

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[10:35 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Here we are back again at camp. The proposed agenda has been circulated. Any additions or corrections?

MR. WRIGHT: Could I ask for a report from the computer services [inaudible]. I mean, I can give you one, if you like.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So if you're going to ask for it, then hopefully there'll be an answer, Mr. Wright. All right, other business. Mr. Bogle.

MR. BOGLE: On the minutes on 85-87 under item 5: Other Business -- Listings in Constituency Telephone Directories. I haven't had an opportunity to check the transcript, but I don't think I asked Ms Bruce-Kavanagh to issue a memorandum to members; rather to clarify for the committee that the present practice of advertising in various communities -- and I'm now speaking to a rural MLA -- in the telephone directory would continue, but that if a member wished to enrich the service by having the bold print, that extra expense would come out of the member's allowance. As I understood it, that reassurance was given, and I think the communication could well be through the various chiefs of staff of the caucuses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right you are. That all got cured, didn't it? It's all cured -- but to underline the fact that a lot of the communications are going to transpire with the chiefs of staff. Thank you.

What is your pleasure with regard to item 2 of the agenda, Approval of May 26, 1987, Meeting Minutes? Motion for approval, Mr. Wright. All those in favour, please signify.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. Thank you.

Item 3(a), Members' Expense Allowance -- Committee. Business arising from the minutes. 3(a) under your folder. This is a matter that was going to be referred back for further information from the various caucuses. No response from government at the moment, no response from ND caucus at the moment, no response from the Liberal caucus.

MR. TAYLOR: The Liberal caucus's response is that certainly this is not the time to be raising the expense allowance. While we realize that it may be out of sync with the rest of Canada, there are a lot of people that are out of sync with the rest of Canada and this is not the time to be recommending any change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Committee members, do you want this item to fail until one of you in your wisdom brings it forward at a future meeting, or do you want to just have it carry on on the agenda? Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Actually we did discuss this in our caucus and thought that the best thing would be to have it just fail; that is, be defeated for now and for the same reason.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To be defeated or just to leave it in abeyance, let it sit there?

MS BARRETT: To be defeated.

MR. WRIGHT: Defeated and not just tabled without recall, right?

MS BARRETT: I don't think you were there.

MR. BOGLE: It's a matter of reporting back. To me it's tabled forward. It's not defeated or approved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can certainly keep bringing it in your folders until the year 9999, if you wish.  
Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: We can certainly defeat it, or we can table it without date of recall. It's much the same thing.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, it's become quite fashionable to leave things in the Constitution for ever and ever amen, anyhow, to be brought up each year. So maybe we should just follow the national standard pattern that's being put out now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes that the Member for Edmonton Strathcona has moved a motion to table.

MR. WRIGHT: I'd prefer that someone else did, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair heard your distinctive voice pattern.

MR. WRIGHT: I mean, I suggested it as a possibility, but we did ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: [Inaudible] to table. Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I'm prepared to move that we table the matter until specifically recalled, that in fact it doesn't otherwise repeat itself until it's recalled.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to table. Those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Item 3(b) -- Report from Pacific Western Airlines, now Canadian Airlines, on Reduction in Air Fare Billing from Alberta Carriers. There's some correspondence which has been distributed. It's self-explanatory. However, Mr. Scarlett, would you like to speak to it, please? You might have to come closer to a microphone.

MR. SCARLETT: In effect the letter indicates that they'd prefer if we went back to a Quick Ticket system instead of trying to get a 10 percent reduction, let's say, on the purchase by using your credit cards. There are some difficulties in the Quick Ticket system; they're bulky. It means each member would have to have them in this office, let's say, or something like that.

The travel bonus points is the other way in which the 10 percent reduction can be achieved. They attach the schedule for the bonus points. As the minister responsible for personnel administration indicated in the Assembly, there is a program where all bonus points from government or MLA travel must be used for government or MLA travel, again, once that's been compiled or enough bonus points have been compiled. Other than that, that was the only reduction they could come forward with. We also checked on reserved seating on the airbus for Fridays, and they can't comply with that request either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Highlands, Edmonton Strathcona.

MS BARRETT: Yes. My question is with respect to the Quick Ticket approach. Is there a savings in that? I don't read it that way, but perhaps you could explain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I assume it's supposed to be convenience.

MR. SCARLETT: Definitely. [Inaudible] time. You don't have to line up in the line at the airport.

MS BARRETT: Can I have another question then? If he used the Quick Ticket method, does that necessarily mean that you dispose of or cannot collect through the government departments the bonuses that would otherwise go with that flying?

MR. SCARLETT: No. The bonus points still go with the Quick Tickets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The main advantage of that Quick Ticket thing -- and a lot of people don't realize it when they have it -- when they're standing in line they can jump the line, which probably means you stand a better chance of getting on that plane instead of being held on to the next plane, which often happens to a lot that are traveling between Calgary and Edmonton.

MS BARRETT: I think that's important. One final question then, before I turn it over. It seems to me that when I was listening to the Labour minister responsible for personnel administration in the House a few days ago on this sort of issue, when bonuses accrue, the benefit goes directly to the department from which the tickets were purchased. Is that something for which the Legislative Assembly is itself eligible then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I assume so.

MR. SCARLETT: The bonus point system goes directly to the employee number. It doesn't necessarily go back to the department. But there are methods in which the department will be informed of bonus points given to the employee number. We would get a statement from Canadian Airlines International saying that so-and-so had accumulated so many bonus points.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Edmonton Strathcona and then Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. WRIGHT: That sheds light on my question, because I believe the regulations say that the bonus points accrue to the individual and not to the business. So I was puzzled how this could be fitted in, but I guess you fit it in by scalping the individual's ticket, so to speak.

MR. SCARLETT: One of the ways which we could maybe handle that is the chiefs of staff handling the bonus point system, keeping track of the members within their caucus. That may in fact be better or easier.

MR. TAYLOR: I am a bit concerned about the whole bonus point system. You say that the system is in place. I haven't seen a letter or anything circulating from personnel or the Minister of Labour saying that it is in place, number one. Number

two is that, as you correctly point out, it accrues to the employee. It was definitely intended as a reward to the employee. In the old days the airlines used to buy steak and send flowers to the secretary that bought the boss's ticket. Now they give points, and as the hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona pointed out, it goes to the employee as sort of a bonus for having picked that airline over the others.

I find it's going to be extraordinarily difficult in its additional chore of policing to find the points that accrue to travel done on the government's behalf and travel points that accrue to the individual's account that's done on their own behalf. There are people that fly on their own behalf and families that fly on their own behalf, so you're going to have a little bit like a divorced family. You're going to have his points, her points, and our points all mixed up in the bonus plan. If you read the letter -- and I don't think we've pursued it enough -- the second paragraph says:

In response to your concern regarding cost savings, our conversation regarding ... is the one method we see as a solution ...

