

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[10:10 a.m.]

MS BARRETT: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, group.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, do we have an agenda that's printed up or what?

MS BARRETT: Yes. It's in your book. Didn't you get your book?

MR. WRIGHT: I probably did. I didn't bring it up though. I'll share yours.

MS BARRETT: You can share mine.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: You're welcome.

MR. WRIGHT: Could I suggest a couple of . . .

MS BARRETT: Look at this.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you very much.

MS BARRETT: That's wonderful, Louise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First off, we do have a quorum. Okay, do you want to make some additional items?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Under Other Business, I'd like to add Handicapped Access to Building and Qualifications of Parliamentary Counsel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will take that one under advisement; I believe it comes directly under the office of the Speaker according to Standing Orders.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, it does. I have no quarrel with that at all, but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we could have a private discussion on that matter.

MR. WRIGHT: As you please, Mr. Speaker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'd kind of like to conform to Standing Orders . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Right. When the item comes up . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . so that the legal people, including yourself, don't then attack me in the House for not complying with Standing Orders.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, that's true. It wasn't to do with -- well, I'll talk about it briefly when . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other items? Thank you.

Okeydoke. What was your motion with regard to the minutes of June 18?

MR. HYLAND: I move that they be adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Moved by Cypress-Redcliff; seconded by Edmonton-Highlands. Any questions? All those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried. Thank you.

Item 1, Business Arising. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon at an earlier meeting had raised the issue about the design on the photo cover. It was designed along lines which did not really show a Liberal Party sitting in opposition. There was kind of a blank space on it. We checked with Maryanne Gibson in Visitor Services, and there are about 3,000 to 4,000 photo covers yet remaining. That should get us through this fall sitting, and then we can order a new design for early in '88 so it will more accurately represent the present configuration of the House.

MS BARRETT: I'm sure he'll be happy.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, an alternative would be to have a design which is nonrepresentational on the outside. It wouldn't have to change every time the House changes. I mean, I don't suppose that's a very frequent occurrence anyway but something to consider.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was wondering for a moment if the hon. member was going to call for a general election and try to rearrange the House so that we can [inaudible] away. This cover isn't designed for it.

MS BARRETT: Nope.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Then call for a general election.
Item 3(b), please.

MR. WRIGHT: Could we table that motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. VISA Card for Non-Members of Executive Council. David McNeil, some comments, please.

DR. McNEIL: Some information first. Forty-two members requested VISA cards, and those have been issued. I've had some difficulties with some members using the cards for other than what's specified in the standing order. I looked over a number of VISA bills. Most of those are for taxis and, on occasion, hotel charges, although in at least one instance I know of a number of airfares charged to the VISA bill as well.

I sent out a memo again in September reinforcing the utilization of the VISA card for what's specified in the Members' Services order and indicated that we need the receipts within 15 days so that we can pay the bills. We subsequently had a number of concerns expressed about that deadline. In most instances when I explained the necessity of having those receipts -- VISA doesn't provide copies of the receipts in your billing, so in order to finally pay the bill, we need a record of that expenditure which the receipt from VISA doesn't provide us with.

In researching the issue for this meeting, I discovered that the Members' Services motion wasn't followed completely when this was implemented. We in the office have failed to get members to sign the necessary agreement limiting the use of the card, which the motion specified. What I did was dig up the undertaking that was recommended back last year. I'm wondering if this may not be useful at this point in time, to send that out, again reinforcing the usage of the card. The members may

want to expand that or whatever, but that's something that was in the motion and wasn't done.

MR. WRIGHT: But the regulation dealing with usage of this is now an order of this committee, isn't it? So it binds the members anyway.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: We didn't do exactly what we wanted to do, but it's all watertight anyway in theory.

DR. McNEIL: Yes, in theory it is. That's my understanding.

MR. HYLAND: A couple of things. Firstly, I know I'm having trouble getting used to having to keep the receipts, because on the gas credit cards they sent a receipt.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly.

MR. HYLAND: That's a new wrinkle that I didn't realize at the time. But still, trying to keep those damn receipts and keep them straight is something else that I guess we'll have to get used to, if we continue with it. I wonder if we should look at it providing -- and I guess that's a whole new ball game of using it, something we maybe never thought of when we initially used it -- airfare. Then we don't need an En Route card, that sort of thing. We can cut down on the number of cards we have to carry. We could actually cut down to one.

DR. McNEIL: May I respond to that? One of the advantages of the En Route card is that they provide what they call a management report so that we in the Legislative Assembly Office get a quarterly report on all airfare usage, which is useful just for management of air traffic, which VISA doesn't provide. That's one advantage of having an En Route card.

MR. HYLAND: VISA, then, just has a printout sheet of the number and the cost, just like MasterCard? That's all they'd have?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. BOGLE: I wanted to ask through you, Mr. Chairman, whether or not there is a recommendation. Now, the last exchange might suggest that we not expand the legitimate use of the card. On the other hand, I guess the question still needs to be answered: whether or not the VISA card, which was approved to replace the gasoline credit card, whether there is scope to expand its use to include other legitimate things that a member may claim for; i.e., a taxi. And I have to acknowledge I'm one who inappropriately used the card for a taxi several times. It was brought to my attention that wasn't the intent of the motion. I should have known that, since I made the motion. In any event, so it's on the record . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's quite a relief to know that not all the members of the committee are infallible.

MR. BOGLE: The Chairman doesn't let us forget that from time to time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's because I [inaudible].

MR. BOGLE: The question is: what recommendation are we receiving from the Chair relative to the administration? Is there an opportunity to expand the use of the card? If so, in what areas?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in terms of our preparation for the meeting, we thought this is a matter of the regularizing of the form to be in complete compliance with the directive of the committee. Since legal counsel -- and I won't check into his qualifications -- had stated we're now covered, that then dealt with the major issue that we had, plus the other thing of trying to keep in conformity with the direction of Treasury, which is where we got into this other business about the receipts being produced by VISA and what for most members is indeed a two-pronged pain: first, to have to keep your receipts; second, to have to get them in within a reasonable time line so that we then have enough turnaround time to be able to get the necessary paperwork processed to satisfy Treasury. So the matter of expanding it, of course, is within the jurisdiction of the members to do at any time.

MR. BOGLE: So there's no recommendation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have no recommendation on that.

MR. BOGLE: All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At least I don't. We didn't get into that, because we still think we're in the early stages of trying to see what the usage of the whole card is. Indeed, it has proved to be much more convenient, with the size of the bulge in my left hip -- I was able to get rid of about five credit cards. So I find the card is much more useful.

But what's your pleasure, to deal with it now or not? First Taber-Warner and then, on this supplementary part, Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. BOGLE: Well, unless there's some administrative reason not to do it, it seems logical to me that use of a taxi should be permissible. The other aspect, how quickly we get our receipts back: I believe there's been an acknowledgment that there's some flexibility on the 15 days, that it's within a reasonable period of time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How long is reasonable?

MR. BOGLE: Well, 15 days is something that should be discussed. Any time limitations are going to be placed on a motion made at this table, that should be discussed and decided upon here. From the administrative side, "reasonable" to me means reasonable. If we find that some members are in excess of that, that should be communicated back directly to that member. If there are still no results, then there are caucuses for each of the parties, and let us deal with it. But if a member is away on a trip and passes the magic 15-day mark, we don't want something else to happen that would be inappropriate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quickly, this is on "reasonable"?

DR. McNEIL: If I could respond to that. I was given the 15 days initially by administration and went to Treasury about that. When I pushed it further, after the memo had gone -- I didn't do that initially -- they said, "Oh, we can arrange in advance with

Treasury so that we can pay the bill and then go back to the member and get the receipts if we don't have them."

MR. BOGLE: Good.

DR. McNEIL: So that 15 days is not a binding constraint. It was presented initially as that; it is not. But there is still the reasonable time involved here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the members are like me when it comes to expense accounts, you'd better keep the pressure on.

DR. McNEIL: And in terms of administrative workload for handling taxis, that's not going to be any more problem [inaudible] for the members than it would be for us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Back to Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I would not wish to see the use of that card expanded beyond necessity, the reason being that it takes a chunk out of the return to the person you're dealing with. I don't know what it is -- 3 or 4 percent, 5 percent, whatever it is. Taxi drivers, for example, have a hard enough time making a living anyway. So I thought it was strictly understood that this was a concession so that we could deal with the sort of no-name gas suppliers in one's constituency and so on.

MR. BOGLE: Well, just for clarification on that point, any time a member has used a taxi since it's been permissible, payment by a MasterCard or VISA card has been perfectly acceptable. So there should be no change. If we expand the use of this particular card, there is no change to the net return to the taxi company or to the driver.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, if you're using a card anyway, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: May I...

MS BARRETT: Well, what about me?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed, you're next. I'm just, on this particular point, trying to see that it's either going to come to a motion or whether we want to give notice to bring it back under new business later on in our meeting. I just leave that as a question. Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Responding to Al's comment about maybe expanding the use of the card altogether, I'm with Gordon on this issue. The return to the retailer is diminished whenever you use that particular card, because every retailer has to pay a fee to the VISA or MasterCard administrator, usually a bank.

But it does occur to me that our Clerk is on to something here in terms of this document; that is, refreshing people's memories. I certainly would support the sending out of this sort of thing to everybody who did get one of those cards so that people are reminded. It's just not a bad idea. I don't think it takes that much work, and then you do have their signature. Gordon is right. We're legally bound anyway under the terms of our own orders, but we're the ones that make the orders. All the rest of the people might not be very clear about them. So I certainly support this, and I have no feeling one way or the other about expanding the use towards taxis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the pleasure of the House, then, with respect to the form?

