be remiss if I didn't give a bouquet, in the sense that there are some improvements in this form over the old forms, in my view. I should have mentioned that earlier and I didn't. I think the disclaimer just above the claimant's signature is simplified. It says the same thing in simpler, plainer English, and that's an improvement, in my view. There is also the reference right under members' allowance claim form, which is pretty straightforward. My main concern -- and a number of issues have been raised by different members. My primary concern is that under section D description of trips be eliminated and that we go back to a time-frame approach on the form. If other members feel other amendments are necessary, I think they should be added to that. My motion would relate to section D under the automobile allowance and that description of trips be struck and time frame would be included.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Time frame has to be in there but not the actual days.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, time frame. We're going back to what was on the old form, striking dates and description of trips and adding time frame.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So basically we would now still go with the same form in this new one?

MR. BOGLE: Unless other members feel strongly about changing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'd still keep the one consolidated form but change these references at the bottom and keep the same disclaimer as on here?

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Speaking to the motion with regard to this, we now understand: same form, on section D take off

the dates, put in time frame.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to vote for the motion, but may I ask the Clerk a question? Are the words "Description of Trips" under sections C and D currently interpreted as follows? For example, under section C would "return" suffice, and under section D would the term "general travel" suffice? If it would, then the form can stand alone. I'm not speaking against the motion, Bob. I'm just asking for clarification. If I were to put under section C, November 6 and November 9, return trip, home and back to whatever it is — to Banff-Cochrane, home and back — and if I were in Alan's constituency on a special mission and put down under section D, November 7, general travel, 480 kilometres — if that's what's expected of us, if that's what's obliged by the Auditor General or whatever, then I have no trouble with the present form. I'm not speaking against the motion; I just wanted clarification. What was expected of us in this new form?

MR. STEFANIUK: To be quite honest, Mr. Chairman, I'm having some difficulty with recalling, because it was so many months ago that I requested that some consideration be given to an amalgamated form. But I would think that under that heading "Description of Trips," that would simply show the words "origin, destination, and return," or things such as "constituency travel" to satisfy the auditors. I would not foresee a description in the event that is a concern which would, in fact, say, "I went to visit with so-and-so," but merely a matter of destinations, so the auditors could be satisfied that the amount of the claim had some relevancy to the destinations.

MR. STEVENS: On the basis of that explanation, Mr. Bogle, would you still wish your motion to proceed?

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. STEVENS: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: That what? I'm sorry. Have you got a time frame?

MR. STEVENS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Section D of the motion

would deal with scrubbing dates there in the left-hand box and then taking out "Description of Trips" and replacing that with the words "Time Frame." With regard to section C, it would stay the same as it is. Section C is simply saying "Banff-Cochrane to Edmonton and return," because there we're talking about 52 return trips between the member's residence and Edmonton.

We have a motion before us, but it's basically a revision of section D.

MR. HYLAND: Maybe it wouldn't matter, but I'd just like to throw it out, whether it would be an amendment or not worth it. In keeping with the old form, if it just said "Description" instead of "Description of Trips," and the mileage is Section C. I suppose one way or the other doesn't make a lot of difference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would think it means about the same thing, Alan.

A call for question on the motion. All those in favour of the motion, please signify one way or the other.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Opposed? Carried. Thank you, we'll put that back into the process.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, would it be in order on my part to make a motion that the committee at some convenient time review the concept of linking the automobile allowance per se to mileage?

MR. STEVENS: That wasn't its purpose, I don't think.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's in order to have it as an agenda item for some discussion at a time other than this, I would suggest, because of our weakened condition on a Friday afternoon. A number of us have many miles to go tonight.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But certainly as a matter for discussion. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Perhaps on the next agenda then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you could give us a few paragraphs about your philosophical intent.

MR. BOGLE: I trust that through the Clerk the new amended form will be sent immediately, so that members are not confused.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll try to withdraw the old form tomorrow, but we again rely on you back in your individual caucuses to let them know that there is a change of form coming again.

MR. STEVENS: Do you mind if I use the new form? I've already fixed it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other issue, of course, Gordon: were you going to propose that there be 3 cents a mile for a bicycle, or in the wintertime that you get 58 cents per kilometre, because of exposure?

MR. WRIGHT: Danger money.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Danger money is another issue, with a bicycle.

MRS. MIROSH: Increase your long-term disability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MRS. MIROSH: Could I ask a question on this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MRS. MIROSH: Is there any assurance with this that members can't claim for both plane and the car against the dates? Is it, or what?