It's not the only method. In other words, I think that we should pursue, as I've wanted to all along, these airlines that cancel the bonus point system to anything that's paid for by a government credit card, and use instead a reduction in fare of 10 to 15 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: By Legislative Assembly credit card.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, right. By Legislative Assembly credit card. And it would be so easy to do. Right now they credit the account, so any time a ticket was paid for by the Legislative Assembly, there'd be no points on it. I think that's the easy way. It doesn't get it mixed up with my wife's travel or my own business travel or anything else. And I think it gets the reward to the taxpayers, which is what we want to show we're doing. We give these people a tremendous lot of business, and surely to gosh they could give us 10 or 15 percent off our account.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, with respect, I doubt that the airlines would be interested in that sort of a formula, because the point system that they have in place is not a straight reduction on the travel itself. I believe that it varies. Time Air schedules 400 points, 500 points for the Edmonton to Calgary airbus. It changes, and then you've got an accumulation of 16,000 points up to 1,500 miles. It's a formula, and I suspect that the only way to negotiate with the airlines is on the accruing of the bonus points in such a way that they could be identified to the Legislative Assembly itself; in other words, turning in every employee number -- let's say all MLA employee numbers -- and department codes to the airlines. I mean, this is a negotiation in contrast to simply allowing each caucus to be responsible for ensuring that members use up their bonus points on legitimate government business. The airlines possibly might be interested in codifying those things so that it could be at least centrally monitored. I don't think that they're going to go for a standard 10 or 15 percent across the board, because they have many formulae.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona, Westlock-Sturgeon, and then the Chair wants to make a comment. Then perhaps we could ...

MR. WRIGHT: How about your comment first, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well basically, as you know, all of us have been somewhat busy the last month or two, and of course when we were having these discussions with the airline, the other difficulty arose that then they were in the midst of a merger. I have experienced a fair amount of frustration at the length of time it took them to get back to us, but I could understand a good part of that.

I personally am not happy with this letter, and while it's an update to the committee, I think it's now reached the stage where either the new Clerk to be appointed or the acting deputy in charge of administration and myself go and meet with somebody higher up in the scheme, because I think this is not satisfactory for me.

MR. TAYLOR: Mine was a point of . . . Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All right.

MR. TAYLOR: It was just one thing that the member mentioned, the Member for Highlands' statement. The variation in the points for the difference between the same distance in flight with a different airline is that Time Air does charge less to fly to Calgary already. So in other words, the percentage reduction . . .

MR. HYLAND: Not any more.

MR. TAYLOR: Well then, of course, this letter is out of date then too, don't forget.

MR. HYLAND: Two weeks ago they upped it.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I know. But at the time this letter was written, it was taken in consideration of the fact that they charged less cashwise, so the percentage reduction -- they're pretty smart; they know what they're doing -- comes back to exactly the same. So that's just a point of information.

But I think Mr. Speaker's got the right solution. You've got to sit down eyeball to eyeball with them and tell them: "This is free enterprise. We're giving cheap gas to Manitoba and a few other things. We're out there competing. We're deregulating the airlines. What kind of a deal can you make for us?" Otherwise, the Liberal caucus will charter a plane and fly everybody for half rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry. That already is an issue of conflict of interest. We would have to unfortunately disbar all members of the Liberal caucus from the House.

MR. WRIGHT: Thinking constructively as usual, Mr. Chairman, and being a lawyer and familiar with legal fictions, I am thinking, since the only problem is this fact that it's the Legislative Assembly paying but the individual gets the points, why don't we just have a legal fiction, a card in the name of John Doe or Jane Roe, and the points just pile up. And if we can refine that system so that the NDP would have a card in the name of Karl Marx or something, and Appassionata and Adam Smith and Margaret Thatcher or something for the -- so we can know what caucus was getting the points. That way we can, with minimum deception, work the system.

MS BARRETT: I just humbly request that the name be changed to, say, someone like Tommy Douglas, if you don't mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, the Chair makes note that discussion has ensued, and the Chair will go forward and try to have some discussions with suitable people at Canadian Airlines.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

3(c) is the matter of Contracts for Constituency Office Staff. In your folder you will see that the issue has been brought up. There's a memorandum from Mr. Clegg to myself dated February 23 where it outlines some of the areas of concern, and I know that some of your constituency employees have their own areas of concern. We have this on our agenda this morning just simply to make note of the fact that this is not an area that's been forgotten, but indeed it is one whereby now that we're out of the House, I've requested Mr. Ritter to take on this area so that we can get serious about these contracts and what might be an improved process all the way around. So there would be reporting back to the committee in due course. But perhaps Mr. Ritter would like to make a few comments on that, and then of course we're open to hear whatever response the committee might have.

MR. RITTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Both Kathy Bruce-Kavanagh and I have gone over all the contracts in this capacity, and we would propose changing the ones we presently have, which I think are two: one basically for the constituency office staff and another one for the people who work on a more permanent basis here at the Assembly. We would suggest changing all the contracts to three types of contracts: groups 1, 2, and 3.

Group 1 would be basically a fee for service on a project basis, for which we don't presently have a standard form, but group 2 contracts would, we propose, replace the present constituency office staff contracts. They would do a number of things which seem to be rather contentious with some of the constituency office people in that they can't count on their wages coming through at a particular time. They presently, I believe, have to submit an invoice. There is no deduction for tax, CPP, UIC, and that type of thing, and there are a number of other problems that they see with it. What we would leave open to the committee, and we would be discussing with several people involved, is making a standard form constituency office staff contract, which would kind of try to strike a balance between temporary or independent contractor basis and permanent employee basis. The permanent employee would be covered by what we would then call a group 3 contract. So if we could strike a balance between the two classes, and this would basically include wages rather than being paid on an invoice basis at an irregular time, we would switch the fees over to the payroll department so they could count on a paycheque at a particular time each month. There would be, in fact, no benefits such as dental plan, health plan -- that type of thing -- but we would be taking the deductions paid from the employer, including the tax, the CPP, the UIC, and the Workers' Compensation Board.

Now, Ms Bruce-Kavanagh has worked out some figures . . . Oh, what did you want me to say?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we pause just half a moment. To the tour guide: your group is from where?

TOUR GUIDE: This is Royal Tours. They're from a number of places, mainly in the United States.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

This morning this is Members' Services Committee, which is a very unique place for us. It's the common meeting ground for some not so common people. They represent all the political parties in the House, save one, and so the elected members in this nonpartisan forum have a chance to become their own union, in one sense. They are able to negotiate and to develop what the overall operational program is with respect to all of the members and the operation of their constituency offices, as well as their support staffs here in the capital city.

Yesterday the Legislature rose after the longest spring sitting in recent years. So some of us are sitting here just a little bit more relaxed than usual because we're finally out of the other thing for a little while.

We bid you welcome and hope you enjoy your stay in Edmonton and Alberta.

TOUR GUIDE: Thank you.