MS BARRETT: I should have moved that. I do move that as a motion: that this go to every member who has a VISA or MasterCard for the purposes of this members' services order for signature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They will use just VISA?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just VISA.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. It's been moved. Speaking to the motion, Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: My only difficulty with supporting the motion at this time is that if it is the decision of the committee not to expand the use of the card, then the motion is clearly in order and should be sent. On the other hand, if we're seriously considering expanding the use of the card, then to send this form out only to have another form sent out in a month or so replacing this would be confusing to our members. Therefore, I guess my own thoughts are that the use of the card should be expanded. Therefore, I'm forced to vote against this motion, but for that reason.

MS BARRETT: Why don't you make that right now?

MR. BOGLE: I can't amend your motion, because it changes the thrust of this whole issue.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I'll withdraw my motion then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unanimous consent of the House to withdraw?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I was going to move a nifty amendment, but I can't now.

MS BARRETT: That's what I was trying to get him to do, but he wants to do it separately.

MR. WRIGHT: Then this can be put into proper words by someone else. We don't have to waste our time on that. But I just move that we do send out one of these, but instead of specifying there what it can be used for, (1) will become: "... use the card only for payment of goods and services provided to me in conformity with Members' Services Committee order so-and-so." Then that's good indefinitely, whatever we do, you see. Or rather, "Members' Services Committee's orders" -- whatever they are, without specifying the one. Then a second sheet can go, saying that at the present time this only provides the right to charge provision of fuel, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we have an omnibus role, really, with respect to this revised document, which would be: "I undertake full responsibility for whatever is allowable according to the Members' Services Committee [inaudible]."

All right, speaking to this motion.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I didn't realize there really was a motion

at this point, but fine. Well, Mr. Chairman, is there any problem with us just deciding at this point, because it would be a sort of amendment, as to whether or not taxi use would be permitted for the VISA card? Is there any problem with dealing with that right now? Because I don't think . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can do it.

MS BARRETT: You know, I mean I'm not opposed to it, so it doesn't matter to me if somebody wants to sponsor such a motion or amendment to the motion. That way we can just clear it up.

MR. CAMPBELL: I so move, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we'll take it as a separate motion, but I think you have consensus here that that motion will indeed pass after this previous motion is passed.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, the two are not inconsistent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So there's a call for the question on the motion on the floor, which is from Edmonton-Highlands with respect to this form as previously described.

MR. WRIGHT: I think that was from me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona. I'm sorry. Thank you. I've got to relearn those skills of who's who.

All those in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes . . .

MR. WRIGHT: It's the very short one from Edmonton-Highlands and the tall one from Edmonton-Strathcona.

MS BARRETT: Well, let's not get into short lands versus . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quantitative versus qualitative. Rocky Mountain House, with respect to the use of the card.

MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that taxi fare be included in the provisions of Order MSC 4/83.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question.

MRS. MIROSH: I'd like to add airport parking. It's an important consideration.

MR. CAMPBELL: I have no difficulty with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the mover of the motion agree to the -- one of the favourite phrases of Edmonton-Highlands -- "friendly amendment"?

MRS. MIROSH: Parking, period. Not airport parking.

MR. HYLAND: Well, no, just a minute now. If we get "parking, period," we've got to be careful because that doesn't all qualify. It would be changing the whole thing. Airport parking qualifies now, but all parking, depending . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Okay, airport parking is my intention, because

if a car is left . . .

MR. HYLAND: Because airport parking is somewhere else in another members' services order, the provisions of paying for airport parking. So that way you'd be sticking within members' services orders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, airport parking is agreed, at least within the motion.

MR. BOGLE: Just a question for information. Could we have a brief summary of the services or activities that are reimbursable by the administration? In other words, we've talked about taxis, airport parking; we've talked about airlines. Are there some other things that we're missing today?

AN HON. MEMBER: Buses.

MR. WRIGHT: They don't work on En Route?

MS BARRETT: We all have a Greyhound bus pass.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Greyhound has a separate pass.

MS BARRETT: Yes, and Red Arrow takes En Route.

MR. CAMPBELL: Does Red Arrow take En Route?

MS BARRETT: I'm quite sure they do. I think they do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think to answer the question as raised . . . Well, of course, the [inaudible] is here, and to get a more definitive answer, we'll have to make a phone call to administration and see if there's anything else that's been showing up.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is the question what has been showing up, or what is covered by . . .

MR. HYLAND: Are there some little ones we should be including?

DR. McNEIL: Well, the other things that showed up are hotels, motels, and that's not legitimate, is it?

MS BARRETT: Uh uh. No way.

MR. BOGLE: And it shouldn't be.

MS BARRETT: I agree. It shouldn't be.

MR. HYLAND: Well then, that's not our intention, I don't think, unless we've changed a whole lot.

DR. McNEIL: Right now that's covered under certain [inaudible] En Route card. It's in-province traveling and car-related expenses under these. Those are the two types of expenditures that were authorized for credit cards. That was my understanding.

MS BARRETT: Is that clear enough then? Can we proceed on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question on the motion, which

expands the use of taxicabs for work related to the members' activities with regard to their constituents and also airport parking. All those in favour?

MR. HYLAND: Well, instead of having it that way, Mr. Chairman, can we say "taxi fares as in members' services order," because that covers fares, and here if you say "related to the constituency," you might use it at home and that's not the intention.

MR. BOGLE: Good point. We're restricted to Edmonton for taxis, and it's not the intent to expand that.

MS BARRETT: That's true. That's right.

MR. HYLAND: And if we stick to members' services order, it's already covered.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, can't we put that in the form, then, of "expenses authorized according to" -- and then list the standing orders.

MR. CAMPBELL: What was the motion? [interjections] Maybe we should just clean this up a bit, Mr. Chairman. Okay, where are we at now? The original motion was the taxi fare. Now we're looking at parking, only in the city of Edmonton.

MS BARRETT: No, airport parking and taxi use within the city of Edmonton, which is exactly the way it is right now. We're just adding airport parking.

MR. HYLAND: What we have to do with cash, we're doing with a credit card.

MRS. MIROSH: Taxis just within the city? What about when we go home?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, because you've got your car parked at the airport, by your own admission [inaudible] 20 minutes ago.

MRS. MIROSH: But, no, what if your car is here? If your car is here and . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: For clarification, ladies and gentlemen, we are by this motion adding taxis and airport parking, no matter where that place is within the province of Alberta? And all of this, then, is subsumed within the previous motion as moved by Edmonton-Strathcona, which said that [inaudible], anything that is congruent with what the Members' Services Committee shall, from time to time, within its wisdom pass.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. WRIGHT: But on this one my suggestion is that we simply say that the credit card can be used for any other member's expenditure authorized by our members' services orders, which I think we probably [inaudible].

MR. CAMPBELL: This is the beauty of having a lawyer on this committee. We were fairly set there at one time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With all fairness, it needs to come back. Each specific addition has to be passed by a resolution of the committee. Otherwise, it's a cumulative list, which [inaudible].

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously. Taxis, Edmonton only; airport parking, [inaudible].

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I have a question, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed.

MS BARRETT: Could we ask, then, for the Clerk to draft up a document, similar to this one, in which those changes are spelled out so that we understand, it's clear -- it doesn't say, you know, "members' services order such and such," which doesn't mean anything to most people -- what the use of this thing is, and get everybody who's got the card to sign it? I think it's a good reinforcement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed. And we'll do the drafting and send it out and we'll bring it back to the committee for prior approval. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. McNEIL: And I can provide an explanatory note in terms of why the receipts are required. This may ease the members' concerns about the requirements for receipts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 3(c), Members Interested in NBI Training -- Caucus Representatives. Anything to report from the New Democrats?

MS BARRETT: Well, I was the only one who was interested, and I got trained.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.

MS BARRETT: That's about the size of it. Probably nobody else was interested anywhere in any other caucus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Government caucus. Anyone have a comment?

MR. HYLAND: I don't think my secretary would want me near the damn thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 3(d), Contracts for Constituency Office Staff, David McNeil. This was a matter that was taken to Parliamentary Counsel, and there are some drafts.

DR. McNEIL: In your binder there is the the latest rendition of the constituency office staff contract. This has been reviewed with some of the chiefs of staff. I was unable to arrange a meeting with Mr. Dryden and get feedback on it, but I have received some feedback from the Liberal chief of staff and PC chief of staff. They provided some good input, to the point that we did make some modifications to the original draft.

The highlight of this particular contract is that it provides to employees provisions similar to what the Alberta government wage employees are provided with. Essentially that changes the status of the constituency office employees from being contract workers to employees, and that would include Canada Pension Plan and unemployment insurance coverage. Vacation and

statutory holiday pay as a percentage of their wage [inaudible] as well. This contract as it stands would reflect an employee/employer relationship rather than a contractor/contractee relationship.

What I have done here is put this into a kind of decision format to sort of lay out the pros and cons of this approach as well as some of the costs involved in it.

MS BARRETT: Well, I have a question if I can, Mr. Chairman. When we discussed this, the idea was first of all that we conform with the law but secondly to provide an alternative to each member with respect to their constituency staff. In some instances I find that I hire an extra person on a contract basis, and that's it. It's like fee for service, and that's just the way it goes. In terms of the person I have at all times during the year, I'm in favour of having that relationship defined as employer/employee. But our understanding at the last meeting was that we want the flexibility to have both; no member should be obliged to have one or the other. I've read through the stuff, but is that still what you're presenting? You're presenting one contract which allows for the employee/employer relationship as commonly understood -- that's the one that's in our book -- but we're not giving up the right to have the other relationship.

DR. McNEIL: No.

MS BARRETT: Good, great.

