

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[9:18 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, the time is 9:18. The Chair calls this meeting to order. Good.

Good morning, Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: May I nod?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. TAYLOR: Do I really have to sit on that side?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In this business, Nick, you take what you can get when you can get it in terms of where you're seated.

What is the wish of the meeting with regard to item 2, Approval of [November] 12, 1987, Committee Meeting Minutes?

Motion to approve by Cypress-Redcliff. Call for the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Thank you.

Item 3, Business Arising from the Minutes, 3(a), Review of Computer Sub-Committee Report.

DR. McNEIL: I can comment on this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why not.

DR. McNEIL: Do you want me to sit there?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I guess so. The Chair welcomes the new leader of the Liberal opposition. Oh.

MR. TAYLOR: Actually, I was just going to mention to the Chair that I was in place. Remember, I missed the proposal about being here to push the proposal for beer and wine in the cafeteria. Would that be coming up under (e), do you think?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair's understanding of the agenda for today was for two items, but we can certainly expand the agenda if that's the wish of the whole committee. So we'll put it down there under Other Business. Okay. Any other points to be raised under Other Business at this time? All righty.

Item 3(a), Review of Computer Sub-Committee Report: David McNeil, and then committee members.

DR. McNEIL: Subsequent to our last meeting, I and my staff met with the chiefs of staff to go over the recommendation from the last meeting. I believe we achieved a consensus with respect to a somewhat modified recommendation on the EDP constituency office pilot project. That recommendation is basically alternative A in the submission that's in your binder under tab A after the blue page.

The recommendation is that the Members' Services Committee approve alternative A, the constituency office EDP pilot project and the initiation of an overall EDP strategic plan at a cost of \$63,268, the expenses to be borne by the Legislative Assembly Office. The concern that the chiefs of staff had was that if we went ahead with an overall strategic plan and the EDP pilot project at the same time, the pilot project may not take first priority.

So we felt that if we could start on the EDP pilot project and

initiate the initial stages of the strategic plan, then in the '88-89 budget we could request funds to complete the EDP strategic plan. This approach is about \$40,000-plus less than the other alternative, alternative B here. We had consensus from all the chiefs of staff to approach it in this way.

MR. WRIGHT: But one.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, we've not heard from Mr. Dryden to this point in time.

MR. WRIGHT: If I may speak, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dryden wasn't aware that the concerns he expressed at the meeting were insufficient to be recorded, as it were. But the concerns he expressed, with which I concur, are that the Clerk's proposal was sound and that it is conceivable that some delay in the pilot project would occur as a result of having a co-ordinated plan, but that it's really silly to go ahead if we're going to have an overall review of the EDP requirements of the Legislative network, as it were, but to go ahead with the pilot project in the absence of someone with an overall view of what's taking place.

It is true that originally the computer subcommittee was discharged with the project of deciding how to go about making members' EDP requirements reasonable and installed. When Dr. McNeil came he suggested that this should better form part of an overall plan and convinced me, anyway, and I think some other committee members at the last meeting of the committee that this was a good idea. It certainly strikes me rather like planning a gearbox for a car without knowing what the car was going to be. It's a piecemeal project that may speed up part of the system at the outset but may end you in incompatible arrangements or worse arrangements or more expensive arrangements in the end. For the amount of delay that might occur, which I think is speculative only, the advantages far outweigh that.

So I would like to go on record as supporting the original idea proposed in part by the computer subcommittee but substantially varied by Dr. McNeil in his proposal and say that I don't think the chiefs of staff, who are concurring with alternative B, were thinking clearly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would appreciate having a motion in due course after a few more comments as to which proposal the House would like to deal with.

Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The direction that we had given through yourself to Dr. McNeil was that he should consult or continue to consult with the various chiefs of staff and come back with a proposal. Now, if my understanding is correct, we have concurrence by three of the four chiefs of staff that the proposal which is currently before us should indeed be used for a six-month pilot project and that all the costs of this pilot project would be borne by the Leg. Assembly. It would not come from the caucus budgets.

If those assumptions are indeed correct and we have concerns being expressed by one of the four chiefs of staff, I would respectfully suggest that, as this is a pilot project, it is intended to be reviewed at the end of the six-month period to determine how we want it to develop from that point in time. We're not really locking something in stone. Unless there's a point that I have missed from the hon. member's comments -- that's the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona -- then it's my belief we

should proceed as has been agreed to through the consensus process. I'm reluctant to make a motion without hearing further from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Before I reply, if it's my turn again, I would very much like Dr. McNeil, the Clerk, to reply to this or make his own comments, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think our motion can wait for a half a moment, in case there are any others over here, so we can do the summation. But any others? All right. Thank you. Good half moment.

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Chairman, my belief is that we can proceed with the pilot project without any deleterious effect on the strategic plan. Because it is a pilot project, we're leasing equipment. We're not making a long-term commitment, and we are likely to learn a fair amount from the exercise that would be useful in developing this strategic plan. So I don't believe it will have a negative impact on our ability to develop a strategic plan. The equipment that we will be leasing will be compatible with existing systems as they are, so I don't perceive any difficulty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Okay. Well, that answers my concern on that score. I was alarmed to hear a suggestion that any of this -- other than in the end, of course, perhaps the hire of the equipment -- would be a charge on constituency budgets. We never had come to grips with who would pay for the pilot project, but do I gather this is to be a charge on constituency budgets somehow? No, I didn't think so. Now, on exactly what it will be a charge remains to be determined, doubtless.

So our next concern is then: is it suggested that we go ahead with the pilot project in the absence of even a decision about whether there will be a project manager for the whole system to make recommendations in respect of the Legislature end of it as well as the members' end of it?

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Chairman, our objective with this proposal contemplates the need for the Legislative Assembly Office to hire an individual to co-ordinate the pilot project on a contract basis. Our intention would be that that individual, given the time available, would also initiate work on the strategic plan. So the kind of person we would want to hire would be somebody who could handle both aspects but with the number one priority being the pilot project.

MR. WRIGHT: So if I can come to the next area of concern, that is, with regard to the pilot project itself, I circulated the proposal contained in the subcommittee report after being considered by our committee -- that's to say, the Members' Services Committee -- to my constituency manager who, to my mind, which is totally uninformed about these things, seemed quite skilled in computer stuff. He said that the systems contemplated in the report from the Public Works people that worked on the project is rather geared to IBM and IBM-clone systems, which are fine for those who are trained in such systems but are hard going for the ordinary Joe who uses a personal computer -- PCs is the term. But these systems are, in the opinion of several peo-

ple I've spoken to, just the ticket for constituency offices, because you can learn to use it within an hour or two and become quite competent on it -- Apple computers, for example -- and this will in the end cut down considerably on the training expense.

You know, part of the proposal was to set up a system to school the operators in the use of any system adopted. I am told that with the simpler sort of PCs, on the one hand, they can do all the jobs that a constituency office would need because they don't need huge sorts of spreadsheets and that sort of thing, I'm told, but on the other hand, you really hardly need any sort of course to go on. You don't need to spend a day being trained somewhere. You don't need to have a specialist to go around and train the operators because it's very -- I'm afraid the jargon, Mr. Chairman, is user-friendly.