MR. RITTER: To continue, Mr. Chairman. As I was saying, the payroll would be on a regular basis. There would be no optional benefits like dental plan, health plan, and pension, but the deductions which would be paid from the employer would be tax, CPP, UIC, and WCB. Those would only be the employer's portion. Naturally, the employees' portion would be deducted from the pay. This protects the Assembly in another way, in that as it presently stands, Revenue Canada has on occasion looked into the relationship between contractors and contractees, and if they deem that in fact an employer/employee relationship exists and the independent contractor has not paid their taxes or other deductions at the end of the year, the person that income tax Canada deems may have been the employer might be held liable for it. These sorts of audits are becoming increasingly regular now, because it has been the tendency, certainly in the private sector, for many employers to hire an employee and then establish the contractor/contractee type of relationship as -- to use Mr. Wright's term -- a legal fiction, basically so that they can save themselves some deductions and put the onus of all deductions back on the employee.

As I say, some of these are becoming undone. They're certainly subject to question, and in any case the employer is, I suppose, protected a little bit if he ensures that some of the deductions, certainly the compulsory government ones, are being made.

Now, Ms Bruce-Kavanagh has worked out the average that would likely be the employer's remittance per month on a constituency office employee, and that would be: the Canada Pension Plan, \$37.05; UIC, \$67.31 -- which together would be [\$104.36] -- and the workers' compensation, which is optional -- certainly in a secretarial capacity it would be, because it's not a high-risk job -- would be an additional \$13.60. So this would be a maximum remittance of \$117.96. So approximately the maximum we would be paying as an employer to constituency office staff on their deductions would be about \$120 per employee per month. Now, this is something certainly which we'd want to keep in touch with all individuals involved to see if this is the type of arrangement they would like to meet.

But there are other matters that are involved in kind of a temporary employee as opposed to an independent contractor basis. The subject of liability comes up, and this is something where we would have to be very careful. Certainly, in a master/servant type of relationship, the employer assumes responsibility and

liability for his employees and their actions. In an independent contractor situation, you don't. But we kind of have a mixture here, so I think something could be arranged contractually which would strike a balance that would be satisfactory to all people. And that's pretty well it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Pengelly, Innisfail.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, why are we doing all of this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because there are some problems which have been coming to our attention, that a number of constituency secretaries are not happy.

MR. PENGELLY: I remember -- well, I guess it was more than four years ago in this committee -- where we spent some time on the contracts, and you remember that. I don't know why we're changing it. It seems to have worked out all right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona, Taber-Warner.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, whether the constituency employees are happy or not, the fact is that the system is not correct in law. I believe Mr. Clegg's opinion was that on balance it was an employer/employee relationship and wasn't really an independent contractor relationship. Consequently, we could get into the sort of trouble that Parliamentary Counsel is referring to.

There's another point, too, which I'm not sure that this clarifies -- but that was going to be the real subject of my question, which is that these people are entirely within the control of the various caucuses, but if they are dismissed, their employer is in the firing line for wrongful dismissal suits. Somewhere in there it must be made quite clear that -- that's to say, "employer" being the Crown, it would be made even plainer that they would be in the firing line. So in whatever contract it is, it must be made quite clear that any damages are the responsibility of the caucus budget and not the Crown.

MR. PENGELLY: On that point, Mr. Chairman, I find that very interesting, because it was a lawyer that drew up the contract that we previously had.

MR. WRIGHT: True. I think those were his instructions. But the way it works out, it's pretty plain that they're ordinary employees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you've identified the issue, Mr. Pengelly, very well.  
Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, possibly I missed something in your opening comments, but am I correct in assuming that this matter is still being reviewed and that further to the recommendations made at our March 3 meeting, Parliamentary Counsel would be working with the various chiefs of staff in reviewing the matter? If that is correct, I would suggest that we move on to other agenda items and allow this to come back once those discussions have been completed.

MS BARRETT: May I ask a question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Surely.

MS BARRETT: I'd like to ask Mike Ritter if what he was looking at in his option 2 -- that is, the standard deductions at source but without the type of permanent employee contract that we're most familiar with -- would be an option, or is it that we would all, once we get the details worked out, be required . . . I'm basically looking at satisfying the concerns that I think Mr. Pengelly has. My personal view and that of our caucus is that it would be preferable, where possible, to at least have the option to go for the number 2 approach to the hiring and, you know, contractual agreement with the employees. We believe that would satisfy a number of both taxation concerns that they have and that we have. But is it that an option would be possible so that those wishing to could maintain the current?

MR. RITTER: Well, at this particular moment I had anticipated that all constituency office staff would fall under the group 2, which would be a standard contract. However, we are introducing a new option which doesn't presently exist, and that is bringing in a group 1 contract which would be the fee-for-service, independent contractor basis. So I imagine if a particular caucus wanted to put an employee on a group 1 contract, that would in fact keep the status quo.

MS BARRETT: I see. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Yes, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: [Inaudible] make sure that I registered my concern of keeping the number 1, and the one that Mr. Pengelly obviously favours. I think any of us that are in rural areas use a number of people in a number of offices, and the idea of going to the highly regularized lockstep-type of contract that may appeal to the NDP constituencies here is not what we want. So I want to see that number 1 there, and I'm just a little concerned that we're marching along into more bureaucracy here. You can have the options there if you want to, get as bureaucratic as you like, but leave one free and easy one out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, what has happened here, committee members, is that again we've brought some information forward and that indeed we're going to take the appropriate steps where the director of administration and the Parliamentary Counsel will meet together with -- I keep forgetting the title -- the chiefs of staff, right, of the various caucuses. So we'll work towards what is indeed going to be an equitable but also a legally correct form or forms of contractual arrangements. I've had a note communicated to me from Mr. Clegg that it should be manifestly clear that he did not draft the present contract, but it was my understanding that it was done by another legal person who was involved with the department.

All right. Item 3(d). Westlock-Sturgeon, I believe this is your issue.

MR. TAYLOR: I still wish to have the motion voted on, although I must admit that it's been superseded by events, it would appear, although there is a fall sitting coming up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, motion on 3(d). I take it then that the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has moved the motion which is found there in your tabs under 3(d). Discussion? Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm not sure if you would want me to

write this out, but I believe that a friendly amendment would be in order. Because of the time of the year at which we find ourselves, we would want to make the motion effective the day it passes -- if it passes -- until 364 days later. I think that would be the correct way to deal with this motion at this time, given that we're several months into the current fiscal year. Would the mover consider that a friendly amendment?

MR. TAYLOR: I don't understand it, so I don't know. What is it?

MS BARRETT: Well, the motion . . . Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair exercises the prerogative of calling for a coffee break, and perhaps Edmonton Highlands and Westlock-Sturgeon could together draft whatever the friendly amendment is. We'll be back here in five minutes, please. This allows everyone the chance to take advantage of the goodies out in the members' lounge.

[The committee recessed from 11:11 a.m. till 11:20 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we'll come back to order. I'm sure the tour guide will forgive us if we just mention that -- is the group from Calgary North Hill? Great. Well, we welcome you all. Members' Services Committee is an interesting arrangement because it brings together all the political parties, and they have a chance to discuss all of the funding capabilities and requirements that are needed to be the backup support to the individual caucuses, whether it be NDP, or Representative, or Liberal, or government. We also deal with a lot of other issues, but it's one of the forums that happen where you bring the representatives of various political parties together, and it becomes a very interesting common ground. It allows you to develop friendships in a different way than down in the much more spirited atmosphere of what goes on most of the time in terms of the Assembly. So we welcome you and hope you enjoy your stay in Edmonton.