DR. McNEIL: It's this sort of decision item, as I've termed it here. We've recommended a third alternative, which represents a combination where you would utilize the contract in the book here for longer term people whom you wanted to have an employee/employer relationship with. You'd use the other contract for services for those short-term requirements that you have. It might be a only a week or it might be for a couple of months, but it's a different kind of relationship than the ongoing.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So on the draft document that you have before you, it's on page 3, and the recommendation that is submitted is under (e), which relates to the top of page 3, which is alternative (c).

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, it's been some months since this matter was last discussed at a Members' Services meeting. I do recall at that time two general areas of agreement by members. One -- and it's been alluded to by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands -- was that we wanted maximum flexibility for members, and we wanted the contractual arrangements to be as close to those that are currently in operation to be adhered to. The second request was that the chiefs of staff of the various parties be involved in the process, so that whatever was to come back to this table would come back with the endorsement of our chiefs of staff.

Now, I understand that that's not been totally possible. I'm uneasy to proceed with a document that hasn't met the criteria that we set. Is it not possible to table this matter and each of us instruct our respective chiefs of staff to meet, and if there's some reason they can't do it collectively, do it individually so that whatever comes back comes back with the endorsement of our chiefs of staff? Because I have only had a chance to glance

through the contract. Now, today, we're looking at a document, and I do see a fairly substantial cost implication on page 3. I'd like my chief of staff's involvement and explanation for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's one of the aspects as to why the process has slightly changed. When I saw the financial implications, then I wanted to make sure that was being brought to this table.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But this would provide anyway a routing to go and then come back and have a meeting early [inaudible] the House.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Well, I'm not agin it; I would like to deal with this sooner as opposed to later. I think what makes the difference here, though, is that the recommendation is saying: we recommend that your longer term employees . . . But maybe that shouldn't be the recommendation; maybe it should be the option. With the conventional employer/employee contract, yes, the cost is going to go up for the employer. I think that decision can be made by each individual MLA. There's nothing to stop you from not doing it and nothing to stop anybody else from not doing it. But here, if we don't actually make a specific recommendation but state that the option for longer term employees is possible, then there's no reason that we couldn't go with this today, Bob. If you see what I'm saying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Be careful, because if I really were listening correctly, I would have heard certain words with respect to [table], which means no debate. So I'm being a little deaf in one ear.

MS BARRETT: Oh, but he didn't move to table. He just said, should we consider it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm just flashing a light here.

MR. HYLAND: Perhaps it would be better if we listened to Mr. Bogle first.

MR. BOGLE: Go ahead.

MR. HYLAND: Because that's what my motion was: being as it hadn't been dealt with the way we had set the guidelines out, because of various problems, that we'd move to table it till they have met on it. Then when we come in here, parties would be agreeable to what's in here. At least we'll know in advance what's proposed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we can try to meet before the end of November.

MS BARRETT: Please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to table. All those in favour?

MS BARRETT: Oh, all right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? It's unanimous.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, for obvious reasons it's not part of the motion, but can we take back and can the Chair communicate to Mr. Taylor that we urge that the chiefs of staff meet so that something can come back that's hopefully got the endorsement of all?

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. BOGLE: Then it will be a very quick and easy item to deal with.

MS BARRETT: Yes, quick. Right on. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the record show some urgency with it. Along that line, would all members add an item (g) on page 3, which would be: proposed commencement date of January 1. It's because of pay periods, income tax ramifications, and all that kind of thing, if indeed you got everyone [inaudible].

Another request from the Chair with respect to your document, which is 3(d), Constituency Staff Contracts. You might think it a bit picky, but I really would prefer if you wrote "draft" on each page. In case pages get fallen out of context at some time, people will know that it is indeed . . .

MR. BOGLE: Well, I'm happy to return the document, Mr. Chairman. I don't intend to do anything with it. That's something we just referred to our respective chiefs of staff. Why don't we hand them in?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can either do that or adjust your pages.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I do want a copy. But I'm putting "draft" on mine. Okay?

MR. BOGLE: You put "draft" on yours; I'll hand mine back.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MRS. MIROSH: Mine says "draft."

MS BARRETT: Just on page 1 though. What we're being asked to do is to put "draft" on all pages so it's understood that there's nothing final, binding, legal, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okeydoke. Item 3(e): some comments with respect to next-day delivery of *Hansard*. I recall the last meeting there was comment made that perhaps the committee wanted to have the Editor of *Hansard* here to speak about this. Was it Edmonton-Highlands?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And is that still your wish? Would you like to have the discussion now, today?

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm kind of constrained in terms of hours. I have to leave at 12:30. But if he can come up, that would be great.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: I'll give him a call right away, and he can wander over right now.

MS BARRETT: Okay, I'm amenable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If we could go on to commence discussion of the Report of Computer Sub-Committee, on the understanding that that would then go into abeyance when Dr. Garrison arrives, so we can deal with that item and come back to this.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Mr. Chairman, the subcommittee did produce a report, which recommended that steps be taken to get the constituencies on electronic data processing and communicating with the centre if possible and so on, the sort of things we'd discussed. They produced a report, and I guess we don't have copies of it. I sent eight along to you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it was on everyone's desk, was it not?

MS BARRETT: One would have to be Sherlock Holmes to find anything like that on my desk.

MR. WRIGHT: I see. Well, it's rather a thorough report, and it comes to a number of conclusions. The recommendation is that the microcomputer technology be utilized to satisfy the EDP requirements of the constituency offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt for a moment, but the Clerk has a document here which is a summation of the reports.

MR. WRIGHT: Very good. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps that could be distributed.

MR. WRIGHT: Excellent.

DR. McNEIL: I'd appreciate the feedback, too, from the members on the format of this kind of "decision item," I've called it. I'd like to try to develop a common approach to presenting information to the members, and feedback would be useful.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I remind members that we agreed that seven or eight constituencies be surveyed, one or two from every caucus. This was done, and this report, which is 32 pages long, is a result of that. I do wish to thank the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services for, to my mind, their excellent work in doing this without any extra expense to the government.

In the thing that's been handed round to you, what was there has been summarized. The matter for immediate decision is this: that the report recommends a pilot project. The pilot project will send people out to three or four constituency offices and actually install some equipment there and evaluate the use of that equipment in those offices. They will then attempt to identify the levels of utilization of each of the functions offered by the system -- the level of acceptance by the pilot groups -- and verify as a result of the pilot project that the microcomputer provides a cost-effective solution in meeting the electronic data processing requirements of the constituency office.

The point that is of importance to us right now is that it was

felt that this should occur both when the House is sitting and when it isn't and should perhaps span 30 days, of which 15 would be when the House is sitting and 15 when it wasn't. Therefore, if we're going to go ahead, we need to make the decision right away if we're going to catch this sitting of the Legislature.

There is a cost implication -- I'm sure I noticed it here. Yes, on page 2. Although I didn't...

DR. McNEIL: The cost [inaudible] the report is [\$52,000] in my analysis.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

DR. McNEIL: That was assuming that we'd have a person full-time for that period who was in the Legislative Assembly Office and had the qualifications to do this. The only question is whether or not we have that expertise within the office, and so under that alternative I've added another \$12,500 for an EDP co-ordinator.

MS BARRETT: Right.

DR. McNEIL: But those other numbers, the hardware and software numbers under alternative B, are the same as in the report [inaudible] manpower is \$12,500.

MR. WRIGHT: All right. So the \$52,892 has simply been bumped up by the cost of a...

MS BARRETT: Co-ordinator.

MR. WRIGHT: All right. Okay. I had a shock when I saw that.

Of the \$52,000, which is that figure less the co-ordinator, the sum of \$19,360 is from the application, maintenance, and support branch of the department of public works. So that would be a shift from one budget to another and not new money for the government to find. Our opinion in Members' Services Committee, working with the \$52,000 figure, was that the new money of \$33,500, which was all the extra to be found, was a bargain for the probable results. But the Clerk has said that he doesn't think this is practical without the hiring of a full-time person for a length of time. But do you think it would take a year?

DR. McNEIL: Well, in the proposal I put forward there are two issues: there's the constituency office pilot project, and then there's the broader issue of developing a strategic plan for the whole Legislative Assembly Office, including in each area the caucus offices and the constituency offices. My concern is that if we don't develop a comprehensive -- and I think the pilot project could go ahead at the same time -- strategic plan fairly quickly, we'll have problems in the long run and just continue with the incompatibility problems.

I guess one other item to note in that regard is that we just had a systems audit by the Auditor General's office, and one of their recommendations in their exit report is that we needed to develop a strategic plan because of the piecemeal approach that had been taken in the past.

MR. WRIGHT: So this whole venture fits in very nicely with that.

DR. McNEIL: So alternative A suggests that rather than just doing the pilot project, we hire a co-ordinator who could manage the pilot project as well as doing the other things that are recommended. There are four or five recommendations in the report, and this individual would handle all the aspects of the recommendations, rather than just the pilot project. That was the thinking in terms of putting together that alternative.

MR. WRIGHT: Fine. Now, in the report itself the ways of financing this were talked about. There were three alternatives addressed, and the first one was simply a continuation of the present system, whereby the constituency office purchased the equipment itself. The second alternative was that it could be purchased through the Legislative Assembly and leased out to the constituency offices, as it were. The third was a similar system, not through the Legislative Assembly but through the department of public works. And so at some point we must decide which is the best system.

My own feeling is that centralized purchasing would achieve economies that certainly we can never make and that the idea of paying a higher charge, as it were, for keeping it out of one's constituency budget means that it can be financed through the existing constituency budgets and also that it doesn't penalize, as it were, those who have already spent money on a computer, on a word processor, which can carry on. So that would be the most flexible. I don't know at what point we need to make a decision on that.

Another aspect addressed in the report is that it's one thing to have the equipment but it's another thing to use it, so there has to be a regime established for supporting services, both for training and for maintenance. That is addressed in the report, and my own feeling is that this, too, should be an item for the constituency budgets of the constituencies, with the possibility of a one-time grant to set the whole thing up.