I was unaware of this, I must say, and so on the pilot project my request will be to have some of these more user-friendly, non-IBM type computers and word processors in the project so we can have a fair test of how the two things compare.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, there appears to be a fair amount of discussion ensuing from this matter, which would ordinarily just appear to be an administrative matter. In light of that it seems unnecessary that so many members of this committee would have to spend their time looking at mundane administrative matters, so I would move that we just simply table this matter until the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table takes precedence. No discussion on the motion to table, hon. members?

Those in favour of the motion to table . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Can I ask a point of order? What happens when a motion is tabled? How can it come back? Can it be moved to take it back, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the very next meeting.

MR. WRIGHT: It can come back at the very next meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the very next meeting.

We have a motion to table. Those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I have a show of hands, please? Those in favour? Six. Opposed? Four.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, who is going to pay for this bloody pilot project? They're ridiculous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, adjourned for the moment.

[The recorder was turned off from 9:33 a.m. to 9:35 a.m.]

[The committee recessed from 9:35 a.m. to 9:40 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the main committee come to order. The Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, there is a tabling motion that I introduced a few minutes ago. I wonder if I could have unanimous consent of the committee to withdraw that tabling motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Unanimous. Anyone opposed? Thank you. Let the record show we are still on the topic of Review of Computer Sub-Committee Report.

MR. WRIGHT: I refer to the hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe there is consensus that we move with alternative A, as is outlined, with the understanding that there is flexibility within that proposal that would allow more than one type of computer to be used. It's my understanding that's what was intended all along.

So I'll make that motion: that the Members' Services Committee approve alternative A, that's the constituency office EDP pilot project and the initiation of an overall EDP strategic plan at a cost of approximately \$63,268. All other expenses are to be borne by the Leg. Assembly with the understanding that that does give the flexibility that we all believe is inherent in the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion before the House. Is there a call for the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Let the record show it carried unanimously. Thank you committee members.

Review of Members' Benefit Package Comparison, 3(b). Clerk, please.

DR. McNEIL: In approaching this item, when you look at the package of benefits that members have, the only one that you can go to the market for and make a comparison on is the extended health care plan. We had our consultant discuss with Blue Cross the possibility of providing a similar plan. They just reported back to me verbally on Wednesday, and I have a summary here for members of that report.

I indicated at the last meeting that we had a verbal discussion with our consultants, who had been discussing with Mutual Life the usage, the experience, on our present extended health care plan in 1987-88. They indicated that they expected a 25 to 35 percent increase in costs. We have since confirmed that they're based on the usage in '87-88. Their rates would be going up by 30 percent effective January 1, 1988. So what I have here is a comparison of our existing plan, with revised rates, proposed rates, of \$10.40 a month for single and \$26.65 a month for family. That's the total cost; that's cost shared fifty-fifty, so the members' costs would be half of those.

With a proposal from Blue Cross -- and Blue Cross indicated

they could provide not quite a similar plan, with the exceptions noted at a rate of \$9.23 a month single and \$25.06 a month family. Those differences between the two plans would be that home nursing care under the Blue Cross proposal would be a maximum of \$5,000 in any three calendar years compared to the existing plan of \$25,000 per year maximum in the Mutual Life plan. The Blue Cross proposal would be a maximum benefit of \$50,000 per year in Canada expenditures compared to no maximum benefit for the Mutual Life plan. Physiotherapy cost maximum is \$250 per person per year under Blue Cross and no limit under Mutual Life. Differences in the auxiliary hospital services: none under the Blue Cross proposal.

Our consultant's recommendation, and our recommendation from the Legislative Assembly Office, is based on this comparison. I would recommend that you stick with the existing plan, given that for the additional costs for the Mutual Life plan, I think those additional maximums are worth that additional expenditure.

I guess one more comment I'd make is that I think there may be a difficulty of switching plans or developing a reputation of switching carriers too quickly that would develop in the marketplace if we moved after one year to another carrier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Comments, Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like some clarification from the Clerk with respect to how many people are incorporated into this pool. I think there was some confusion at the last meeting. I was quite surprised to discover that usage of a particular benefit item from any one of 83 members could have an influence on the rate. Now, I had understood last year when this package was approved that we were actually being absorbed into a pool that was comprised of tens of thousands of people, that we had bought into that sort of a thing.

The second thing that I'd like to see us discuss at least is any sort of notion that eye examinations would be covered under this. I stand opposed to that.

MR. WRIGHT: At public expense.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

DR. McNEIL: I have another information item on that issue, so maybe we could separate the two. The plan is based on a total of 79 individuals enrolled at the present time. That's the group it's based on, and the increase in rate is based on the usage for this year.

MS BARRETT: May I have a supplementary question, Chairman? Is that for the entire thing, the entire package, everything to which we are subscribing?

DR. McNEIL: Sorry, just the extended health care plan. The other benefits, the group life for example, were in with the government plan. A number of the other benefits, the dental plan, were in with the government plan. So that's why we have rates, and some of those plans we couldn't get a better rate anywhere. This particular plan we went to the outside market for, and therefore, we're just strictly using the MLAs as the group we're talking about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The variation was in place so that we could

give coverage to members who were beyond age 65. That was the problem.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And it was of great benefit to one in particular.

Westlock-Sturgeon, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm just a little bothered at the process, or maybe I'd like to know a little bit more about it, Dr. McNeil. You said "our consultant." Who is the consultant?

DR. McNEIL: The consultant that we used was McPherson & L'Hirondelle in Red Deer. They did the work for us initially.

MR. TAYLOR: We had them in last year. But they're agents for Mutual Life, so I don't see how you call it "consultant." For instance, we ran into the problem last year. When you use somebody that takes a commission from the insurance company that they place it with -- in other words, they're an agent -- some insurance companies won't bid. For instance, London Life, a Canadian insurance company in Ontario, probably the largest employer coverage, will not bid through an agent. For argument's sake now, are you aware if there was a London bid on this at all? I'm almost sure they didn't.

DR. McNEIL: My understanding, Mr. Chairman...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, Rod.

MR. SCARLETT: Sorry, Mr. Taylor, but McPherson & L'Hirondelle are not agents for Mutual Life. They are agents of New York Life, and they went at the market not as a representative of Mutual Life, because they aren't.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, that's a fine line. I'll agree that they're registered as New York Life as their prime agent, but they are an agent for whatever fund they place, which is entirely different from a consultant asking for outside bids. For instance, London Life will not bid through an agent. In other words, you can check me on this, but I am sure you have not got a bid on your books -- or I'm almost sure; I guess I'd better be careful on this -- from London Life.

And there are others. I think Manufacturers will bid through it, but I'd have to look through it. Canadian Indemnity I don't believe goes through an agent. Most of the companies that handle employee policies in Canada will not bid through an agent. You have to ask for it yourself. In other words, I would like to see us retain a consultant that we pay, not the insurance company that gets the contract pay, to bring in all the cross-board bids.

MS BARRETT: Point of information, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MS BARRETT: Not speaking for or against anything that Westlock-Sturgeon has just said, but is it not true -- I think I still have the package -- that a shop-around had been done last summer? Was that originally presented? I remember about 10 company names. Is that correct or not?

MR. SCARLETT: There were 13 company names that were shopped around. Part of the problem, Mr. Taylor, is that at the last Members' Services Committee meeting, it was agreed that we would compare the Mutual Life package solely with the Blue Cross package. What we had was McPherson & L'Hirondelle do that comparison. They weren't shopping the market; they were just doing the comparison.