We have an amendment here as moved by the Member for Edmonton Highlands. It's been distributed. Discussion? Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yes. I'd like to explain on the record what the amendment is. It requests that the following words be deleted "during the 1987-88 budget year only" and the following words replace that phrase "from the date this motion is passed till that date in the following year."

The reason I sponsored this sort of amendment is that just as I don't believe in retroactive taxation, I also don't believe in anything retroactive with respect to income. I think that's the only fair way to deal with this sort of motion. We are already into the fiscal year which the motion requested consideration of, and because of that, any passing of this motion without the amendment would imply a retroactive measure which I in principle oppose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other discussion to the amendment? Call for the question on the amendment.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the amendment as proposed and distributed, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The amendment fails. The main motion; call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It fails.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. With respect to agenda item 3(e), universal credit card, Mr. Scarlett.

MR. SCARLETT: I was in touch with the committee members who were supposed to have the report in March. I talked to the Controller, who indicated that on June 25 they're scheduling another meeting to discuss a universal credit card, after which point they may come out with a recommendation within a month. That's their committee's report.

The thing I think this committee must keep in mind is that whatever they recommend may not necessarily help the Members' Services Committee.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, it's been almost a year since this matter was first raised. At that time it was raised to allow MLAs the same privilege now enjoyed by members of Executive Council. Members of Executive Council have the right to have either a Master or a VISA card, and that card may be used for the purchase of gasoline.

I would like to move that nonmembers of Executive Council be afforded the same privilege now extended to members of Executive Council and that members be given the opportunity to have either a MasterCard or a VISA card, and that the use of the card would be restricted to purchases that can currently be made by a gasoline credit card, and that any member choosing to exercise that right would be required to sign the necessary paper or disclaimer committing him or herself to using it for that specific purpose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a motion. Speaking to the motion, Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I second it. I think it's a good motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No need to second in committee, but the endorsement is very useful. Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, rather than list the things that the card could be used for, if we refer to the Members' Services order number, then there's no question about if we've missed anything. Rather than, say, to the existing gas credit cards, let's just refer to a Members' Services order num-

ber, and then there's no mistaking it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which would then be the coverage of the mileage and oil changes, stuff like that. Good idea. All righty.

MR. WRIGHT: A question to somebody, Mr. Chairman. This would not be in substitution for the existing credit cards?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair appreciates -- I hadn't realized ... I get so tired of trying to talk like a Chair. I hadn't realized that members of Executive Council had the credit card capability to do this, so that's good as the precedent for us then to go back and go ahead and get on with this thing. So we'll follow through with that. There is a difficulty that not all service stations will accept -- there seems to be no one credit card that will cover every gas station in the province or different types of gas stations, but there has to be one that is most generally accepted.

MR. BOGLE: On the point. First, on your question, Mr. Chairman, I do recall that when we first discussed this matter, it was suggested by some source -- and I think it may have been information that came from Treasury -- that we were breaking new ground. At the time I did mention that members of Executive Council certainly had that privilege. I, for one, exercised it for 11 years.

Secondly, on the matter of a credit card, in the motion I did mention MasterCard or VISA. VISA is the more popular of the two. I personally use a MasterCard, and I find that that is accepted in -- I have yet to go to a service station where a MasterCard has not been accepted. That's a better way to put it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. Well, in the spirit of the motion, we'll then figure out which one is the most acceptable.

MR. BOGLE: I think the members should be given the right, either of the two.

MS BARRETT: I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. One or the other, but not both.

MR. BOGLE: To the Member for Edmonton Strathcona, it is optional. There would be nothing requiring the member to do this or restricting a member from using a gasoline credit card that the member may be using now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Item 4, Taber-Warner: Members' Air Travel Allowance.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, possibly a brief report today would be in order. We thought we had a motion that would be acceptable. However, we found that it does need some further input. Basically, what is going to be proposed is that when the Legislature is in session, members be restricted to the use of an air travel card for one round trip per week from the normal resi-

dence to the capital.

We were looking for some flexibility, and therefore I'm going to request that the various chiefs of staff of the parties get together between now and our next meeting to see if we can come up with some formula that would designate to, say, the Whips of the various caucuses the right to approve additional usages. There may be some extraordinary reasons, and we wanted to keep the motion flexible enough to allow for some appeal mechanism. As it is not appropriate to do that through the Chair or through the Speaker of the House, it may be that we can handle it through our caucuses, re the Whips of the various caucuses.

But it's merely a report today, with the recommendation that we would follow up through the chiefs of staff, and if we're not able to come to a mutually acceptable arrangement, we'll drop the proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the basic thrust of it is the travel when the House is in session?

MR. BOGLE: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Other comments on that? Thank you.

Item 5, Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I brought this up, I believe, in February. I wonder if it would be possible, now that we're out of the sitting and prior to what I anticipate to be the fall sitting, for the administrative wing of the Assembly to organize a training session for MLAs to learn how to use the NBIs which are in all offices. I, for one, know how to approximately use it, but I for one have come in close call of shutting down the entire system for wrongly turning off the machine. I would like to have the experts teach me, and I believe that there are some other members who would like to join the computer generation -- I won't say the "p" word -- and learn how to use these things properly. I suspect, if I'm not mistaken, Kathleen, that it takes a day to learn the basics. I mean, you can always refine your techniques, but I believe it only would take a day, and a couple of our members would like to do this.

It occurred to me that if we could do it centrally, find out how many MLAs are interested, submit the names to administration, and identify a day -- I propose sometime around, in fact, September 3, because I believe most MLAs will be here for the 75th anniversary of this building -- that we all get together and sit down and get taught the ropes properly on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Campbell.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that would be an excellent job for the chiefs of staff, to line up with their particular members and get a number on it, and of course proceed if numbers warrant or whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And even if there's only one member that wants to do it, then that's quite fine, I would think. Comment, Kathleen?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: I think we can manage that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the thing might be then as some direction that the chiefs of staff ask members within their own

caucus who would be interested in dealing with the word processing equipment on that one day, a very basic preliminary workup, and then when you have those together, give the list of the names of the members to Kathleen. Then she can go from there about working with Sheila Unger to be able to work something together. Okay? Great.

Tour procedures, item 6. You have their letter dated June 10, and if you've had a chance to review it, it's from Maryanne Gibson in Visitor Services. Perhaps this is something that you could take back to your caucuses, because it of course really deals with the situation when the House is in session. I'm sure you all appreciate the fact that now that they're handling 50,000 visitors a year, the system is such that you have to keep the people moving. There have been some complaints that because members didn't get there on time to get their photo taken, then the whole system goes out of sync. Then people end up -- some school groups have missed question period because their MLA got them out of the sequence. So I think basically what's there is that they'll wait -- they schedule the time of the photograph being taken. If you can get there, great, and if you can't, tough beans, and the group gets on to coming into the House. So you have that there, if you would gently remind your colleagues. That's why it's there, because we need to be able to have some kind of fast-tracking for moving the volume of students through.