That's all I need say at this point, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the light of that, Mr. Wright, are you then in favour of alternative A or alternative B on this draft synopsis?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, our committee didn't consider alternative A, so I'm just giving a personal opinion there. In view of the fact that the Auditor General has said what he did say and that really there are two projects going on at once, which can result in mutual savings to each of them, I would think alternative A is the more cost-effective, even though it requires more money at the present time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: General discussion? I don't have a motion. Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In view of this and the cost implications, I think we should table this until this is reviewed by our chiefs of staff. You know, just by the first look at this, this could be quite pricey. So I make that motion.

MR. WRIGHT: The chiefs of staff have reviewed and approved our report. The only thing they haven't dealt with, to my knowledge, is the \$50,000 for the co-ordinator, to take account of the Auditor General's concerns in addition to the pilot project. But it is important to get the pilot project on its way tout de suite.

MR. CAMPBELL: I wouldn't agree, Mr. Chairman. I believe we should table it and take a look at it in depth.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to table by the Member for Rocky Mountain House. Those in favour? Opposed? Motion carries, 4 to 2.

In the tabling motion one would also assume the documentation would be indeed part of some discussions with chiefs of staff and various caucus members before we come back to our next meeting, and knowledgeable [inaudible].

MR. WRIGHT: Do I gather that the report itself has been conveyed to members of the Members' Services Committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's my understanding, but we will double-check.

AN HON. MEMBER: I haven't seen it.

MR. CAMPBELL: This is the first I've seen of it.

MR. WRIGHT: I didn't receive one back myself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The Chair apologizes. [inaudible] All right. Thank you.

Can we come back to the agenda? Edmonton-Highlands, some comments with respect to next-day delivery of *Hansard*, and we have, of course, the Editor of *Hansard* with us.

MS BARRETT: My comments will probably be more in the line of questions for the Editor, for Gary. I recall some months ago that you sent out kind of a survey questionnaire to determine -- or perhaps administration did -- a number of things, including next-day *Hansard*. And at that time there was discussion -- you know, casual discussion -- between a number of people in the House and in the coffee room outside of the House about the merits of the next-day *Hansard* in terms of catching mistakes. That is the concern.

I wonder, first of all, if you've had many questions raised with you about that problem and if there's some sort of alternative we could look at so that there's enough time for us to catch mistakes, particularly Wednesdays and Fridays, when we don't ever sit at night. Chances are you're not going to hang around and wait while the last of the typesetting comes upstairs and look it over.

DR. GARRISON: Well, I should mention that that user survey was done in June, and there were actually two parts to it: one was a survey of all the MLAs; and secondly, we surveyed all of the other subscribers to *Hansard*. Out of the 66 MLAs who replied, only four expressed any concern at all about errors or not having a chance to correct the Blues. And in general, there was a fair bit of enthusiasm for the concept of next-day service.

MS BARRETT: So the ayes have it, is the fast way to say it.

DR. GARRISON: Well, according to the results of the survey, that's the way it appears to me.

I wanted to mention -- it had appeared to me that members might have thought that in going to next-day service we had dropped some of the checks in the system which we use to catch the errors, and that's the reason I put the sheet here in your book, or submitted it to the Clerk. Column 1 shows the various

stages the text goes through now, and column 2 shows the stages it went through before. I don't know how much detail you want me to get into in describing what happens in the various stages, but there are at least as many stages at which the text is checked now as there were before. As a matter of fact, before 1986 the night sitting portion was never proofread. There was a step there that the text didn't go through at night prior to 1986, so we have in fact added one step to that part of the process.

I should also mention . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands, for just a moment. Is there any more of a specific problem that you've encountered?

MS BARRETT: No, it is simply the time frame for catching errors. Often what happens is, it can be hard for the people listening to the tapes and sitting upstairs in the gallery to catch certain words that may sound like other words, and I think that turns out to be the greatest problem. It's not that there are, you know, grievous errors; it's that one word turns into another and puts the statement out of context. There just isn't enough time in the day for anybody, as far as I can see, but it's especially true for members during the sitting. It's hard to remember to go and look at the Blues as they're shipped up. And you know, if you're up on your feet at 5 o'clock, you're not likely to hang around till 6:30 to see what's been said. That's all the more true if there's no night sitting. Similarly, you're not going to be able to review your 10 p.m. comments because if the House concludes at 20 after, you're not likely to hang around for yet another hour. That's the sort of problem.

It's nothing so deadly serious. I wanted to see if there were a lot of people who had this concern, and if there was -- I mean, I don't know how it would be humanly possible to get the Blues up faster; I can't imagine it -- a way to delay the printing process ultimately. But it would appear that, first of all, there were only four of us who had the concern, and secondly, any delay would really mean pushing it to second-day *Hansard*. Is that correct?

DR. GARRISON: Yes, that's right.

MS BARRETT: Well, I think that just settles the issue, then. I mean, if we're that concerned about it, the four of us can just hang around.

DR. GARRISON: Mr. Chairman, do you mind if I add one comment to what Ms Barrett just said? I know that it's impossible for you to stay around at the end of a night sitting for the Blues to be posted. I should mention that since the Blues for the night don't have to be shipped out for printing till 11:30 the following morning, you in fact do have until about 10 o'clock in the morning the following day. Up to that time you could read through the Blues, and if you notice something, you could let us know.

MS BARRETT: Well, maybe I can ask something else, Mr. Chairman. Would it be possible to go back to the system where a copy of the nighttime Blues is delivered to each caucus office early in the morning, so that MLAs have a chance to do that in a place where they're centrally gathered? Would that be reasonable? Does it cost much more to run a few extra copies?

DR. GARRISON: It depends how many extra copies you're

talking about.

MS BARRETT: Four.

DR. GARRISON: No, it wouldn't cost very much to do that. One of the difficulties with that, though, is that -- and some of you may be aware of this -- the Blues documents are the initial transcription from the tape.

MS BARRETT: They're not an edited transcription.

DR. GARRISON: Well, very minimal editing is done at that point. Some of you have sent in corrections to us and we may have said, "Well, we've already caught that." That simply means that when the Blues are printed and posted, we don't wait around for the members to come back and make their comments.

MS BARRETT: Yes, right. Obviously.

DR. GARRISON: We just keep processing the text. Then these corrections will come in, and the text is already at a later stage, and most of those things will have already been changed. So if you wanted to institute a practice whereby the night Blues could be copied for each caucus office for the following morning, the chances are that most of the things that you would note in those copies would already have been changed at night by our editors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So a request has been made. Would that still be helpful to you, Edmonton-Highlands, to have one copy per caucus, even though you realize that it's already then been edited further?

MS BARRETT: I think so, because one doesn't worry about the articles in a sentence or small words, but certainly word replacement is the more important concern, and only people who are either listening or present or speaking are going to really be sensitive to that -- knowing. It's happened to me a few times. I mean, it's no big hairy deal, but I would prefer at least if we could at minimum get that. Because the afternoon -- it's true; you tend to be able to run out and grab a copy and have a quick look. But the nighttime sittings -- we don't get a chance. So I would still like that, if the cost is not too overwhelming.

MR. WRIGHT: When does *Hansard* become final? What I'm getting at is this. The next day, or whatever it is -- and recently it's been the next day -- the *Hansard* is distributed, but nowadays it's all on a word processor, isn't it? So there's no limit beyond one of convenience as to when things can be changed. And I'm just wondering whether there's any rule that when the next day you see that a homonym has reared its ugly head, you can get the right word and still be within the limits of custom.

DR. GARRISON: I'm glad you brought that up, because you might have noticed that we just distributed bound volumes from the spring sittings, and those bound volumes actually incorporate new pages where previously there had been errata.

MS BARRETT: Right.

DR. GARRISON: And so that version is a bit more final than the next-day version. I assume that's what you're getting at.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

DR. GARRISON: If a member notices that there is an error in the daily *Hansard* and they give us a notice of that, we can publish an erratum in a subsequent issue, and we can also do as we just did now and change the original for the bound volumes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Once again, I point out that in Standing Orders, under 108, subsection (a) comes into effect. It reads: revisions shall be limited to the correction of grammar, spelling and punctuation, ensuring that the correct parliamentary forms are observed, and minimizing superfluous repetition and redundancies, but no material alterations shall be made, nor any amendments which would in any way tend to change the sense of what has been spoken.

So it's minimal stuff, and it's picked up under your item 6 again, "errata printed as noticed," and then you go from there.

MR. WRIGHT: No, it would certainly have to conform with that.

MS BARRETT: Sure. My concern, Mr. Chairman, was that -- I can't recall the specific words, but the word "green" appeared instead of "been." That's because people are listening with -- and I know that "green" looks stupid in that sentence, and everybody in the world can see that it looks out of context and destroys the meaning of the sentence. That was the sort of error that I'm concerned about. I'm not concerned about other errors; they don't make much difference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, the Editor of *Hansard* has agreed that he will send one copy to each caucus the next morning.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll go from there, and that was to keep on with the system.

MS BARRETT: Great.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

DR. GARRISON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. I understand one of the members must leave by 12:30. We have a lunch being supplied.

Unfortunately, with respect to item 3(g) the answer is no; the airlines do not give any rebate. They claim that they don't give it to anyone in particular, to anyone at all. We took it to the vice-president level, so [inaudible].

MRS. MIROSH: That's not high enough.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Too bad.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 3(h): Members' Benefit Package. I remember last year we did a lot of work in this area on behalf of all the members, and thank goodness we did with respect to some of our colleagues, one of whom is no longer with us. But at the same time, we also added on our order paper, the agenda

of this committee, that it had to be reviewed for December 31, '87, and so this week we've had the Clerk and Rod Scarlett meet with the insurance representatives so an update could be supplied. So, David McNeil, would you like to bring the committee up to date on the information, please?