MR. TAYLOR: If the proposal was only to compare Mutual with Blue Cross, that's fine. But the impression I got from Dr. McNeil was that he was saying that the consultant had it up for bids. I know that insurance companies have called me and said they've not been asked, and some others have said they do not bid through agents. I know, as a man who's run a few companies, that when you call for it using the agency process, it automatically rules out about 25 percent because they prefer to bid directly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on the whole issue, and we'll have the Clerk make a few notes and answer them all at once, please. Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I guess the only comment I have is that this is just the extended health care benefits. Along with that it would include the difference in drugs; i.e., Blue Cross's ability that you don't have to pay for them first and then receive your money back; rather, you have the credit card.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, that's another point to be addressed. Any other points?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I thought last year we were alert to the possibility that since the consultant would get their recompense from the company chosen, perhaps there might be a less than disinterested review of the market. But the basket of comparisons was so large that I thought we satisfied ourselves that we need have no fear on that score. As for this comparison, it was just asked as a particular comparison of Blue Cross rates. I'm not worried about that, but I can't forbear from remarking, since the experience is in part based on what the 79 members of the Legislature who are in the plan do, that judging from the usage of the phys ed room, only the two members from Red Deer and myself are making strenuous efforts to keep the experience low.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would like to comment that my understanding is that this company -- our consultants, so-called -- these people who have generously given of their time and have any kind of interest in dealing with us as an entity, have really received the princely sum of about \$1,300. In my personal opinion, they've been losing money on this in terms of the amount of time that we have, as a department and as a committee, been going back and back and back. So I think any imputation that there's tons of money rolling in and going to these people is not entirely fair.

I don't think it's also entirely fair to think that a whole bunch of people out there want to do business with us anyway. I know that other members of this committee who have served on behalf of the Legislative Assembly before realize that in this last year and a half, this committee has finally done what it should have been doing earlier and has really enhanced what the package of

benefits is. So I must admit I am expressing a certain amount of frustration.

Clerk. And after that we'll just pause for a moment.

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Chairman, my understanding was that the market had been assessed last year. It was mentioned that 13 companies were asked to bid on this situation and very few did. This particular exercise was just -- and I believe that was the direction of the committee; they wanted the comparison of the Blue Cross plan with our existing extended health care plan, which is what we did. Because of time constraints and, I guess, my lack of familiarity with the plan, I suggested that it would be better for the consultants to do it since they were much more familiar with the players in the game than myself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Chair recognizes . . .

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Hyland's question with respect to the drug plan: I am not certain of this, but my understanding is that the two plans would compare and that the same drug situation would apply with Blue Cross as would apply with our existing plan. It would cost more to have the credit card situation where you didn't have to pay in advance for the drugs under either plan, and that cost is estimated typically at about 20 percent more for having that card.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Westlock-Sturgeon.

MS BARRETT: My comments will be reserved until the point where you want to momentarily adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair was about to ask the tour guides: the group is from where, please?

MS BARRETT: That's what I wanted to talk about, if I could introduce them, actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Introduction of special guests, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Does the House agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I met this morning with this class from the Newton school, located in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands. I know these students and teachers from having been at their school in their class before. We met this morning briefly, had our pictures taken together, and they came into my office. I want to assure you that these people are probably more computer literate than most average Albertans. They're real whizzes. I am real pleased that they could be here today. I gave all due apologies on behalf of the entire Assembly that we weren't in question period this morning so that they could watch the cut and thrust of the Legislature, and they seemed to accept those apologies. So I personally would like to ask the members of this Members' Services Committee to welcome these students and teachers from Newton school.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only one here who isn't broken up that we're not in question period today is the Chairman. Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We might give

them a demonstration without the referee and see what it would be like.

Mr. Chairman, the only comment here is that -- and I have no trouble voting to keep the existing plan. I have two. One is that I think public business has to be done in public. I just don't like the concept of awarding public contracts where the agent is subject to innuendo by people such as myself or anyone else that they maybe have gotten money -- in other words, I think it should be on the table exactly what anybody that works for this Legislature gets in dollars. It shouldn't be hidden in any way. That's the first point.

The second point is the well-known fact that many of the insurance companies out there, particularly those that handle employee things, do not bid through agents. They bid directly. I would certainly hope that down the road -- and I will be recommending that when we go into it again -- we hire a consultant, pay the \$1,300 or \$1,500 or whatever you're talking about to have someone go out, so that we can get the widest possible coverage. That was my point in bringing it up. Because I brought it up last year. It was steamrollered over and said that maybe we would be doing the whole thing this year. I just want to see it done in the most open, public manner possible so that the most number of people can compete for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rocky Mountain House, followed by Cypress-Redcliff, followed by a motion, perhaps, from a committee member.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. You know, when I consider the members sitting at these desks, it's \$100 for this morning, and they got \$1,200. I don't know what the witch hunt is about, really. A consultant's report, very unbiased, and we're looking for some problems. I would suggest that the session has ended. This is Members' Services, for the members, and I would caution the members to direct their questions and things in that manner. To sit here and go over these things to merely hear ourselves talk -- personally, I don't particularly care for it. Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we accept, or reaffirm I guess is the right word, the existing plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With the proposed rates? Thank you. There is a motion. Discussion?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to dilute the discussion any further, but it seems to me from our last meeting that the real question centred around vision care and a concern that there not be an expansion of a service without the express approval of the committee. Now, that may be something that's coming next. What I want to know before we vote on the motion is: how are we dealing with that particular aspect of our health care coverage?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's separate from this, is it not?

DR. McNEIL: Anything related to vision care would be an additional cost above what we're talking about now. Nothing related to vision care is included in this proposed rate. I have additional information on the additional costs of vision care, but nothing related to vision care would be included in this proposed rate. The committee was . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that assurance, is there a call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

Now, may we speak to the matter of the vision care, as we had undertaken. Okay, David McNeil, please, speaking to . . .

Wait a minute. Is the new group Edmonton-Highlands' as well or . . .

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, there's a second group. Tour guide, please, your new group in the back row . . . Okay, whoever you are, welcome nevertheless.

Clerk, please.

DR. McNEIL: The vision care benefit could be added to our extended health care package. That first line should read: purchase and repair to eye glasses and contact lenses that are necessary for correction of vision by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. To add that benefit to the package, the maximum benefit would be \$200 per person, every two years would cost \$7.79 a month for a family and \$3.04 a month single. In addition, an additional benefit of an eye examination by an optometrist, limited to one examination in a 24-month period, with a maximum benefit of \$45 per person for 24 months, would cost 37 cents a month for a family and 14 cents a month for a single. So the information I provided at our last meeting was incorrect. We had been advised that they were going to add this second benefit as part of the extended health care plan at no cost. That was not correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It says "repairs to eyeglasses and contact lenses." I take it that means that it does not mean the filling of a prescription of corrective lenses?

DR. McNEIL: No. I said earlier that it was "purchase and repairs." It should say "purchase and repairs."

MR. WRIGHT: The part that troubles me is that the cost of this proposed extension is to be shared fifty-fifty between members and the Legislative Assembly Office, which means the public, and I think it perhaps not the time to be adding to our benefits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. KOWALSKI: I move that we table this matter, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table. Those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The item is tabled.

With the indulgence of the committee for half a moment. Tour guides, which groups are here, please?

FIRST TOUR GUIDE: [Inaudible] from the Adult Learning Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Adult Learning Centre. Which constituency? Edmonton-Centre? Somewhere in Edmonton, at any rate. Okay.