MR. STEFANIUK: No, there isn't, Mr. Chairman. In fact some discussion took place within this committee relative to travel generally, and the committee determined that it was appropriate for members to place claims for various modes of travel in a single trip because a member might be required to drive some distance to a destination which would enable him then to fly. On arrival here, let's say it was from a community in southern

Alberta which did not have an airport, the member might be forced to drive to a community with an airport, then to embark on an airplane, land in Edmonton, and use a taxi. And all of those were legitimate expenses in connection with a single trip.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And at the same time, claim for the parking it costs you back at the airport . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Say Calgary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . where you caught the plane, whether it was there, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, or wherever. That's all part of the equation. So the executive assistant did come through on that one very well.

MR. BOGLE: Very well.

There was one other matter I raised with the Speaker's office . . .

MR. STEVENS: A lot of them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're all here for the members, and maybe this is an enhanced role for the committee. I appreciate it.

MR. BOGLE: It's on the interpretation of the use of taxis in Edmonton. As an example, if the Member for Cypress drives his vehicle to Medicine Hat, catches Time Air to Edmonton, uses a taxi from the Edmonton airport to his office, those are all now recognized as legitimate claims. If on the other hand, he drives his vehicle from his home in Bow Island to Edmonton and uses his vehicle to go to and from his temporary residence to his office and to other meetings here in Edmonton, he can claim on a kilometre charge and claim for the gas used. The question I had asked of the office was whether or not taxi claims could be used in Edmonton for trips other than between the airport and the Legislature, because it seems to me that a member has one of two options: he either has a second vehicle that's used on a temporary basis here in Edmonton — actually three; the temporary or second vehicle — or he uses the taxi at his own expense. I guess there are those two options right now.

So my query is: if use of your own vehicle is permitted in the city and you can claim for it, why not limited use of taxis for a member?

MR. HYLAND: There probably is a third option, and that is the fact that if you're on a committee it's different than in the Assembly.

MR. BOGLE: I raise it because I think it's important that all members recognize that our tax-free allowance, which some would argue is the fund we should be using for those kinds of out-of-pocket expenses, is the second lowest in Canada. Only Prince Edward Island is lower, and that by a few hundred dollars. Most other provinces are thousands of dollars higher on the tax-free allowance.

MR. STEVENS: They could all use bicycles in P.E.I.

MR. BOGLE: It seems to me that particularly in the winter months in Edmonton there's yet one more hardship relative to travel around the city being placed on those members who do not have their permanent residence in Edmonton. I've asked the question as to whether or not the existing parameters could include use of taxis, and there's some question about that. So now I'm asking the committee if it's a matter we should consider at a future meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll put it on the agenda for another meeting, just as we've done with Gordon's issue. Let's do that.

MR. HYLAND: If I can use this as an example, last night I went out to the Convention Inn south to meet with some of the MDs and counties in my area, and that was eight bucks each way.

MR. STEVENS: You're suggesting that we review this another time?

MR. BOGLE: No, I'll hold my comments.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, it does seem to me that this is exactly why we have a tax-free allowance, but with the tax-free allowance being so exiguous as it is at present . . .

MR. STEVENS: What's that word mean?

MR. WRIGHT: Small. [laughter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not you that brought in the plain English.

MR. WRIGHT: It's plain English. It's just a bit refined, that's all.

But until we do something about the tax-free allowance, I think there's room for authorizing these expenditures, or regularizing them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the Chair take it that the Member for Edmonton Strathcona is going to bring up the matter of tax-free allowance at some future date?

MR. WRIGHT: I thought that was going to be on the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At some future date. All right. Thank you.

There's one other item I want to refer to under new business. It's to share a concern with committee members at large, and I'll only take a moment. It's simply that we have at least one case in point where an employee of one of the caucuses was let go. A case for wrongful dismissal was brought, and a settlement has been made out of court. I've had indications that this might also occur with one or two other caucuses, and I seem to be getting some whispers in my ear that the caucuses involved want the Legislative Assembly Office to pay for the out-of-court settlements. My position is: thank you very much, but no.

If I, on your behalf, as Speaker of the Assembly, do not have the right to hire your staff -- and believe me, I do not want to hire your staff -- and I don't have the right to dismiss your staff, then surely to goodness it is inappropriate that I then have to pay the bill for whatever kind of situation you folks have gotten yourselves into. That's the interpretation I'm giving, and that's the interpretation by which I intend to abide. In terms of the various fundings you have in your caucuses, if such situations arise, I respectfully submit that you really are liable yourselves to have to deal with the settlement of that process, not the Legislative Assembly.

MR. HYLAND: Are you ready for the adjournment motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed. Set to wave. All those in favour of the motion for adjournment, please stand. Thank you all very much.

[The committee adjourned at 4:11 p.m.]