MR. BOGLE: While we're on the subject of tour groups, in particular school groups and the pictures that are taken, I would like to express appreciation for the response that's been given to the request by a number of members -- I believe both government and opposition -- to go back to the practice of having the school name appear on the small plaque in front of the class. I realize that that may not have seemed important to some people who were involved in the processing of the pictures, and the identification number was indeed necessary. On the other hand, it is meaningful to the classes that are coming in, regardless of where they're from in the province, to have the name of the school appear with the picture.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. One quick comment with regard to Visitor Services. Over the course of the summer I will be working with Visitor Services to review their slide program and presentation which they are currently giving to a number of the groups who come. In the last week or so of the House you saw that we had an extra photographer in here from time to time. She was taking photographs to update the slide presentation that is given to the tours. But along that line we also have now some VCR footage that we're going to incorporate into two presentations for VCR. One will be on a history of the building, with some background of the history of the province, which might be only about a seven to 10 minute shot. The second program, which will be developed after the new Clerk is in place, will be to give about a seven minute breakdown about how the House operates.

The eventual program, as I see it, would be that we might take over rooms such as the Carillon Room or another and have a VCR with the television, or a larger television, and then these can be plugged into the machine. The group of 20 to 22 comes into the room and they can watch that in seven minutes. You're saving wear and tear on the tour guides' voices. The other thing is that what's been happening in the tours is that people at the back of the tour can't hear what's happening at the front. So we see this as being one way to give more of an information flow and also to make it easier on the tour guides. Also, the people



then have a better idea of what indeed does go on with respect to the building and the process. But that will be developed over the next few months.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, further as to the Member for Taber-Warner, I'll appreciate the name that's been put on the bottom of the pictures. But I would express, or maybe ask you to find out from Members' Services or whoever is doing the photos, how many covers they have for those photos, because it still shows two two-person oppositions and my class often asks where I'm sitting in the sketch. At first, six months or a year ago, I thought we'd be running out of them, but I just wonder how many million we ordered at one time. If you'll look at the caricature or the pen-and-ink drawing of the Legislature, it still shows two two-person oppositions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the cover to the photograph?

MR. TAYLOR: That they sent out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure; okay. I haven't seen one.

MR. TAYLOR: I don't know who is in charge, but whoever is maybe could word it that things have changed a bit. Now, on the other hand, for the area of economy I don't want to make a poor old photographer get rid of them, but after a year they should be starting to have something new in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: All they have to do is draw in two more seats behind there.

MR. TAYLOR: Either that or cut . . . [inaudible].

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, well we'll have a look at this thing.

MR. TAYLOR: I'd say too, after the survey a member of the opposition holding up their class outside because the only real action in the Legislature is the opposition in question period. So I'm sure it must be some of the government backbenchers there letting the classes . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, the Chair hesitates. No, the Chair does not hesitate. Weren't you around yesterday? The House rose.

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Chairman, I think maybe we should have this pointed out in that brochure -- that the fact is there are backbenchers on the other side too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moving right along, item 7(a). The Chair has here, under Other Business, Wright, computer.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, just a very short report that the computer people who are surveying the eight constituencies -- now seven, I believe -- for their computer needs have done a partial report, in draft form, which is being inspected by their superiors there, the people who did the work, Mr. Don MacLeod in particular. They have been to all the constituencies involved, I believe, so the survey appears to be well up to time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great. Are there any other comments on

that? Okay, Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, I think this is another instance where this issue is kind of going on for a long time, and I'd like to give oral notice of intent for a motion for the subsequent meeting of this committee. If a report is not available at that time, I will move that a certain allocation be set aside for those constituencies wanting to computerize their offices. I think this is another example where we've gone close to a year without a report on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: So we clearly understand the Member for Edmonton Highlands when she speaks of a certain allocation, we're clearly talking about moneys that are currently within a member's member service allowance, are we not?

MS BARRETT: I had not that in mind last September when the issue was first raised. If I could continue: the point being that some constituency offices have inherited computers while some have not, and the thing I think would be appropriate would be to equalize that. Now, perhaps we could have a discussion outside the committee as to whether or not that's appropriate, and I'm open to that. But I thought that was one of the ideas behind all of this, not just standardizing equipment. In any event I will, you know, sponsor a specific motion to deal with it at the next meeting one way or the other so that we can make a report or give some recommendations to those constituencies wanting computers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona, when did you believe that the report was going to be ready?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, from the start it was made clear that the survey would occur while the House was both in session and out of session, so it was impossible to complete it sooner. But in any event, it will be completed by September.

MR. CHAIRMAN: By September. All right, thank you. So that gives us a time line, and indeed that was the Chair's understanding, that certain constituencies were going to be involved. You know, I think it's quite fair -- the understanding, as expressed by Taber-Warner, that in time past we've got those allocations there and allowances for purchases of equipment that are right there within a member's capability to purchase if indeed that's what they want to do. But we can see that as being the discussion when we next meet and have the report and the feedback from the eight constituencies. Okay, thank you.

One other item that I have here for just half a moment. Tour guide, this group is from where?

TOUR GUIDE: Viking. Dr. West's.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From Viking. Right. Okay, we'll wait for them: Dr. West from Vermilion-Viking. Thank you.

The other item I have down here, members of the committee, is that I wonder if perhaps you might solicit from your various caucus members what kind of feedback they have had with respect to the television coverage of question period. We were able to make arrangements at a reasonably modest amount of money to have QCTV carry on the coverage of question period and then to have it rebroadcast 11 o'clock at night throughout a



large number of centres in the province. I entered into that agreement only for the spring sitting, so I would be, you know, most appreciative of whatever feedback you have in that matter -- if you had any friends who wanted to stay up for the late-late show. That would be useful so that I can plan as to what may or may not happen in future.

MS BARRETT: I wonder if we can get the information as to what that costs. I think I can reflect that it's been extremely useful, but I had no idea what had happened that brought this into being. So I wonder if we can request that we have that information in writing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Members of the Committee, just for a half moment. To the people in the gallery, I understand you're from the constituency of Vermilion-Viking, where Dr. Steve West is your member. This committee is the Members' Services Committee, and there are representatives from the New Democrats, from the Liberals, and from the Progressive Conservatives. This is one of the common meeting areas for the members to work together on some mutual concerns with respect to the operation of their constituency offices and also with regard to caucus support, because behind every member of the Legislative Assembly there are a number of other support people who are very essential to our being able to survive. So we have here myself as Speaker acting as chairman of this committee, and some of my support staff are here because we have the Legislative Assembly Office. We have the 175 employees who are involved with the Legislature Library, Parliamentary Counsel, the administration, and also *Hansard* and security, and then the Sergeant-at-Arms over there keeping an eye on all of us and yourselves as well.

So we welcome you to the Legislature, because it is indeed your building. On September 3 this year we're going to mark the 75th birthday of the opening of this building. So it's a very special place, and all of us who are elected to represent various parts of Alberta are all too aware of just what a very special opportunity it is to be here in your building and ours to represent you. So welcome to the Legislature and welcome to Edmonton. I know all of you are Calgary Flames fans anyway.