And your group, please?

SECOND TOUR GUIDE: This is the adult basic upgrading class, from the Adult Learning Centre as well. It's from Edmonton Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to your Legislative Assembly. Since your educational facility is located in Edmonton-Centre, as you probably know, the MLA there is William Roberts.

This morning this is Members' Services Committee, which is a committee comprised of people who have been designated by their own caucuses to work on behalf of the general overall operation, and so we have representatives here from the New Democrats, from the Liberals, as well as from the Progressive Conservatives, together with the Legislative Assembly staff component.

This is a very interesting bridge. It is regarded as being much more of a neutral meeting place at the middle of the parliamentary bridge, if you will, so things are not quite as fiercely partisan here as they oftentimes are in the House.

We're quite happy that the House is not in session, or at least I am. Nevertheless, this is one of the things that goes on. When people in the province think that the House is only operating from 2:30 in the afternoon until 5:30, or again in the evening from 8 until 10:30, and that's all the time that these people put in, that is not the truth, because oftentimes they're here working from 7:30 or 8 o'clock in the morning, and meetings at every conceivable moment, and oftentimes they have a problem of trying to meet three meetings all at the same time.

So we welcome you to your Legislative Assembly and hope you come back anytime.

The next item of business on our agenda takes us to 3(c), Review of Draft Constituency Office Staff Contract. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: The direction of the committee at the last meeting was to review the contract with the chiefs of staff. We did have a meeting, and the recommendation was that a revised proposal be put forward to this committee which allowed for both a fee-for-service arrangement as well as a contract-of-employment arrangement for the hiring of constituency office staff. What we've developed is that proposal.

My recommendation would be that at this meeting it be treated as an information item, because this particular draft has not been reviewed by the chiefs of staff. I think the ideas reflected in it reflect the discussion and decisions of that meeting, but I believe there is need for additional discussion in terms of

some of the implications of the fee-for-service versus the contract-of-employment arrangement. But I believe this proposal sets out the alternatives and some of the issues that need to be addressed in choosing one or the other means of employing staff in the constituency offices. Having said that, I would then ask for questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to congratulate all of the people who have worked on this over the last several months. I've been through the document as we sat here this morning, and I think the two proposals are just crackerjack. They're just perfect, I think, in terms of offering the flexibility that members have indicated they require and, at the same time, conforming to, I suppose, conventions with respect to either of those contracts.

I understand the signal of the Clerk is that we should treat it as information; therefore, I will hold my intention to sponsor a motion. I wonder, though, if the Clerk can explain what happened here. I thought the chiefs of staff would get a chance to work this through and allow it to come back to this meeting as an actual proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good question. What's the answer, please?

DR. McNEIL: The answer is that we did work it through in a meeting in terms of the approach we would take. The document, I believe, reflects that understanding that we reached. The chiefs of staff have not had the opportunity yet to provide feedback to ensure that this proposal reflects that agreement, but my belief is that it does reflect the understanding that we did reach in that meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would like to call for a coffee break, please.

[The committee recessed from 10:14 a.m. to 10:19 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen -- well, maybe boys and girls; either way. This morning what we have down here is Members' Services Committee. It's an interesting group of people on an individual basis, but they're also an interesting group of people because they represent three of the four political parties in the House. This is much more of a neutral meeting ground -- this Members' Services Committee -- so that we can deal with matters that relate to members of the Legislature being able to carry out their duties both here in Edmonton and in their constituencies.

This is, I would like to think, much more of a saner atmosphere. Members will note how I chose my words very carefully. But there's less of the cut and thrust of debate that goes on if you were here especially at question period or at debating of Bills or motions. So this is a much more relaxed atmosphere where we can indeed stop and speak at greater length without having to put in place all of the parliamentary procedure orders, which are a frustration to the members as well as to the Speaker when he has to put them in place. But here we have much more of an ebb and flow.

So we're glad you're here. We welcome you on behalf of your MLA, the Hon. Nancy Betkowski, the Minister of Education, and we hope you'll come back and visit your Legislature many times. Have a good Christmas.

Members of the committee. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I think a consensus has been reached that another meeting is desirable between Dr. McNeil and the chiefs of staff to try to refine further or ensure that all parties fully understand the implications of the options available, keeping in mind the Chair's desire to see this matter resolved, so that if indeed we're moving in the direction as suggested, the target date could be January 1. I believe there's a consensus that next Wednesday morning would be an agreeable time for a special meeting of the committee so that we could deal primarily with this agenda item. There may be something else that needs to be added to the list, but this would be the primary matter for which we would be meeting. So my motion would be that we table this item, come back at a special meeting to be held on Wednesday, December 16, convening at 10 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would respectfully request the members to see if it would be possible to have the meeting at 2 in the afternoon. [The recorder was turned off briefly]

The Chair takes it that there appears to be a developing consensus, and the Chair is most appreciative. Wednesday afternoon at 4 o'clock. The location? Thank you. Those in favour of that motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you very much.

At this stage the Chair would like to welcome the new member of Members' Services Committee. I beg Dr. Elliott's forgiveness that I didn't make note of that earlier. So on behalf of all members of the committee, we welcome you to this committee, Member for Grande Prairie.

Next item of business, 3(d), Draft Constituency Office Rental Agreement. Brief comment, or is there a motion? Motion, Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Move to accept as our model.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Even though it's not precisely an item either within this or attached to this, I wonder if we could get the committee to agree that I put a question to the Clerk with respect to insurance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under Other Business, or at this time?

MS BARRETT: Well, I thought it would be appropriate at this time, but we can do it under Other Business, if you like.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee agrees? Now?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Can the Clerk give us a report, please? We talked about this last time, and I'm still antsy about not having any insurance.

DR. McNEIL: You are covered. We received a letter from the Treasury that government coverage covers property and liability coverage in constituency offices. Our program extends to cover that property which is owned by the Crown or for which you have assumed responsibility and our legal liability which may arise out of the operation of the constituency office in accordance with the constituency office lease.

MS BARRETT: All right. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. With alacrity and dispatch.

Schedule of Budget Meetings. Hon. members realize that you no sooner get finished with one budget when we're back into the next. Some preliminary work has indeed been done, quite extensive, so that the committee needs to think in terms of meeting for a number of days. It has been suggested by some members that the dates for the next regular meeting after our next Wednesday's special meeting would be January 18 and 19, convening on a Monday afternoon at 1 p.m. and then working throughout the afternoon, adjourning for the evening and then meeting again the next morning. So it would be a Monday afternoon and into a Tuesday evening. That then allows time for sober second thoughts. So January 18 and 19 can be seen as the first set of dates, and then the possibility of February 8 and 9 as a second set if required. Does that seem to be agreeable?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I'm in a difficulty on February 8 or 9, but I guess I'll just have to lump it. I won't be able to be here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we will, in light of our vast reservoir of experience of last year, be able to deal with such sweetness and light and dispatch that we won't need the February meeting. We will take January 18 and 19 as the next set of meetings with regard to the budget, and members will please hold in reserve February 8 and 9. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we have item 5, which deals with Other Business, but the Chair does have to point out that at the last meeting we were directed that we would be dealing with the items that we have already dealt with on this day. Nevertheless, there's a narrow parameter there, which was indeed put out there as notice. But if the committee wants to deal with other items, so be it, and the Chair has notice of one from Westlock-Sturgeon. What is the wish of the committee? To proceed with other items?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The Chair recognizes Westlock-

Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Speaking to my earlier proposal... [interjection] I'm used to you interrupting me after the first sentence. That's why I pause, Mr. Chairman. [interjections] Two sentences.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that our cafeteria should be allowed to serve -- I don't remember the class of licence -- wine and beer with the meals. It's not the same as a bar licence. I don't see why our cafeteria should be different from 99 percent of the eating places in Alberta. In other words, the public out there is not going to be corrupted by coming in here and having lunch with an MLA. As a matter of fact, it begins to be almost a penance to come in here and have lunch with an MLA. So it's quite all right to offer wine and beer, because as far as I know, roughly 98 to 99 percent of restaurants in Alberta do so. Although I don't drink myself, I haven't noticed the Legislature full of people whose breath would knock me down at coffee time, so I don't think the MLAs need to be weaned and told that they can't have access to it for fear that they will make any more asses of themselves than they have up to now by getting loose in the cafeteria.