DR. McNEIL: We really didn't have a lot of information other than adding to the supplementary health care benefit the present cost now of an eye examination by an optometrist, not an ophthalmologist, up to a maximum of \$45 per year. That's included in the supplementary health care plan -- it wasn't before. They indicated that the changes in the LTDI plan that were discussed last year require that change to the Legislative Assembly Act to allow us to go into the private insurance market to get that coverage. So until that the Legislative Assembly Act is amended -- I'm not certain of the details there yet; I'm not totally familiar with the benefit package. I understand there was an LTDI package recommended last year that that was predicated upon, and it was discovered that it was necessary to amend the Legislative Assembly Act in order to implement that. So that has yet to be done.

They also advised us that they expect a 30 to 35 percent increase in the cost of the extended health care package due to the high level of usage of the plan this year. That's not a lot in dollar terms for the Assembly budget for the members, but in terms of percentage increase it's still quite healthy, I think.

Do you want me to deal with the vision care issue at this point in time? I see it's later on in the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, on the one issue, I'll send another letter to the Government House Leader making a request that the long-term disability provision -- just bringing it back to the attention again that the committee has requested it, and hopefully it will be proceeded with at some stage.

MR. WRIGHT: A change in the Act, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The raw dollar numbers for increases on a single basis or on a member basis are [inaudible] because of the [inaudible] program. When we say a -- what? -- 30 percent increase, do you have the raw dollar figure?

DR. McNEIL: It's my understanding that this was on the extended health care benefit. Right now I think members pay \$10 or \$10.25 a month for a family. The total cost of this would be a 30 percent increase on that, so it would go from about \$10 to, say, \$13 or \$14. That's assuming that we don't add the vision care benefit, and I have some information on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's assuming that you do add it or you don't?

DR. McNEIL: Don't.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do not. David, I'm going to have to have you talk a little louder. I'm getting old and deaf.

All right. Three: vision care.

MR. WRIGHT: I had a question still on this. What was the unexpected usage then? Dental care or drugs or . . .

DR. McNEIL: They didn't give it specifically, but I think it relates to a number of members who had hospital coverage and

things like that; Mr. Kroeger and maybe some others. They said their usage rate, compared to the average, was significantly higher. They gave us some numbers on that.

MR. WRIGHT: It's all the unhealthy members, that's what it is.

There's always a bug for dental care at the beginning, though, because that's something you can postpone. As long as they bring it down and the usage gets less.

DR. McNEIL: That was a different plan. We weren't talking about dental care.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. On this one, Cypress-Redcliff, Taber-Warner, Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. HYLAND: I may be on the wrong one. The increase is on the extended care, not the dental, drugs, et cetera.

DR. McNEIL: Yes, extended health care. That's correct.

MR. HYLAND: Okay. My question is on the drugs -- that sort of thing -- not the extended.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we'll come back to drugs? Or do you want to deal with drugs now, David?

DR. McNEIL: We may as well deal with the drug question now.

MR. HYLAND: Okay. David, were you talking a 30 percent increase on that as well?

MR. SCARLETT: The supplementary health package, which includes drugs. That's part of [inaudible] care. That's the whole package. They quoted me 30 percent.

MR. HYLAND: Initially it was low, and we accepted a low one. My question is: were they low for a year to get into there, and now we'll get it boosted up? Initially we were told that if we looked at Blue Cross, it was more expensive. It was a lot easier on a payout. You didn't have to lay your money out front with Blue Cross. Are we now getting this one here and Blue Cross here, and should we be looking at Blue Cross, where we don't have to lay out money to get into Blue Cross and that sort of stuff?

DR. McNEIL: When you say "lay out money," do you mean in terms of the drugs?

MR. HYLAND: Well, the drugs, for example; that's one. I don't know what Blue Cross does with dental or if it even covers dental. I know my wife was on Blue Cross, and now we're on this one. Before we didn't have to lay out money for medicine; now we have to lay out the money and claim it back. When I asked Rod that, he was initially told that it cost extra to do that, that Blue Cross was more. I'm just wondering now if we shouldn't look and see if we're not getting pretty close.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we can take that. We did discuss it and . . .

DR. McNEIL: Can I respond to that? With respect to the drug aspect, they indicated that you could go on a card system with

this plan. Just going to the card system would be an additional 30 to 35 percent as well. They indicated that part of the reason for that increase is that the history of using a card in other plans is that usage tends to go up immediately with having a card. So for a card you're talking about another 30 to 35 percent, another \$4 a month cost to the member. But we should compare the cost of getting this extended health care through Mutual Life, as it is now, against the cost of Blue Cross.

MR. HYLAND: Or any other that's involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We'll take that under advisement and see if there's a crossover point. Just a reminder: at the time we realized that we were going to have probably additional usage on the whole system because of the health of a number of our members.

Taber-Warner, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted clarification from David. I think in your opening remarks you made reference to services which are covered for optometrists but not ophthalmologists.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: Could you repeat that, please?

DR. McNEIL: My understanding of it -- and we don't have this documented yet in writing. They indicated that added to the extended health care coverage now was eye examination by an optometrist up to a maximum of \$45 per year. It is now included in supplementary health care.

MR. BOGLE: The effective date?

DR. McNEIL: They said immediately.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think the examination might be every two years, though.

MR. BOGLE: But not for an ophthalmologist.

DR. McNEIL: Not for an ophthalmologist.

MR. WRIGHT: That's covered by health care.

MS BARRETT: The ophthalmologist is, yes.

MR. BOGLE: Well, if you were referred to an ophthalmologist by a general practitioner for medical reasons; otherwise, it's not covered.

MS BARRETT: Correct.

MR. BOGLE: That's my understanding.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MR. BOGLE: Who made the decision to include optometrists?

DR. McNEIL: This was something the carrier made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The carrier automatically added it.

DR. McNEIL: This is something they said: "We now include this." I understand it was not included before.

MRS. MIROSH: Now he wants more money.

DR. McNEIL: No, they said that -- well, they're saying this is added to the plan without putting money in.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm really uneasy about this. We sat down and extensively negotiated, and this table agreed to the things we would be covering for. That's why I wanted clarification on the optometrist. I don't feel at all comfortable with a carrier adding items at his discretion, because obviously there's going to be a cost incurred and that is reflected back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Give us the benefit and give us the deduction.

MR. BOGLE: There's a principle at stake that seems more important than the dollar. The principle is that we should decide. I still don't understand why they would believe that it's all right to cover for an optometrist but not for an ophthalmologist, both of whom may be performing exactly the same service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, let's find out if the documentation has arrived on it yet.

DR. McNEIL: This is something we gathered in somewhat informal discussions with these individuals. In fact, this was something our agent got in talking on the phone with a Mutual Life person while we were in the meetings.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'm sure the difference in policy arose at a time when ophthalmologists' charges for regular eye checks were covered on the tariff. I think that's one of the things that has been removed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We need further clarification on that one, and then that also raises the question: where do we go about talking further today about vision care?

MS BARRETT: I have the feeling that we're starting to get taken on this system here. I recall our discussions last year. We were told that we weren't going into a self-insuring system of 83 people; we were going into a great big pool. If we're going into a great big pool, the hospitalization of one person shouldn't make such a difference, particularly considering ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was more than one.

MS BARRETT: Fine; all right. But it doesn't matter. The point is that in a population of 2.5 million people, under some systems a couple of people being hospitalized for quite a while ... I mean, medicare still picks up the largest part of that tab. It's the additional benefits that we're in this insurance scheme for.

I'm with Al on this. I think we need a real solid review of the overall costs and benefits of going back to Blue Cross. As far as I can see, this is a foot in the door to continually increasing premiums, some of which we bear ourselves as individuals, some of which are cost-shared by the Leg. Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do I take that as a motion to table?

MS BARRETT: What is there really to table at this point?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The issue was that we had to bring it back for a review, so the members came back and the issue was raised. The thing would be that we could set it over to the next meeting, and in the meantime we'll get the rest of the information.

MR. HYLAND: Before she makes that motion, could I... I wonder if it would be easier if, rather than all of us, each of us picks one from our caucuses. Could they look at it, or is it better we all look at it? I don't know. Just thinking out loud.

MS BARRETT: I suspect that if we can get a report from David, we can have a look in this committee. I mean, no decision will probably be taken on the instant anyway. Is that all right? Well then, okay, I'll move to table.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, now, there would be a review -- a review of everything or of portions?

MR. WRIGHT: That's right. As long as it's understood that while the thing is tabled, this review takes place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But it's the whole coverage, is it not?

MS BARRETT: Yes, I think a comparative review.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of the motion? Opposed? Carried unanimously.
Okay, five-minute stretch.

[The committee recessed from 11:31 a.m. until 11:37 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, item 4, Members' Air Travel Allowance.

MR. BOGLE: The motion that was originally made requested that the chiefs of staff get together to see if an alternate arrangement could be agreed to. The meetings were held. There was no concurrence; therefore, the item should go off the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Five, Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: This was something that's since been set up to the satisfaction of those that were concerned about it. It was simply that in the case of those members coming from out of town who are entitled to a daily allowance for lodging, when the claim was made of \$75 or whatever it is, they had to certify that all of this money had been spent on the purposes of the order, when in fact it's not an accountable advance or anything like that; it's simply an allowance. A member raised it with me, so I've passed it on that the wording of the form has now been altered to reflect that.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BOGLE: And the revised form is much better.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's all been vetted by Parliamentary Counsel. Thank you.

Item 6. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is not present. What is the pleasure of the committee?

MR. HYLAND: Table it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Table, Cypress-Redcliff. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Tabled.
Item 7. What is the pleasure of the committee?