Question period feedback, Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it occurs to me there's another item perhaps I can just briefly mention. That is, there are three offices within the Legislative Assembly staff of importance to all members which are to be filled: the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, and a permanent post for Parliamentary Counsel. Some of us are hoping, at least on a courtesy basis, that before appointments are in fact made there will be a chance for the Members' Services Committee to get acquainted with the candidates and offer their suggestions. I know there's some such arrangement with respect to the appointment of the Clerk, or so I understand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair undertook to have final candidates with respect to the Clerk meet with members of the committee and, I believe, consult with your colleague to your immediate right about when that is to take place. With respect to the Clerk Assistant, the Chair is going to make that appointment on Monday. With respect to Parliamentary Counsel, that's also within the purview of the Speaker and, as explained at the last meeting, I believe, the Chair did indeed make the necessary appointments there. To refresh one's memory, the Parliamentary

Counsel, Mr. Clegg, continues, and also as Parliamentary Counsel of equal status is Mr. Ritter. Mr. Ritter was on a contractual one-year basis. So those two appointments have been made. The director of administration, Kathleen Bruce-Kavanagh: that appointment has been in place and, in my opinion, is working out quite well. So the two outstanding positions are the Clerk and the Clerk Assistant, and as I say, a decision has been made about the Clerk Assistant. Hopefully, later today or by Monday at the latest a decision will be made about the Clerk. I would expect to make two announcements on Monday.

Other items. Cypress-Redcliff was in; Calgary Glenmore, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I have a motion here relating to the 10 days maximum for temporary residence allowance that you can get when you're in the city on Legislature business. What the motion really says is that -- it doesn't increase the time so it has no different budget implications, but it would make it so that over a quarterly period or over three months you could have the days amount up to 30 days rather than have the 10 days maximum.

The reason I bring it forward has partly to do with the summer months. There may be a month where you're not in Edmonton that much and then the next month you may be in over the 10 days, and that way you'll be able to receive the maximum amount of time you spend here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there copies of the motion to be distributed?

MS BARRETT: May I just ask for a repeat of the motion please? I didn't quite get it all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there copies, Mr. Hyland?

MR. HYLAND: Yes. I probably should read it into the record though, should I not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: Moved by myself that the Members' Allowances Order be amended as follows: (Temporary Residence Program)

Section 3(a) and (b) are repealed and the following is substituted:

- (a) At any time when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, a maximum of 10 days in a month or 30 days accumulated over a quarterly period.

MS BARRETT: Well, on the motion, I see that it makes virtually no difference. It just allows for a change in scheduling, and I think it's just fine and appropriate.

MR. BOGLE: Just for clarification, to the mover of the motion: are we speaking of a partial month as a month? For instance, we're now June 18, so could we speaking of the remaining portion of the month of June, the months of July and August as a period where 30 days could be accumulated?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think so, Taber-Warner. We've got that problem. You see, we were saying . . .

MR. HYLAND: We have to go by what's in the services order, and I don't think . . .

MR. BOGLE: I just wanted clarification. Am I correct that under the present order if a member were in Edmonton for 10 days in the month of June, from the 18th day of the month until the 30th day of the month, that member would be entitled to collect 10 days? That's in the current order.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: All right. Then I'm asking for clarification to ensure that if we're talking about a three-month period, we're talking about the partial month that remains from the time the Legislature has risen and then the two full months following that and that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we have a whole . . . The Chair has to ask this: has this gone before Parliamentary Counsel?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MISS BLANEY: You have to review it with Parliamentary Counsel, Mr. Clegg, who disagrees with the motion. He believes that we should be calculating this allowance on an annual basis.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I think it's very clear. You've got the option, 10 days in a month or 30 days accumulated over a quarterly period. But whatever quarter you pick, whether you start in the middle of June, the end of June, the middle of July, the 20th or whatever, it doesn't . . . [interjection] Yeah?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question the Chair needs clarification on is: by what we have at present before this, is a member entitled to collect for an additional 10 days in the month of June?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you. Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: As far as I can see, you get the same effect simply by altering the present (b) to say "a maximum of 30 days in any quarter," to make it very plain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we're back to the original motion of today as proposed.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I'm just thinking of a less mystifying way of phrasing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Westlock-Sturgeon, then Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I think the thing is quite clear, and it has the added advantage of getting rid of clause (a), which is a redundant one because time has passed. I don't know how you can be much clearer. I may be handicapped by lack of legal training, but it seems very obvious to me what that means, and I don't see where it hurts in any way. It doesn't change, it doesn't cut down what anybody has under the present legislation, and at the same time it allows those that are far removed from this

Legislature to accumulate the things, take it over a solid period. I think that's reasonable too. It doesn't cost the Treasury any more and allows them to jockey it back and forth.

MR. WRIGHT: Why I say it could be plainer is because presumably there is a point in referring to a month. Otherwise, why refer to it? If there's no point in referring to a month, then just say "30 days every three months."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then I suspect we're going to have some members who are going to still -- well, no, that's only the chiefs of staff -- start trying to claim in addition to what they can presently claim even when the House is sitting.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, no. I'm saying, "at any time when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, to a maximum of 30 days per three months."

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, Member for Edmonton Strathcona. I'm just reflecting some of the stuff that comes across my desk from time to time.

Mr. Scarlett, and then Edmonton Highlands.

MR. SCARLETT: Just for clarification, when the motion says "a quarterly or three-month period," for our administration that would have to mean as of March 31. We have to get set dates for a quarter because a member could claim 60 days in a three-month period if each member has a different three-month period. A quarter ending March 31 or a quarter ending . . . And this is just administration. Members would have to know that we have to do it like that.

MR. TAYLOR: As a point of information, a quarter does not mean three months; it means specific dates. Is that it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. [Inaudible] every quarter.

MR. SCARLETT: That's what it would have to do; otherwise we'd get in trouble.

MR. BOGLE: I have difficulty with that interpretation, Mr. Chairman. I don't want to prolong the debate. Maybe we should have a coffee break. But the intent of the motion, as I understand it, is to provide some flexibility. Obviously, when a claim is submitted it's going to cover -- and assume that a member wishes to exercise this option, then the member is claiming for a three-month period. Now, why that has to be locked into the quarterly system that the administration may wish to see is beyond me. I think we're making a mountain out of a molehill, because in order to be claimed a form has to be submitted and signed by the member, and it must be approved by our chief of staff or the respective chiefs of staff and then go on to the administration, who again are going to scrutinize it carefully. There are ample safeguards in place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Part of this, Taber-Warner, is all of us together working through the useful development of chiefs of staff and our own administrative overhaul. But I think the fiscal year point is indeed a good reminder that it starts April 1. That's the first quarter, or that is a quarter for a fiscal year for fiscal year purposes. But we'll work on the theory, yes, that the chiefs of staff will clear it. If, for example, the House didn't come in until say April 19 or something, so we had an overlap of a fiscal

year occurring -- not that that would -- we need to make sure we have clarity that they can only claim in one fiscal year. That's one of our major problems, the fiscal year tidy up, because that's when everything seems to go into a basket.