I think, thirdly, it's an extra cash flow to whoever's in charge of providing meals, in charge of the cafeteria at the time, which reflects probably into a more stable income. As you know, we've had to keep switching, and we always seem to be looking for a landlord or an operator for the cafeteria. I think that would help the cash flow problem and stabilize the ownership and at the same time possibly provide, with the extra cash flow, maybe a little better quality of meals, although I'm not trying to fault the quality of the meals. That's not the point here.

In general, Mr. Chairman, I feel it is something that's common in most of Alberta, and to have a cafeteria that will not allow the serving of beer and wine at meals is an aberration and something that's entirely different from the general way of life of Albertans.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the understanding of the Chair, though, it's with a meal?

MR. TAYLOR: I don't understand the liquor Act in full, but I understand there's only two types of licences. There's the wine and beer licence, which means with food, and the other is the bar licence. No, wait a minute. There's a cabaret, I think, too. But that's a long way into the future, especially with the entertainment being so good upstairs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Members, show of hands again, please. We have Edmonton-Highlands and Rocky Mountain House and the Minister of the Environment. Edmonton-Highlands, please.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm not sure that we're actually dealing with a motion, Mr. Chairman. I know there's just no consensus on this issue, but probably I'm in the minority end of it. I speak against it. I know that the Alberta Legislature is one of the few in Canada that does not allow the sale of alcoholic beverages in its cafeteria or dining room. I prefer to keep it that way, largely because, as has been pointed out before, we have a lot of visitors to this building. First of all, I'm not inclined to see some visitors who might want to hang around there prior to, say, the House opening and indulge themselves. Those people have free access throughout the building, and that's fair enough, but I just

don't think we should implicitly be encouraging the consumption of alcohol on our premises. This is the building in which the laws are made to govern Alberta. I think we should encourage people to remain sober as much as possible. I realize that I am on the minority end of this issue, and if it's a motion, I'll vote against it. I also realize that I'll probably lose that vote, but I need to be on record expressing my view.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I guess that unlike the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I do have a drink from time to time.

MR. TAYLOR: You'd never know it.

MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. Really and truly, in some cases . . . This comes as a real surprise to me -- you know, in view of the way the member acts in the House -- that he doesn't drink.

However, with that I'd like to go on record as opposing this. The reason for this is that there are businesses in the proximity of the Legislature that serve good meals and drinks, and I think that particular thing is available to any and all. So I speak against serving alcoholic beverages in the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Minister of the Environment, followed by Taber-Warner.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. This is an issue that really should come to a head, I think, and the most appropriate way of bringing the issue to a head is really to have a motion. So I would like to move that the Members' Services Committee does not approve of the suggestion put forward by the leader of the Liberal Party that alcoholic beverages be served in the cafeteria of the Legislature Building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was no original motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, okay, it doesn't matter if you word it negative or positive, I guess, but I thought that's what I was speaking to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It actually does matter considerably as to whether it's negative or positive.

MR. TAYLOR: You tabled my motion from the other meeting. I thought I brought it on to the paper this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the motion from the previous meeting then? Let me . . . That's right; it would be two meetings back.

MR. TAYLOR: That's right.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I believe that unless it was expressly moved that Westlock-Sturgeon's motion was brought back to this committee -- and I'm not convinced that that was expressly moved -- the Environment minister's motion takes precedence on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. The Minister of the Environment's motion is the one that is now being discussed. Speaking to that, Taber-Warner, then Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you. I'd like to begin by posing a question to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. She indicated that she knows she's in the minority. I'd like to know why you would make such a statement, when you were the lead-off speaker following the person who introduced the subject matter.

MS BARRETT: Oh, sure.

MR. BOGLE: What makes you believe you are in the minority?

MS BARRETT: Oh, well, maybe I don't know that. That's construed from comments I've had outside this meeting. I wasn't referring to the committee members. I meant within the Assembly and my understanding of the number of MLAs who have signed the petition that was available in the cafeteria in support of allowing that a liquor licence be available, so nothing formal.

But seeing as how I have the floor, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to point out that the Legislature cafeteria was closed on two consecutive Thursday nights while the House was sitting, and it caused no end of trouble for someone like me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. BOGLE: I'd appreciate some clarification from the hon. member, because it's important that in the committee we not jump to conclusions as to where members might stand on a particular issue. While I think it might have been helpful had the leader of the Liberal Party, who has initiated this subject, had the operator of the cafeteria here to address the matter, we now have a motion to be debated. Like the Member for Barrhead, I believe it should be brought to a head. I also share the belief that beer and wine is not needed in this particular building and in the cafeteria in this building.

It has long been my belief that in the longer term we should be striving for a proper dining room, probably located in the Legislature Annex building, with appropriate private meeting rooms, so that when constituents are in Edmonton, or if they're Edmontonians, and they're in their capital meeting their MLAs, ministers, or others, there can be those accommodations, in addition to visiting parliamentarians and legislators from other jurisdictions.

That obviously isn't something we are discussing at this time. We are discussing the possibility of a beer and wine licence for the operator of the cafeteria within the Legislature Building. I must speak against that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I have three points, Mr. Chairman. The first is on the question of drinks. It does strike me as odd, in fact extraordinary, that we can't get a drink of beer or a drink of wine with our meal if we wish. I remember there were these same prognostications of doom when beer and wine became widely available to small cafes, and so on. We haven't seen any problem arising from it. It's just a funny attitude . . .

MR. TAYLOR: People started voting NDP. What the hell do you mean?

MR. WRIGHT: It's a funny attitude. I find it very hard to understand. If you don't want to drink, you don't have to.

Now, the second point is that I, too, thought that on the whole the majority of the members of the Legislature were in

favour of the availability of beer and wine in the cafeteria. On something like this it's fair enough for us to reflect the wishes of the majority unless we are convinced they are completely on the wrong tack.

The third thing is, however, that there is an existing contract with the operators of the Legislature cafeteria. If it is our intention -- I mean that if a majority of us wish to see this addition to the amenity down there in place, it has to be subject to the legal position with that contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Westlock-Sturgeon, speaking to the motion. The Minister of the Environment would have the opportunity to close because it's his motion, but you certainly can speak to the motion.

MR. TAYLOR: I couldn't understand. I didn't know which can the shell was under or which shell the pea was under.