MR. CAMPBELL: I move that we table this also, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Rocky Mountain House. All those in favour of tabling?

MR. WRIGHT: I would like to ask why. It seems such a reasonable and obvious sort of move, I wonder why it needs to be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There will be no petitions made for establishing a pub [inaudible] no matter how much I want it, and no matter how much you might want to have the licence. There's still a motion to table, folks. Sorry. Those in favour of tabling, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. Thank you very much.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, now that we've voted on it, may I offer an explanation to the hon. member? I think it's just good common courtesy to table a motion by one of the members of the committee if that member is not here or if the member has not asked someone else to address the motion on their behalf.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, I didn't pick that up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had regrets from Westlock-Sturgeon. All right. I assume that item 8 on mine, the Vision Care, is now subsumed into our previous examination of the package.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members' Services Committee Budget Estimates, item 9 in your package.

MS BARRETT: Oh, before we do that, Mr. Chairman, can we get an answer to Ray Speaker's question, at least, in item 8? It's just one question. He just said, "Does the \$90 benefit for each 24-month period under the vision care package apply to each family member or to a family in total?" Could we just have that answered, please?

DR. McNEIL: The answer is that it would apply to each family member.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: Just another piece of information is that they indicate now that the benefit would be, rather than \$90 for 24 months, \$200 for each 24 months, but at some additional cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As the Chair pointed out, that's going to be dealt with at [inaudible].

MR. CAMPBELL: Could I have that explanation again please, Mr. Chairman? The answer is: now, there is a \$90 benefit for each 24-month period, or is it for the family or . . .

DR. McNEIL: Per family member for each 24-month period.

MR. CAMPBELL: Per family member?

DR. McNEIL: Right.

MR. CAMPBELL: Okay, thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Is that the part that's been added to the thing, or is this the old part?

DR. McNEIL: No, no. That was never included is my understanding. When the package was communicated, my understanding was that there was a piece of information included in it that related to the vision care package, which really was not part of the extended health care package.

MR. HYLAND: So this includes glasses, not examinations.

DR. McNEIL: Well, it would include both examinations and glasses is my understanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, but that's it for the discussion on this issue. Let's leave it alone, because all we're doing is digging ourselves deeper in the hole. We're going to bring it back at the next meeting.

All righty. On item 9, my understanding is that this reflects two scenarios: zero and minus 7. Is that correct, Mr. Scarlett?

MR. SCARLETT: Yes. Minus 6.56.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is for the committee itself, and then we will be meeting at a future date about the overall budgeting process. Is it the pleasure of the committee to take this as information now or to discuss it now or just carry on? All right, the floor is open.

MR. BOGLE: Well, Mr. Chairman, could we have a brief explanation? The only change between the two options seems to centre around travel expenses, and I'm assuming that that relates specifically to members of this committee traveling to other jurisdictions. I use an example, the visit we made to Saskatchewan to look at their sound system, their audiovisual system. Is that correct?

MR. SCARLETT: Yes. And the reason we've left that money in there is to leave the committee the option to travel next fiscal year.

MR. BOGLE: And the forecasts for the current budget, the 1987-88 budget, are all within range?

MR. SCARLETT: They are. In fact they're substantially under budget because this committee has not traveled this fiscal year thus far.

MRS. MIROSH: That's good.

MR. BOGLE: So is there any reason we shouldn't deal with the issue and shouldn't adopt the first proposal, which would be a 6.6 percent decrease?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we need a motion.

MR. CAMPBELL: Minus 6.56.

MR. BOGLE: Well, 6.56. I'll so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion before us.

MRS. MIROSH: I'll second it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Further discussion?

MR. BOGLE: It sets the tone for future discussions.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, that's what I'm worried about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

MS BARRETT: Right. I don't speak against the motion precisely, but I do speak against the last comment that was made by the member who made the motion; that is, speaking from this caucus that got axed to little bits last year in our budgetary process, I don't want this to be used as an excuse or the precedent by which a further hacking of our budget commences with the following meetings. So let's have that on the record at any rate.

MR. BOGLE: It certainly wasn't my intent to put the cat among the pigeons.

MS BARRETT: No. That would have nothing to do with why you made that statement about setting the tone, right, Bob? Anyway, I'm on record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed, you are on record.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, this just illustrates the difference between the pessimist, my comrade on my right, and myself. I look at this as very good news because it means we then have 6.56 percent in hand.

MS BARRETT: Right. Which can be dealt with otherwise.

MR. HYLAND: Well, Mr. Chairman, it looks like I may be the only one on the other side of this. I know we've never used this travel to other Legislatures or used it very little. I think we're missing something. I know you can argue the times, you can argue a lot of things, but I think it's something that we haven't used that we're missing on. Maybe the whole committee doesn't have to go, but various ones can go to various places. I think it's something that we're missing on, an exchange that we're missing on. I know there are other allotments for travel to other Legislatures but not per se for the Members' Services Committee. I think it's something we're missing on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Point of clarification. This travel, if it were

to become a reality, is this one way or a round trip?.

MR. CAMPBELL: Depends on the traveler.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, this question really is to Rod. With that reduction, which comes to about \$2,750 -- in real dollars it's not that much -- and given Al's desire that at least sub-committees be permitted to travel, can you foresee that that reduction would prohibit that?

MR. SCARLETT: Well, it depends on where the committee decides to travel and how many.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And if.

MR. SCARLETT: And if. We've never exceeded the travel budget since I've been associated with the committee; we've always been under budget. But it's like our trip to Saskatchewan -- I think it was \$5,000 or \$6,000. It leaves the option open.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, when the computer project goes ahead -- note I say when -- where will that budget fit in? The Legislative Assembly budget?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It hasn't been determined, but it wouldn't be under here.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, that's okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Call for the question on the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried. Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, could I have my vote recorded, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pardon?

MR. HYLAND: I guess after I spoke out, I should have my vote recorded as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Constituency Office Rental Agreement: the Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel.

DR. McNEIL: This is an information item at this stage. This is an ongoing process of reviewing our various contracts that we have to ensure that they are up to date and as tight as they should be. We've looked at the constituency office lease agreement and . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Michael, would you like to come on up to the table here, please.

DR. McNEIL: . . . this is a redraft. Michael Ritter can comment on what changes are in here and why they're being proposed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, with respect to item 10, members of

the committee should be aware that there are a number of MLAs switching their offices, and have been, and in some cases this has caused some difficulties. It's certainly a good thing that we've have Parliamentary Counsel able to advise the members on those aspects. Then we've been in the complete review that we requested of the constituency office rental agreements, and some other things came to life. Michael, please.

MR. RITTER: The form you have in front of you tries to imitate as closely as possible general government standards and guidelines. In this case we used the standard PWSS lease form, making necessary adaptations that we found desirable for the Legislative Assembly. One of them, of course, is paragraph 3, Use of Office, designating the constituency and giving the member absolute control over hours of operation and various aspects of his office that he or she wishes, and paragraph 4, being the term, has that essential clause that standard government contracts don't have: for 36 months and subject to earlier termination as set out in the schedule by election or otherwise.

The rent was the most surprising discovery of all. In a total review of some of the bills that we've been paying, we discovered that the constituency offices had been paying municipal and business taxes and various city assessments, from which this Assembly specifically exempted itself. To my surprise I found the same in the PWSS lease. So I don't know what their policy is, but I certainly know that most members would certainly like to take advantage of any exemptions they may have benefit under. There's a very specific section of the Municipal Taxation Act that anything in the Crown is exempt from any municipal taxation. We're still researching exactly how much had been paid out. Where these taxes had been paid and are recoverable, I will endeavour to recover them. But in future we'll be making sure that no one is paying any more than they have to. So that was probably the most significant aspect of this lease. You will see that the municipal tax is specifically exempted. In most cases the members have been paying the taxes included in the monthly tax rate, and in some cases it's been additional. We're going to see that those are stopped in all cases.

Included Incidentals: these will be deleted as necessary, but it is more specific than the other list because there were many things that were left unsaid.

Most of the changes occur in the appendix. Appendix A is identical to the old lease form. Appendix B is a little more specific about parking facilities. Believe me, I was joking a while back that it seemed to be almost a phase of the moon when everybody starts having trouble with their constituency office leases at the same time. It's been fortunate in a way, even though it's created a lot of work for me, because we were able to come across various things that obviously needed remedying. Parking spaces are a common source of disagreement between the lessee and the lessor. When a constituency lease contract was made before, often there was an oral agreement or some type of informal agreement as to parking spaces, and then it always neglected to mention would they have the juice running in the winter for heating the cars and that type of thing. So we hope we've remedied that by a description of parking facilities and other facilities which might be included in appendix B.

Appendix C is the General Conditions and Regulations, which you'll notice is considerably longer than the other constituency lease contract, but it is much more inclusive and protects in black and white the rights of each member to operate his or her office as they deem fit. We're talking about little things that have happened. For example -- well, again we're dealing

with taxes in paragraph 6; anything we're exempt from and the lessor received the benefit for must be credited back to us, to the respective member's allowance. But the lessee's insurance and the lessor's insurance has now been updated to follow Treasury's guidelines as far as indemnity.

It also includes an exclusion of liability for your employees and little things like signs, in paragraph 12. We've had considerable disagreement with lessors going up, without any permission, and removing the member's sign that he puts up. Or what seems to be a common thing now, particularly in the Calgary area, is that a lot of the landlords are making agreements with sign companies, so that the tenant is now obliged to order the sign through him and then he gets a kickback. They are much more expensive than the member making his own arrangements. So these things have all been remedied now, hopefully.

I guess that's really it. The rest takes a good, thorough reading, but I think you'll find it much more complete and at the same time trying to keep it as plain English and as short as possible, given the type of circumstances that we operate under.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. A little forest of hands here.