MR. BOGLE: The reason I make the point, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry; I'm out of line.

MR. WRIGHT: Assuming . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, and then Edmonton . . .

MR. BOGLE: The reason I make the point is that traditionally a spring sitting goes into the early part of June. Now, that's not always the case, but that's often the case. Speaking as a rural member representing a constituency some distance from Edmonton, it is my practice to get back to the constituency and spend the next two to three weeks trying to catch up on all the things I've postponed because we've been in the sitting or in the session five days a week for the last three and a half to four months. However, we wind up then coming back in to catch up on our office work here, so I think it's important to give the flexibility. If you cut it off strictly on the quarterly basis re the fiscal year, we wind up building walls around members' ability to exercise or access the support that I don't think needs to be there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I just again respond by saying that with the system of the chiefs of staff things are working much better, because we have -- for example, last summer I had to deal with someone who is coming retroactive for a whole year after the fiscal year was well passed. So I want to believe in all the members and chiefs of staff getting it together, and I'm sure discussions like this would be very helpful.

Edmonton Strathcona, Edmonton Highlands, and Calgary Glenmore.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, we have to satisfy three points here: first, the desire to bunch the 10 days; second, the fact that the present system deals in quarters on specific quarter days; and third, that there will be fractions of a quarter. Therefore, I think we can cover all of that simply by saying: "at a time when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, at a rate not exceeding 30 days a quarter."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, so now you have made an amendment. Then we have to find out if it becomes friendly or otherwise, so Cypress-Redcliff needs to look at that. Now, we have an amendment. The amendment -- say again, please, Edmonton Strathcona, so we've all got it on the sheet.

MR. WRIGHT: The words "at any time when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting" remain, and then follows instead of the rest, "at a rate not exceeding 30 days a quarter."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. At a rate not exceeding 30 days a quarter, so . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Then if it's a fraction of a quarter, the 30 days will be reduced proportionately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. The Chair feels the need for a coffee break.

[The committee recessed from 12:04 p.m. till 12:15 pm.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; back in order. There's an amendment.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

MS BARRETT: I believe we had an amendment on the floor, and I'd like to recommend that the committee defeat that amendment so I can propose an alternative one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or the other thing is we could have unanimous consent to withdraw.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a request by Edmonton Strathcona? All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Withdrawn. New amendment or something, Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yes, it is an amendment, Mr. Chairman, such that the substitution (a) would now read: "At any time when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting." Delete all of the rest of that sentence, and replace that partial sentence with the following: "30 days for any three-month period, and for the purposes of this section a partial month shall count as a month."

MR. WRIGHT: I thought we were speaking of quarters.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, why not? Mr. Chairman, the problem here -- I can't see where partial months come in if we're talking about every three months. Unless you're talking about three calendar months.

MR. BOGLE: Could the hon. member read the amendment again please?

MS BARRETT: Yes. The substitution after the word "sitting": "30 days for any three-month period, and for the purposes of this section a partial month shall count as a month."

MR. BOGLE: That has been cleared with Parliamentary Counsel?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the understanding of the Chair. [interjection]

MR. WRIGHT: I'm sorry; I missed something here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, the members were just pointing out that Parliamentary Counsel Clegg had been involved in the drafting of this.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, that's true. But I thought the object of the exercise was, if possible, to keep the reference to a quarter in

because of the way the administration works. And the Parliamentary Counsel did say that they expressed that wish, if it could be done. I don't see why it can't be done by substituting "quarter" for "three-months' period."

MS BARRETT: When discussing this just a few moments ago, I think it was understood that the administration has the ability, just as they do with the automobile allowance reimbursement program, to ensure that the cutoff is done at the end of the fiscal year, and they administer it on a quarterly basis. So you would get forms on a quarterly basis at the maximum. But it's up to the administration to do that. This doesn't run against that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. That's the summation with regard to the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried.  
The motion as amended: call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: I had my hand up. You had called for remarks on your very laudable program of the contract with QCTV, and I wanted to pass a comment to you, because I actually have surveyed my constituency.

First of all, one has to take a bow. Because I must confess that it seems to be watched much more than I thought it would. It's very acceptable, particularly the rebroadcast. If they were suggesting any two improvements at all, one would be earlier.

They have three improvements they're talking about. One would be earlier, at 10 o'clock if possible, but 11 is still there. Second, somehow or another get it onto satellite, because a lot of rural people use satellite and not cable. But that's a case of ACCESS getting onto satellite. I just don't know what the ins and outs are except that I see a lot of stuff on satellite that's certainly a lot less valuable than that. Third is the ... [interjection] At least that's one thought.

Third, Mr. Chairman, is with respect to the general atmosphere. This I got more from watching it myself a few times. The sound apparently is trapped off the recording system. The noise and the heckling, which maybe contributes to your discomfort at times to try to keep the House in order, is certainly part of the climate of excitement and what's going on in the House. Possibly microphone pickups that are in the House generally picking up all the noise rather than tapped in -- I don't know; this is a technical thing. It may well be that all you would get is the noise and not the speaking. But what you're getting now is a very clear, almost telephone-type message coming through on the tape with very little of the background hullo that's going on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just on that point, there's another thing that is also occurring though. Remember it's being carried on radio

as well. And on the radio we're getting some interesting feedback that they're able to hear conversations of people on either side of you. So on the radio portion it's coming across even ...

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe they should use radio on the TV.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's whatever the mikes come in. Because on QCTV they're getting the direct feed from the House system via Doug Jeneroux up there.

MR. TAYLOR: Now and again the camera or the sound aren't there, but I think it makes it more dull than what it actually is if you're sitting in the gallery.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the other hand, hon. member, there are a few comments that probably shouldn't be heard.

MR. WRIGHT: It would be a shame if we lost many of the Liberal leaders comments, wouldn't it, Mr. Chairman?

MR. TAYLOR: I've got my own recording for posterity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay, additional items? Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, there was one thing I wanted to see if we could add to the agenda. I see another motion -- or two actually -- in front of me, but could we have a brief discussion of *Hansard*? I recall receiving a memo from the Member for Stettler, and I wouldn't mind at least a brief discussion, perhaps not resolution of an issue, but at least a brief discussion of that if the committee would agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. One other quick response by the Chair to Westlock-Sturgeon. The matter of satellite: the cost would be exorbitant. But I think we have those figures, and we'll bring them to the next meeting. The program that we have in place at the moment was of much more modest cost, and we really appreciate the work of QCTV and ACCESS at being able to give us the access to the province that we've really had this time around. But we'll have those figures for the next meeting.

Okay, Calgary Glenmore I had recognized earlier, and we'll come back to *Hansard*, Edmonton Highlands.

MRS. MIROSH: I have a motion, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to move that Constituency Services Order No. 9 be amended as follows. Section 2(3)(a) to read:

(a) rental office space, furnishings, fittings and office equipment including electronic equipment.

Presently it reads: "rental office space, including furnishings."