MR. WRIGHT: In committee we can speak any number of times.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, hon. member, yes. The Chair's hesitancy was the fact of a motion which is worded in a negative form. I could recollect something out of *Beauchesne*. It's under *Beauchesne* 423:

A motion should be neither argumentative, nor in the style of a speech, nor contain unnecessary provisions or objectionable words. [However] it is usually expressed in the affirmative, even where its purpose and effect are negative.

But the operative word is "usually." Therefore, the motion by the member -- the Minister of the Environment, the Member for Barrhead -- is in order, so we are now dealing with the motion that is a negative . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I can understand, Mr. Chairman. The Minister of the Environment is often an exception. If I may go on, though, I'm speaking on the question of beer and wine in the Legislature -- or in the cafeteria in the Legislature; I'm sorry.

Are we just conforming to a standard? Although the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona mentioned, I think quite rightfully, that there's been no perceptible change in the attitudes of the public and no increase in crime or whatever it is that will happen by having wine and beer in the Legislature. I think that's quite well taken; I think it's just a matter of fact.

Caffeine is probably a drug that's just as debilitating as alcohol. To have one of the members of this committee that is famous for being perceived through nicotine smoke whenever you look in her direction, and then to worry about a drug like alcohol in a cafeteria -- it is only confined to those that use it -- and is interested in spreading nicotine from one end of that thing to the other, it absolutely boggles the mind. At least it's a drug that taken internally, and outside there is a smell that drifts over. It may be six inches or so, but it doesn't compare in any way. [interjection] Well, I'm sorry; she's accompanied by the minister in charge of clean air too, as far as that's concerned.

Mr. Chairman, I just find it hard -- I think we're thinking of bogeymen out there and that all of a sudden we're going to get all kinds of letters from a temperance union and a demonstration by Carry Nation's modern descendants out on the steps. I think it's one that's quite reasonable, because it makes for better dining and makes for our constituents enjoying their meal and makes for more cash flow to help run a better cafeteria. That's my main excuse.

Thank you very much.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question, but Edmonton-Highlands and Innisfail.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think Edmonton-Strathcona raised a really important point, and that is that maybe we shouldn't decide this yet. It occurs to me . . . I mean, I'm in favour of the Environment minister's motion, but perhaps what we could do is ask our colleagues -- that is, within the caucus -- whether or not they have a strong position one way or the other, or whether or not they'd like to . . . You know, I don't care if they vote internally and decide on a position or a free-for-all or give us instructions as to how they'd like to deal with it. I mean, I believe in democracy, and pluralistic democracy to boot, and maybe the fact is we haven't dealt as thoroughly with our caucuses as we should on this issue.

So I'm not going to move to table the motion, but it does occur to me that perhaps we could at least ask our caucuses what they would like us to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Innisfail.

MR. PENGELLY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not aware of any petition or whatever it was that has been handed around, but I have talked to many members of our caucus, and I haven't had one tell me that they're in favour of that, and I've had none of my constituents arguing for a place like this. I would vote against that and call the question.

MR. WRIGHT: I'd like to move that we postpone the vote on this until the Members' Services Committee has circulated a notice to all members soliciting their opinion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair recognizes that as being a motion to table.

MR. WRIGHT: Subject to instructions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a motion to table, unfortunately. I'm sorry; a motion to table.

MR. TAYLOR: And the amendment -- oh, I was just thinking of a secret ballot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona, was that indeed a motion to table?

MR. WRIGHT: It is a sort of motion to table, yes, but it's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has been very good at trying to keep the Chair on the straight and narrow, in a legal position, so the Chair regards it as being a motion to table. There is a call for the question on the motion to table. [interjections] No, I can't . . . Well, all right. The mover . . .

MR. WRIGHT: I didn't understand it as that, Mr. Chairman, so . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Chair has defective hearing. Could the Chair hear what the member said?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. What I was trying to say -- I'm sorry if it came out wrong, Mr. Chairman -- is that I move that we solicit the opinion of the members of the Legislature on this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, that is either an amendment . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Then I amend the motion. I amend the motion on the floor in this wise: provided that we first solicit the opinion of the members of the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committee members, I'll have our committee secretary read the original motion, and you'll see that we have a conflict of interest within our amendment, I believe. But if we could have the main motion, please.

MRS. EMPSON: Moved by the hon. Mr. Kowalski that the Members' Services Committee does not approve the proposal by Mr. Taylor that beer and wine be served with meals in the cafeteria of the Legislature Building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you couple that, which is a rejection, with your motion, they're incompatible.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes; [inaudible] I simply . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Let's vote.

MR. WRIGHT: I vote to table.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table by Edmonton-Strathcona. All those in favour of the motion to table, please signify. The Chair recognizes two. Those opposed? The motion to table fails. We're now back to the original motion.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question. Do you wish to hear summation by the sponsor of the motion?

MR. KOWALSKI: I think it's pretty clear, Mr. Chairman. We have a motion that says that we should not have alcoholic beverages served in the cafeteria of the Legislative Assembly. My original motion said, as a result, "does not approve the suggestion put forward by the leader of the Liberal Party." That was changed to "Mr. Taylor," but that's a minor point, and I'll accept the one that's in the record. I think we should have the vote on it, and let's get on with the next item.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion carries. The Chair will not make any comment about where the beverages are presently being offered within the confines of this building.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, may I move to that order of

business with respect to the cafeteria. I have another motion I would like to make. It has to do also with drugs. I would like to move that the cafeteria be a no-smoking area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is made by the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. Is there discussion?

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to back that up. No-smoking areas are taking up many public areas now. Many towns have public areas where there is no smoking. Our airlines have no-smoking airlines. I think the time has come to give some leadership in this question amongst the people of the province. Certainly, smoking and approving of smoking in the cafeteria by a Legislature that gets up at least twice a year to debate how we're going to have preventive health methods or how much money we should be voting to no-smoking programs and having a cafeteria in the very heart of the legislative process that allows smoking seems to me to be flying in the face of common sense and what we are trying to preach.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Rocky Mountain House, followed by Environment, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much. [interjection] Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a procedural problem. The motion would be reworded so that it would be that the committee recommend to the minister responsible, which is the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, to carry through, because we don't have that within our jurisdiction. But if that would be agreeable to the committee members, as to the appropriate wording . . . Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Rocky Mountain House.

MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I do not smoke, and I'd like to speak against this motion because I think it's infringing on the rights of people in order -- if they wish to have a cigarette, that is fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Minister of the Environment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, I just heartily endorse the motion put forward by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. I think he's shown some initiative and some leadership in this particular issue, and I want to go on public record as being totally in support of that motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, again, as on the last motion, I feel this is something that the members should decide for themselves in a majority vote. I'm astonished that I just can't move a simple procedural amendment that we postpone the vote in this committee until we have circulated to members. That's all I'd like to do, and I'm amazed that that's not in order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This motion would be.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, because it's not negative.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It wouldn't be, because it was framed in the

negative.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I so move that we tack the booze question onto the ballot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We now have an amendment that the booze question be tacked onto . . . [interjection] It's the exact wording of the hon. member.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, you didn't hear it right: that we postpone this motion until we have circulated to members as to their wishes as to smoking in the Legislature, and secondly, that we append the question of no beer and wine or beer and wine in the cafeteria there also. But I'd like the question divided when it comes to a vote, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question would have to be divided in any case because we have another procedural problem. The committee has already decided on the liquor aspect. That one might come back at a future date. But with respect to the first part of the amendment, with regard to smoking, that opinion be taken of members . . . The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, however, said "the Legislature", whereas the main motion is with regard to "the Legislature cafeteria." So the Chair would recognize that an amendment with regard to smoking in the Legislature cafeteria would be in order. So speaking to the amendment, Edmonton-Highlands and then . . . Sorry, Taber-Warner had been recognized.