MR. HYLAND: Taxes: does that mean that if we lease a building or a portion of a building from a person, they can get their municipal taxes on that portion exempted?

MR. RITTER: Correct.

MR. HYLAND: That's what I thought you said, but I didn't think I heard you right.

MR. RITTER: Yes. The Municipal Taxation Act is very clear that any portion of land or any building, even including leased premises and offices in a building, becomes exempt from municipal tax assessment. It doesn't say in the Act who shall inform the municipal authorities of this fact, but I think it's probably better that we make sure it's done. That way we know it's done rather than relying on the landlord to tell the assessors, "Well, I've got an MLA in my building." This should be a considerable saving.

MR. HYLAND: What about if you've got one in your house that you don't charge the government for and you use it for government purposes? Can we exempt that part, like a farmer or businessman does?

MR. RITTER: I'll take that under advisement.

MS BARRETT: My whole house would qualify then. Wherever there's a telephone, right?

MR. RITTER: I know the name of a good tax lawyer.

MS BARRETT: I'm just making a joke. Those phones have been used for years for that sort of purpose, and I never qualified before.

My question is about the lessee's insurance. This scares the bejeebers out of me because I don't think I've got any insurance in my constituency office. I didn't know I was supposed to. I have operated under the assumption that the same rule of thumb which applies to insuring all other government activities applies here: we are self-insured; the Crown basically insures us. If that ain't so, boy, I gotta get to a phone fast.

MR. RITTER: It ain't so. We've discovered that some of the members have the accident insurance and some don't.

MS BARRETT: Some have none.

MR. RITTER: So we're going to remedy that situation.

MR. HYLAND: Would you tell us who so that we know if we do or don't? You've checked our leases?

MR. RITTER: Oh, we're still researching that area, because a lot of the buildings are in fact -- it's a very complex issue because sometimes the landlord has assumed all responsibility. It's a very cumbersome thing. All the members will be contacted individually when we find something relevant to them. In the meantime . . .

MS BARRETT: But in the meantime if my office catches fire and I lose my computer, that's that.

MR. RITTER: The actual structural insurance must in all cases be carried by the lessor. The lessee is mostly responsible for the contents of each office and various things that happen due to the negligence of their own employees. But this structural thing and fire insurance are almost always the responsibilities of the lessor anyway.

MR. WRIGHT: Of his own equipment, of its own building, not of the contents.

MR. RITTER: No, not of the contents, only on the structure of the building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But on the review of the constituencies: how far along are you on that one?

MR. RITTER: Well, that one, I've got Betty checking into it. She's still also trying to look through the tax problems, so we've only just started on this.

MS BARRETT: I have one other question. At the outset where it talks about the provision of specific utilities, when it says, "the Lessor agrees to provide," does that mean the lessor also agrees to pick up the tab on those utilities or no?

MR. RITTER: Yes. Under paragraph 6 in the lease it's called Included Incidentals. Then you delete as applicable, which gives you a lot of room for negotiation with each landlord.

MS BARRETT: Oh, does it ever. Ha, ha, ha.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to say what a good job this appears to be. Very, very good indeed. The one minor point is paragraph 9 of appendix C. "The Lessor will, at all times during the term, insure with an insurer licensed . . ." and so on. Well, under the usual triple net lease which is usual in the cities the tenant pays all of these, his proportionate part of all expenses, and insurance is one of them. This just obliges the landlord to place the insurance in the first place.

MR. RITTER: Exactly. Incidentally, the lessee's insurance and the lessor's insurance is word-for-word picked up from the PWSS contract. It's the standard form of government lease.

MRS. MIROSH: I want to know why you put 36 months in the first section here, leasing up to 36 months: "not to exceed 36 months." Is there any specific reason for that?

MR. RITTER: That is the present maximum on the constituency office contracts. I don't know whether a Members' Services order relates to that, but I know that the administrative form -- before my coming, 36 was always the maximum simply because you're anticipating the likelihood of an election or some other earlier termination which might occur, which doesn't happen in normal government circumstances. But these are things which I'm certainly flexible on.

MRS. MIROSH: Yes, I'd like to see more flexibility here. If we can negotiate . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think part of what happens with it is that the 36 months becomes more of a maximum threshold. We've had a few instances where we're carrying two offices in one constituency because the new person who comes in doesn't like the location of his predecessor, probably of another political party. So then we got caught. In the case of one member in particular, we got two constituency offices being paid for at both times and there was only [inaudible]. So that's part of the difficulty about the threshold being in there.

MR. WRIGHT: Could I point out that there is no practical disadvantage, or hardly any, to this because in the lease you make it's usual that the maximum benefit will have accrued by three years, and then thereafter you can simply negotiate the option to renew year by year.

MRS. MIROSH: One other question. If these regulations are in force or changed and you have existing leases for up to 36 months and you're renegeing on a deal you made initially, where the lessor did not know that the lease regulations were in place . . .

MR. RITTER: It was tentatively anticipated between myself and the Clerk that these new contracts, subject to your approval of course, would be used upon the renewal of any lease or if the landlord is willing to transfer over. But we can't really impose it on them -- for example, just take in a new lease; say, "Cancel the old one; here's the new one."

MRS. MIROSH: Like the parking, if you didn't negotiate that, or other things. Except for the tax, that is something . . .

MR. RITTER: We're looking into the possibility of recovering anything that might have been paid. In most cases it's going to be very difficult because we have no real figures on how much was paid in tax because that was included in the rent.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. There's no breakdown usually. It's just a fixed price.

MR. RITTER: So we're making sure there will be in the future.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: Also, payments made on a mistake of law are recoverable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there a motion forthcoming from the committee with respect to this information? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Sure. I'll move that the document presented to us today become the sanctioned contract for lease negotiations hereafter. Is that what you wanted?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, Cypress-Redcliff, a little negotiation there?

MR. BOGLE: I reluctantly have to move that we table it. I want an opportunity to discuss this with our caucus members first to see if there's any other input they have. I'd feel much more comfortable on issues that are so substantive like this if we adopted a practice of either bringing them to the table to get a feeling from our committee members -- that's been done today, and it's good -- and give us an opportunity then to either in some cases refer them to our chiefs of staff if they're strictly administrative and in other matters, where they're more than administrative, get some input from other caucus members as well and bring it back to our next meeting and deal with it.

MS BARRETT: Fair enough. No big hurry.

DR. McNEIL: Our intention was as an information item, to expose you to it and then . . .

MS BARRETT: Fine, I'll withdraw my motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Perhaps as a matter of practice in the future, Mr. Chairman, things like this, which were perhaps drafted a month or two back, could be circulated to the members even when we don't have a meeting in prospect.

DR. McNEIL: That would be our intention, ideally, to have every document that we're going to discuss in the book. I apologize for a number this time. It was primarily my fault, and I just wasn't up to speed on a lot of things.

MR. WRIGHT: So we can come to the meeting and decide because it's already gone through the hoop.

DR. McNEIL: And I would hope to have a decision item format like I had for a couple of things.

MR. BOGLE: Really, the best way to do that to ensure that none of us -- because if we're talking about a meeting between sittings of the Legislature, we may not be in; we may not see what's here. The best way, in my view, is to circulate it through our chiefs of staff, and then they'll take whatever action is necessary. Then we are prepared when we do come to the meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I just want to underline that, because some of this information I had requested my staff to hold back on so that we could get it here to this group first. Then if we had all of -- could respond to the sensitivities of the members here before we then gave it on to chiefs of staff, because on occasion we've had some difficulties that way, not with any of those present. But it's a problem of what information you want, because then I don't want members coming back and saying, "You so-and-so, you gave out information without it really com-

ing to this table." So I find this discussion -- this is useful to us as to what information flow you want to go there without coming here or through you and then direct over to there.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to leave it to your discretion to exercise: things which are common to all the members -- business of that nature such as the draft leases or the computer proposals it seems to me would be the sort of things we'd want to go via chiefs of staff. There might be more personal things pertaining to members that perhaps shouldn't, but we'll leave it to you.

MR. BOGLE: That's my point exactly. I'd emphasize that the matters that should not go to our chiefs of staff but should come to this table first are strictly policy matters. But where we're into the administrative side -- and the Chair has to use some discretion.

MR. WRIGHT: That's a good way of putting it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We then have a motion to table. Those in favour please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

My understanding then is that Pam has to be gone by 12:30. Do you want to just take three minutes to grab a sandwich and a whatnot here, then come on back to the meeting?

[The committee recessed from 12:12 p.m. until 12:14 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under Other Business was handicapped access to the building.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, you've probably noticed that we've received some criticism because there's no handicapped access up the front steps. I think it's misconceived criticism, for reasons which I have actually pointed out in the press and thereby attracted some disagreement from those who work for the handicapped or are handicapped. My point, of course, is that when the Legislature was renovated seven or eight years ago, there was very good handicapped access, I think, provided that goes through the front entrance although not up the front steps. Nonetheless, I could be wrong on that, so I did promise to bring it to the Members' Services Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. It's been brought to my attention that -- is recording going on? I'm sorry.

MR. WRIGHT: I suppose the thing we could perhaps consider doing is requesting public works to see (a) whether there is a practical way within reasonable cost of providing that front door access to wheelchairs and (b) making any other observations as to the reasonableness of such a move. It occurs to me that when the renovations did take place, at a time long before I was a member, I'm sure the thing was gone into then, so it may already have been done. But I would like to move that the approach be made, that public works report along those lines, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we carry on with that one, I would like to just make a request of the committee for the benefit of the committee's input here, with apologies to the *Sun* for [inaudible] for half a moment. Is it the wish of the committee to allow members of the media to record you or not? We have

them here by courtesy, to be able to make whatever notes they wish, but I just don't want anyone to violate the members' privileges. So since you were speaking, Edmonton-Strathcona, I think . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I personally have no objection to being recorded here or elsewhere, I suppose, other than in my own home perhaps. But my understanding is that the rules applicable to the Legislative Assembly apply in the committees also, namely, there be publicity and the ability to report but not to record. Is that not correct?