Section 3(a) to read, in communications:

(a) the cost of printed items to be sent to constituents and the cost of postage for such items.

Section 3(d) is deleted under communications.

MS BARRETT: May I ask the mover what all this means, please?

MRS. MIROSH: It includes electronic equipment now. Which one? Section ...

MS BARRETT: Well, if you would explain the context of both. I don't know the members' services orders off by heart.

MRS. MIROSH: Currently it doesn't include electronic equipment.

MS BARRETT: In the context of what though?

MRS. MIROSH: For office equipment. When you have office equipment in your constituency office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So this is basically seen as a tidy up to allow what has gone on in the past -- of being able to purchase the computers, for example?

MRS. MIROSH: Do you want me to read what it presently reads? It presently reads:

the cost of printing of letters, pamphlets, brochures and greetings sent to his [or her] constituents and the cost of postage for bulk mailing of such letters, pamphlets, brochures and greetings.

And the deletion of (d). It currently reads:

the rental or purchase of micro-computers or word processing equipment.

That would be deleted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. It might be helpful . . . We've basically got two motions here. Let's deal with the top one first. I assume this has been passed around to all members. Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, am I mistaken in supposing that what we're doing here is saying the office equipment that is supplied without encroachment upon the constituency budgets will now include electronic equipment? Is that what you're saying?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, was the answer yes to that?

MR. BOGLE: May I help out? I raised some questions with our chief of staff some time ago about what kind of equipment was indeed eligible for purchase under our constituency office allocation. I was specifically looking at electronic equipment and found that while that's been the practice of members for some time, the motion as presently worded does not mention electronic equipment. So the only change in the first part of the motion is by adding "electronic equipment."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair poses the question then: what do you mean by electronic equipment? Other kinds of gizmos, not just simply microcomputers or word processors?

MR. BOGLE: Any electronic equipment that the member wants in his constituency office. It's the same as furnishings. "Furnishings" is a very broad word. It's a practice that's being done now; it's a tidying up exercise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does it mean microwaves? Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, perhaps someone will correct me if I'm wrong. Now, I believe I understand this to mean that the amendment to the members' services order gives specific latitude for constituency budgets to be spent on "rental office space, furnishings, fittings, and office equipment including elec-

tronic equipment." Is that correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Okay?

MR. WRIGHT: I understand, but perhaps one query anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect to this first part?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. WRIGHT: A lot of the furnishings, fittings, and office equipment come as supplied by the government, don't they, at present?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes. Some.

MR. WRIGHT: So this isn't in substitution for that. We'll still get the package, so to speak, and then in addition we can out of the constituency budget buy extra, including electronic equipment. So really it doesn't alter anything, except it makes what we've been doing regular. Okay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question on this first portion. All those in favour please signify?

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried unanimously. Section 3(a).

MR. BOGLE: If I can give a brief explanation on section 3(a). Again, I'm the culprit for raising with our chief of staff a concern I had. I put out a constituency calendar. I've done so now for two terms.

MR. WRIGHT: And a very good one, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you. I'm going to have St. David's day on the next calendar too, hon. Member for Edmonton Strathcona, as recommended.

MR. WRIGHT: St. David's day -- I wanted St. George's day.

MR. BOGLE: Well, St. David's day you recommended as well. We'll include St. George's day too. [interjections]

I became concerned that while I've exercised this practice in the past two fiscal years, a calendar is not listed in the current list of approved items, so I thought we should find a way. My first suggestion was add the word "calendar," and our chief of staff very astutely came back and suggested that we should be more general with the definition of printed materials for constituency purposes rather than having an exclusive list and merely broadening it. I think this is what the hon. Member for Calgary Glenmore was attempting to do in meeting that need.

MR. PENGELLY: So that means you can send the *Edmonton Journal* to every one of your constituents now and . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I think it's a good idea. But the way it's expressed here it just says "the cost of" -- in effect, any printed items to be sent to the constituents. So there has to be some rea-

sonable control on that. May I suggest the addition of the word "appropriate" between "items" and "to" so that it reads: "The cost of printed items appropriate to be sent to constituents." Of course, that's what the earlier list in the existing regulation attempted to do, wasn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That means without the Liberal logo or the NDP or the Representative or the PC logos but appropriate. And the "appropriate" would come in again: of appropriate printed items. Or where was it again?

MR. WRIGHT: The cost of printed items appropriate to be sent to constituents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: After "items." Discussion on "appropriate?"

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: What's appropriate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure none of you want to do anything that's inappropriate.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, it's better than nothing is what I'm saying.

MR. TAYLOR: Any MLA in his right mind is not going to be sending out items that aren't appropriate. What would you expect -- dirty literature or what -- to be coming out of here? Cost of printed items: I'm sure if the MLA is sending it out to the constituents, it'll be to praise himself and the cause of his thing, so it's bound to be appropriate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the word "appropriate" has been proposed as an appropriately friendly amendment.

MR. WRIGHT: Second thoughts, Mr. Chairman, and unless someone objects violently -- or objects at all, I guess -- I withdraw the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The call for the question with respect to the motion as printed. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional motions. Any more motions? Any other items of business? Edmonton Highlands, *Hansard*.

MS BARRETT: Yes. I didn't bring it with me, but I received a memo from Brian Downey, the Member for Stettler, in which he observed a concern that I share with him, as do other members, certainly within our caucus and, I believe, having talked casually with members from other caucuses in the Assembly -- and that is that while it's wonderful to have the next-day *Hansard*, the printing of it is in fact so quick that a number of mistakes are

let through. I wonder if we can at least get some information right now.

I responded to a questionnaire sent out to me and I presume all members by the Editor of *Hansard*, in which I made a similar observation and requested that consideration be given to perhaps going back to the Blues system, such that changes could be made by 10 a.m., at which point if no changes were made by the members, then it be shipped off for printing, such that distribution of the actual *Hansard* could occur in the afternoon. I have no answer on that, but I wonder if someone in this committee would have an answer approximately on that issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All we can do is take it under advisement and check.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, could we maybe at our next meeting have the Editor of *Hansard* and discuss it with him?

MS BARRETT: Great idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okeydoke. Other items? Date of the next meeting. Call of the Chair or do you have something specific?

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Does the chairman have a tentative date or even a month in mind?

MR. CHAIRMAN: January 1999. No, at the moment I wouldn't, unless some emergent issue did come. I would see perhaps late August, maybe the day before or the day after our September 3 . . . Looking in that nature, if that's . . .

MR. HYLAND: I would think the only item we've got outstanding that would have to be cleared up before session would be the *Hansard* thing -- or at least understood whether we have a fall session or not. That would have to be straightened out before then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, having listened to the point as raised by Edmonton Highlands about *Hansard*, it's one of the issues that was going to be discussed with *Hansard* anyway when we finally got out of the House, so we can start working towards what's a more appropriate procedure. Okay?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. Motion to adjourn.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Highlands. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Lunch is served for members in the members' lounge, and then 1 o'clock in the Carillon Room is for members only.

[The committee adjourned at 12:35 p.m.]