MR. BOGLE: Could I have the amendment read again, please?

MRS. EMPSON:

Moved by Mr. Wright that we postpone this motion until we have circulated to members as to their wishes regarding smoking in the Legislative cafeteria.

MS BARRETT: I do speak to the amendment. As someone who does smoke and who will try again to quit, I feel that I have some sort of bias here, but I also know that most members of the Assembly are non-smokers and I go whichever way it flows. It's certainly not a problem to me. But I do think we should consult again with all MLAs. They may have reasons, as Rocky Mountain House pointed out, to want to leave it divided into smoking and non-smoking sections. Surely when we have visitors here, we have to represent them. That's a common meeting place for MLAs to meet with constituents from around the province, and maybe all MLAs should have a chance to vote on this issue or to make their views known prior to a decision.

MR. BOGLE: I wanted to make an observation on process, and I think this is the appropriate place to do it. Some members have drawn a parallel between the previous subject matter, a beer and wine licence in the cafeteria, with the right to smoke in the cafeteria. I would respectfully point out to those members that the matter of a possible beer and wine licence was first raised by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon some months ago. It was tabled at our last meeting because the member was not present. So there's been ample opportunity for discussion by members of the Members' Services Committee with their respective caucuses and with members within those caucuses. We heard from the Member for Innisfail that in fact he had discussed this matter with a number of caucus members, and I am under the assumption that all of us have talked to caucus mem-

bers about the matter.

The subject of whether or not all smoking should be banned from the Assembly . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Cafeteria.

MR. BOGLE: . . . cafeteria has been raised today for the first time. I also believe that we should follow the practice we've established in the past and, before moving on matters like this, find out how other members feel. I do not support the concept of a structured poll or something that's conducted by the Speaker or the administration. This is something that we as members of the committee can take back to our respective caucuses.

While the Representative Party is not represented today . . .

MR. HYLAND: I'll speak for them.

MR. BOGLE: . . . they certainly will get copies of the minutes and will be able to discuss it amongst themselves.

Therefore, I support the idea that the matter be tabled today. I don't think we should be making that kind of decision today.

When I originally raised my hand, Mr. Chairman, it was to ask for clarification if in fact we do not have in our cafeteria at the present time a non-smoking area, because I'm assuming our cafeteria conforms to the bylaws of the city of Edmonton. That's not correct? We don't have to?

MR. WRIGHT: They don't have to, but there is a non-smoking area.

MR. BOGLE: They don't have to, but there is a non-smoking area in the cafeteria at the present time. So I support the motion to . . . It's not actually a motion to table; it's an amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair has now heard from Taber-Warner, a motion to table.

MR. BOGLE: Pardon me. I'm back to the amendment, I guess. Because the amendment is that we defer a decision until we've had a chance to speak with other members of the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is correct: a motion to defer. Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. It wasn't expressed in that way, I don't think, but that's fine with me. Instead of a formal circulation, if it's a question of referring back to caucus, the motion can be deemed amended.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's deemed to be a motion to defer.

The Chair also points out that there are a lot of people that use this building other than MLAs, in terms of staff, the people who keep this place really going. Perhaps they could be consulted as well as elected members.

The motion to defer, which is basically what the amendment says. Those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. The amendment carries. Therefore, the motion as amended. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

It's the understanding of the Chair that that concludes the business. The Chair would like to report, however, that at our last meeting there was concern raised with regard to handicapped access to the front of the building. The matter was communicated to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. A project already had been initiated, and members will see new sidewalk construction and access at the north and the east of the main building. That is indeed for handicapped access.

Other items of business? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure how this should be dealt with. I don't actually have a motion, but I would like to bring a point of information with respect to two letters that were attached to our binders today, with the agreement of the committee. It's the letters between Westlock-Sturgeon and the Speaker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They weren't given to all members.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see, yes. Well, may I proceed then? I'm in receipt of copies of correspondence, the first of which was from Westlock-Sturgeon to the Speaker, dated December 7, with respect to one seat assigned in the public gallery to a representative of the Premier's office, and the response from the Speaker, dated today, December 10, in which it is advised that Westlock-Sturgeon speak to, for instance, myself and the Member for Little Bow on this issue.

I'd like to point out a bit of information for all members of this committee in the event that it is relevant or becomes relevant. First of all, there was a meeting between House leaders and the Speaker last year, at which I was present and an active participant, in which we discussed seating within the public and members' galleries. The tradition had it that there were staff people from the Premier's office and from each caucus office over several years -- and I know, because I was one of those people for several years -- permitted to sit in the gallery, provided that, you know, we didn't send up all our staff for every day the House sat.

What we agreed to last year at the meeting of the House leaders was that there would be provision for up to, as I recall, two seats in the public or members' gallery to be provided for the staff of each caucus, and if there was not an awful lot of people otherwise in the galleries -- that is, students having come to visit -- then as many as wanted to could be there.

I reflect only upon one particular tradition, Mr. Chairman, and that is that while I recognize Westlock-Sturgeon was not at that meeting and perhaps didn't have a chance to talk to his House leader about it afterwards, there was agreement in which we also recognized that that reserved seat -- which, by the way, has been there for years and marked "reserved" -- is for the Premier's office representative, the purpose of which I happen to know because I used to sit next to them every day: to watch and make sure on the spot who was introducing what Bill so they could have them ready for review on the spot. Speaking as somebody who worked for the Official Opposition, it was assumed that that practice was fine, and I believe it was ratified again or at least reaffirmed at that meeting of the House leaders and the Speaker last year. So I leave this just for a point of in-

formation with the members of the committee.

MR. TAYLOR: It doesn't jibe. Well, of course, as you were present at the meeting and I was not, the report is secondhand. The letters that we had gave me the impression that there was a segment of the gallery within which the party staff had to sit. They couldn't wander all over the place, but there were no seats reserved for them. In other words, if the members of the public came and sat in those seats, that's fine. I mean, that was it; that was too bad. So in other words, it's not a case of reserving seats, two seats or whatever you said it was. My understanding from the House leader and also the letter earlier from the minister was that there was a section of the gallery within which our caucus members had to sit.

I can tell you, speaking as one party anyhow, I don't want anybody from the public to get thrown out of a seat under the excuse that that happens to be the Liberal opposition's seat in the gallery. In other words, if a member of the public happens to sit in the public gallery in one of those seats, the last thing I want is the Sergeant-at-Arms taking them out and saying that happens to be a Liberal seat. As far as I'm concerned, I think their staff has a right to get up there and sit in a segment that the Speaker says, but I don't think there should be a particular seat reserved. If a member of the public happens to get there first, that's too bad; they can stand there and watch. They could get there earlier to get their seat or they can stand there, but I do not think in a democratic process -- it's called the public gallery -- we should be throwing any of the public out of a seat because it supposedly belongs to somebody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First off, for clarification, does the member have knowledge that anyone has been treated that way?

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, yes; the Sergeant-at-Arms twice has asked people to leave seats from that particular one where . . .