MS BARRETT: I have a different perspective on this. In fact, when I raised my hand earlier, it was going to be on the point of order about this. If reporters are allowed to be here -- and they are, and they are in the Assembly and they're allowed to tape visually and sound, I don't see any difference here. If a member wants a reporter to turn the tape recorder off at a certain point, that could be asked. The transcripts of the entire thing are fully public, and if it's assisting somebody doing their job, I have no objection.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry. If I mistook what the rules were of the Legislative Assembly, then I stand corrected. If they're allowed there, they should be allowed here. Whatever's good there should be good here, in my opinion.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, that's what I was going to suggest. Perhaps somebody can look at the rules for the Assembly. I think somewhere in the Standing Orders it does say that the committee is bound by the rules of the Assembly unless the committee makes otherwise. If they were to change, we'd have to specifically I think outline . . .

MR. PENGELLY: Yes, you have to sit here and listen to us. You can't just leave that machine and go and drink coffee.

MS MORRIS: Everything seems fascinating. I want to be here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The interesting wording of Standing Orders -- it has a very interesting specific. It's 111(1).

The broadcast media, subject to conditions set by Mr. Speaker, may record and broadcast by audio or visual means the proceedings of the Assembly and the committees of the whole Assembly conducted in the Assembly Chamber. And that's those specific precincts. Anyway, the reason . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, that's all it says: as the committee rules. I thought there was something else that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just so that everyone is clear. The matter was brought to my attention by a note, and I just wanted to make sure we were safeguarding all the members and everyone felt comfortable with it. So that's fine. Click goes the cassette to on.

MS MORRIS: Can we put it on the table now? Would that be all right?

AN HON. MEMBER: Would you like to sit up here too?

MR. BOGLE: I want to express some uneasiness with our committee's involvement in this area. I say that and remind all

members that I have urged that the role of the committee be enhanced relative to the offices provided for members either in this building or in the Legislature Annex Building. But what we desire to see happen and what happens are sometimes two different things. The committee's responsibility has not been enhanced to include those things. That is a responsibility of the Executive Council and the government of the province of Alberta.

Access to the building likewise is a responsibility of the government. It's a matter that's been dealt with in question period. It's a matter that is a responsibility of the member charged with administration and maintenance of the building. Therefore, I'm reluctant to see this committee involved in it in a formal sense. Now, there is absolutely nothing preventing any of us as members of the Assembly from raising it in the House and directing the question to Mr. Isley, as has been done in the past, and making our points in that forum. But I don't believe this is the proper forum for it.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, at the moment that's true. It's true our job is mainly to oversee the concerns of MLAs, but in the future we may have an MLA in a wheelchair, for instance, so I think in that sense it's not unreasonable for us to deal with Gordon's motion, which is basically to ask for some alternatives to be presented. I understand what you're getting at, but I think there is a shared jurisdiction here and the benefit of the doubt should apply.

MR. PENGELLY: You're saying that the entrances at the back are not suitable?

MS BARRETT: No, I'm not saying that and neither is Gordon. What he said is that maybe the fair thing to do, basically in light of the awareness raised by the Rick Hansen tour, is to have a look at some other options aside from going through the winding corridors and the basement network from the annex to get up to the main floor in the front. It's true: the back door problem is genuine inasmuch as it's not always staffed. They shut that door at 6 o'clock or so and there's not a constant monitor there, so access isn't assured. But the motion just calls for us to ask for some alternatives to be placed before us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are staff at the back door.

MS BARRETT: At all times?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, later than 6 o'clock -- the time.

Could the Chair hear the motion? We don't seem to have a motion up here.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I thought you made it.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I intended to make it; I thought I had made it. "That Public Works, Supply and Services be asked to report on the feasibility and expense of providing handicapped access through the outside front door." That's really it. I had added . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of the Legislature Building.

MR. WRIGHT: . . . of the Legislature Building. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Further discussion, Cypress-Redcliff?

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if . . . Well, I guess everybody knows what the outside front door is, or at least we know what we mean by "outside front door."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Closing debate on the motion. Any comments?

MR. BOGLE: Would the mover of the motion entertain a friendly amendment to broaden that review to look at all entrances to the building and to look at other jurisdictions in Canada -- the federal House of Commons, other provincial capitals -- to see what arrangements have been made, how they deal with this particular matter? If there's some information we don't have, maybe we should have it, and we as a committee can then pass that on in turn. Notwithstanding my reluctance to get into an area that's not a part of our jurisdiction, I do make that as a friendly amendment.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, it can perhaps be summed up by adding the words, "and appropriateness having regard to practice elsewhere and other alternatives."

MR. BOGLE: Well, isn't it clear . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the front door and all access doors.

MR. WRIGHT: I would have thought, Mr. Chairman, that as it is, we have not-bad access by other means, and that's been covered. I was kind of assuming that. The question it comes down to in the public is: if Rick Hansen can go through the front door, why can't other handicapped people? But I agree with the intent of your amendment.

MR. BOGLE: Yeah. I wanted to include, though, the side doors that lead to the main hallway and the rotunda -- and other provincial and federal Houses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The possibility, if a ramp were required to come up to the door in, say, that wing where the Official Opposition have their offices; whereas in the case of Ottawa they come in the front door all right, but it's underneath the front door, under the steps. There is access to this building which might be utilized in that way. It would still be more front door than the other but without having to redo the architecture of the building.

MR. WRIGHT: Just return to the 1912 arrangements; put a porte cochere in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, fair enough.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, the difficulty with the side entrance and the ramp is that the ramp has to be so long so it's not so steep.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So the understanding is that a friendly amendment has been received: "the front door and other access points in the building with a view to looking at how it's been solved in other jurisdictions." Call for the question.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

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

posed? Carried unanimously.

Okay. It's my understanding that the other item that was there would be with respect to Parliamentary Counsel.

MR. WRIGHT: Adjourned sine die.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and I have had a discussion.

Do I understand there's another motion to be put forward, Cypress-Redcliff?

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, it's relating to travel of our staff, constituency office and the capital. If memory serves me right, I think a number of years ago when I was first on this committee, the Member for Innisfail helped me out and I made a motion at that time. Previous to that, neither constituency office staff nor staff from our Edmonton office had traveled in either direction, either them up here or the ones from here down to the constituency office. At that time I made the motion that travel be allowed, assuming there was money in the constituency office budget for the same. I think this is in the same vein, and it's just a slight change from the initial in that it's suggesting three trips and that the members themselves make the decision because they're the ones that control that budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A point of clarification, then. It means one of your staff can go three times or three different ones will go once.

MR. HYLAND: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It doesn't mean three . . .

MR. HYLAND: . . . can go three times, no.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The other thing is that staff from the capital city can go down to your constituency -- or up to it or over to it -- three times, but from the point of view of your constituency personnel, they can only come here twice.

MR. HYLAND: No. It should be no more than a combination of three trips in total per member. It should say "three round trips in total," because three trips will leave somebody up here, obviously, if it's not a round trip.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the three includes your Edmonton staff and your back-home staff. Further discussion?

MR. HYLAND: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, just looking at that. My mind hasn't been working quite quickly enough; I realize we've passed it. But would the words "in total" not make it plain? I mean, you yourself were not clear what was meant, and I think it is open to misinterpretation: three times in either direction or three times per person. So if the words "in total" were put in there, three occasions in total in the fiscal year, it might clarify.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will take it that that was indeed in the

original wording.

MR. WRIGHT: Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unanimous consent, unanimous bobbing of heads in an affirmative direction. Thank you.

Okay, the other item is future meetings. We'll have to deal with some matters that we've tabled today and also the matter of an overall budget. What's the wisdom of the House, please?

MR. HYLAND: Can I put an idea out that I think we used last year and this last session, that we meet the day after the coming session is over with?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or one or two days or whatever is required.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, we don't know when that would be. The fact is that insofar as the computer business and also Members' Services is concerned, a date before the end of this month would be the best. I remind people that the reason for that is that the pilot project should get under way while the House is sitting. As to the members' benefits package, that has to be decided upon before the end of the year, meaning two weeks' leeway is what we need, so my suggestion would be at the end of the month sometime, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'd work through what's left on the agenda here and then perhaps go to the budget after the session? Something like that?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: I recall that the thrust of what we've done in the past, which was raised by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff, was that we set our next regular meeting to take place immediately after the House rose but gave the Chair the opportunity to call an emergency meeting on a specific issue. I think that kind of flexibility has to be built into any motion that's made so that if there is a matter that for logical reasons should not wait until the end of a sitting, it can come back during the session but that our agenda be restricted. Quite frankly, I find the workload gets very heavy during the sitting, with caucus committees and so on, and I don't look forward to a lengthy Members' Services meeting on top of an already heavy schedule. On the other hand, if we were coming back to deal with one or possibly two specific items that really shouldn't wait, then I think that's understandable and we could do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would tie in with Edmonton-Strathcona that the matter of the two issues really ought to be the matter of the benefits package and the computer subcommittee. So might we take that as a general understanding that we could perhaps find a slot of an hour and a half?

MR. HYLAND: Would you want me to amend my motion, then, to include: at the call of the Chair for items we deem to be . . .

MR. BOGLE: Those two.

MR. HYLAND: Well, I'm a little hesitant just to say those two in case something else comes up.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, there might be something else.

Boxing Day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Okay, then that would be the motion: that we would meet immediately after session but also on the basis of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks a bunch. All those in favour of the motion please signify by saying aye. Opposed, if any? Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

MR. HYLAND: That's assuming it isn't Christmas Day and

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