MS BARRETT: Were they your staff members, Nick?

MR. TAYLOR: One was a staff member. Another was a Liberal, I'll agree; but possibly, yeah. The point is that whoever was sitting there, they didn't check to see who it was to ask him to leave.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, with respect, the point is that certain staff members need to be in place, whether it's the New Democrats or the Liberals or the Representatives or the government, to help facilitate business in the House. The letter as received here is a complaint, an issue of concern, raised with regard to particular seats in a particular portion of the gallery, and the problem is that that relates to the total operation of the House. As pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, who's been around a considerable length of time on the floor as well up there up in the gallery, again, it's for access flow to help there, just as the hon. member has someone there to make access to hand out, I presume, any information the Liberal caucus wishes to be distributed to the media. We have also purposely set aside certain areas over there, in consultation with your own House leader as well as the other House leaders, to help facilitate your own operation in terms of the House.

I will indeed undertake to speak with the Sergeant-at-Arms to clarify what may have happened, but no one is going to be ejected from a gallery for the reason as you have stated.

MR. TAYLOR: Not the gallery; the seat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I know, because there are other seats available. But as far as I'm concerned, the present arrangement will still stand, because it still strikes me as being fair to all the political parties involved.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I want to make it quite clear that I do not want anyone ejected from the gallery under the guise that it was for a seat in any way, shape, or form reserved for the Liberal opposition. Maybe the NDP wants to have seats, maybe the government wants to, but the point is that I didn't request it, I didn't ask for it, and I don't want it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. leader of the Liberal Party, but it was dealt with by your House leader. I suppose you'd better have a conversation with that person.

MR. TAYLOR: I have had conversations, Mr. Chairman. As far as I'm concerned, it is clearly out of order to ask any member of the public to leave any seat in the public gallery in the guise that one of the caucuses needs it. I may be overvoted on it, I may be outruled in the Legislature, but I'm willing to fight a long way for this particular issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, let's not overdramatize what's happening.
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I'd really appreciate an opportunity to express the need for that seat. It was something I was concerned about when I first came on staff here. It had a "reserved" sign on it and it was explained to me why, and I didn't think there was much to it at first either. But let me explain what it is that the representative of the Premier's office does from that seat.

That representative can be advised very quickly by the Government House Leader as to who stood up to introduce what Bills, within a moment or two, if the person can't visually see the minister or government member doing it. However, because of the nature of the opposition introduction of Bills, it really facilitates the process of getting the information to the Clerk's office as to which Bills can be released when an opposition member introduces a Bill. Now, I didn't realize when I first came on staff how important that was until I realized that sometimes you can't hear the name of the member who's been identified by yourself in the role of Mr. Speaker. Sometimes the audio system just doesn't pick it up fast enough. And I used to do this, too, when I was working here as a researcher. I wrote down the number of every Bill and the name so that I could quickly go through and figure, you know, what was going to be implied, what really needed attention quickly or not. No government office has access to the information on those Bills prior to their introduction, and it does become important in the flow of information to the Clerk's office to allow the release of them. Even the Clerk's office doesn't know up until a few hours beforehand which ones we think we will introduce, and even then if we tell them and we don't do it, that information isn't public -- right? So there is actually a logical reason for all this.

I note over the years that *Hansard* used to occupy two seats as well, and it was understood, that's right, that those were really important because sometimes seeing a member speak would help clarify a word that might not have been picked up by the

audio system.

So I just want to make a point that I really don't think there's ever been any partisanship here in reserving that chair. The chair has always been reserved for the purpose of an office, not of a political party. And I say that from one political party that would like to be government and have access to that chair as well. Because it's important. It really is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: It seems we've run into a designation problem, Mr. Chairman, because everyone agrees that it's necessary to have both the Premier's person and space for two people from every caucus observing the proceedings somewhere or the other. Now, if we were being very formal about it, we would rope off or fence off or designate an area for these people, because it must be admitted that they are necessary. We try and do it differently and have some flexibility so that if the caucus staff aren't there, members of the public can sit in the place. But I would certainly be in favour of an actual reservation for the Premier's person being there, as being an office, as it were. As for the other, the more flexible arrangement, I haven't really been aware that there have been complaints about it. So why fix something that ain't broke, as they say?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the other question the Chair has is on the occasion where one staff person had to move, or another Liberal person. How far did they have to move? About two seats away? They were still in the gallery?

MR. TAYLOR: That's not the point though, Mr. Speaker. My experience...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the point? They haven't been ejected.

MR. TAYLOR: They moved one chair or two chairs. I didn't find out how many chairs they moved. The point is that there is a chair reserved in the public gallery for a member of the political party, whether it be in power, and you say for other members. I don't want that reservation. I must admit my experience in that gallery goes back a lot further than the House leader for the NDP. As you will recall, I was elected back in '74, probably the old man of politics. That's how I observe politics. And it was not unusual at all under the former Speaker's regime that always the people stood up there. There was no question that you took a seat away from a member of the public or that a member of the public couldn't get a seat. I remember for years Judy Wish standing right by the door up there, looking down. It was a better observation post than sitting. I just think the idea... I find it a bit repugnant to think that there is a section of the public gallery reserved for the staff of any of the political parties.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, the Chair has listened with some considerable interest, especially since the previous arrangement was entered into in June of 1986. This, I understand, is December of 1987. The allocations are there. Let it be clearly understood that no one, but no one, has been asked to leave any of the galleries; therefore, they are still within the Assembly.

My understanding of the two specific cases is that the person didn't have to move terribly far; nevertheless, it was still within

the gallery. The member has pointed out that, yes, in time past, before we went through the renovations a year ago, people were indeed standing around here, and this place was then much more vulnerable from the security point of view because we had blind spots up there as well. In the renovations, we then put in much more additional seating; we added about 55 extra seats. At the same time, as pointed out by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, I also removed my two *Hansard* people from the public gallery and put them over into the Speaker's gallery so we would have even more seating available.

So it should be clearly understood that this is not a matter of anyone being denied a seat or denied access to their particular building. The arrangement was made with the various House leaders, and that's where the issues should really be resolved. If the member or any particular party doesn't wish to take advantage of having designated spaces so they can help their staff relate, in this case, to the media, fine. That's an individual decision. But I think, with due respect, hon. leader of the Liberal Party, some of the comments in the letter are a bit strained.

Next issue. Motion to adjourn.

MR. PENGELLY: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Innisfail. Those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Before we adjourn, as the members adjourn, this group, please?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: New Sarepta Community high school.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, as you well know, your member is the Member for Camrose, Ken Rostad, the Solicitor General. This morning we have been meeting in Members' Services Committee, which is comprised of representation from the Liberal Party, from the New Democrats, and from the Progressive Conservative Party. This is a common meeting ground where things are generally less partisan and where the members are directed to deal with some of the overall operation of the Legislative Assembly but, in particular, with funding and the kind of programs they as individual MLAs or as the caucus of the New Democrats or the Representatives or the Liberals or the government can then work out various benefits for their total operation, whether it be with regard to research or the operation of constituency offices.

We appreciate the fact that you've come to visit your Legislature. We hope you have a happy Christmas, and we also hope you'll live dangerously and come back any time at all.

Members, I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thank you. We'll see you next week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: See you next week, but I want you to have a safe one in the meantime.

[The committee adjourned at 11:17 a.m.]

