

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[2:08 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. You have the binders. [Not recorded] in the morning, so that other people can get away and make their travel arrangements to get through -- in all directions. So we'll get along as far as we can on this afternoon's agenda, but hopefully we might be free of the first part of the agenda by about 4:30, 4:15 so that some other sub-committee meetings might happen if we need to have them. Okay?

First off, do we want to give notification of any other items of new business? Thank you. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Yes. Under New Business, item (b), capital residence program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any others? Okay; I'd like to bring forward -- one is a technical matter about a Members' Services order revision with regard to postal rate increases. Another one: I'd like to introduce some discussion about the use of MLA communications allowance with regard to language instruction. Any other items?

All righty. What's your desire with regard to item 2, the approval of the February 29 meeting?

MS BARRETT: Motion to adopt.

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

Before we go to item 3, Business Arising from the Minutes, do you all have two pages of follow-up items -- they'll be right in behind the agenda -- so that we might run down those? Okay.

In terms of what we have on the agenda this afternoon, we'll be able to deal with the information that's come back with regard to the draft form of agreement on the use of the VISA credit card. Item 2: what was to report on that one, Rod, the vision care?

MR. SCARLETT: It was discussed at, I believe, the last meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that one should just fall for the moment.

The next is the telephone system after hours; that's to be dealt with. Briefly, right now, David McNeil, the legislative research services section: that was accomplished.

DR. McNEIL: It's wound down. Everybody's been re-employed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everyone's been re-employed. Okay. Thank you.

The next item; has that one been dealt with?

MR. WRIGHT: I thought that was in place. Isn't that so?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've done that one, so there's another one to come off this.

MR. BOGLE: It should be done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, it comes off on the footing it's already in

existence, Mr. Chairman. If it's not, I suppose it will come back on again.

MR. HYLAND: If it's not, it will have to come back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next one is to be dealt with today, the satellites. The next one was -- what's the status on that one? That one has also been communicated to the Provincial Treasurer.

DR. McNEIL: And that was done in terms of the way the budget has been set up in the estimates this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The next item, at the bottom of the page, was done. It's good to go through this, so then we can be sure we haven't got any tag ends. The memo went to the caucus Whips regarding the purchasing restrictions of VISA. The next item was accomplished as well: contracts, constituency office. The next is done: EDP projects and Calgary-Egmont. Child day care report: on today's agenda. Next item: memorandum to House leaders re airline ticket program; that was the availability of the vouchers. The next item, the report is here before us today; that was the RITE line. Universal gas credit card: today. This next item re subscription rates to *Hansard*: is that coming later today, or it's already been done?

MS BARRETT: It's been done.

DR. McNEIL: There are still some organizations that are yet to receive their refunds because they've just recently provided us with information on their nonprofit status, but it's under control.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it's partially in place and it's continuing. Okay.

All right. The next is done and the final one was completed, so that'll help to tick off some pages.

All right. We might return to the agenda, 3(a) and David McNeil, Form of Agreement for VISA Card-Holding Members; 3(a) in the binder.

DR. McNEIL: My recollection of this item was that rather than send out the form of agreement, the committee determined that they wanted me to communicate with the Whips with information as to who was having difficulty sending in receipts and that the Whips would contact their members and attempt to improve the process in that way. I did send a memo out, and there was a significant improvement in terms of the timeliness and the number of VISA receipts that were received in administration. I would say that that's no longer the problem that it was at that time, which was the reason for proposing sending out the agreement. There are still, on an occasional basis, members who lose their VISA chits and they have to be contacted by the administration office, but that's significantly reduced from what it was prior to that intervention. I guess I'd seek the committee's direction as to how they want to proceed from here, as to whether or not they . . . The proposed agreement is there, which I sent out to members I think last November for the first time.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that if there's a significant improvement shown, maybe we should leave it for a while, see if everybody's got the understanding properly and then carry it from there.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, would it be out of order . . . I'd like to put cab fares . . .

MR. HYLAND: It is.

MS BARRETT: It's on there.

MR. BOGLE: It is for Edmonton.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I think it should be for the province. It's kind of silly if you put it on in Edmonton and not in Calgary. The cab fares can be put on the VISA only in Edmonton: is that what you're saying? That means not in Calgary. Well, I was of the impression, and I may be wrong, but I don't see why we can't put the cab fares on it anywhere in Alberta, or at least I'd like to move that. That would make it a lot simpler. When I use the airbus, I use one VISA one place and my own VISA the other, which I resubmit anyhow. It's transportation. I would like to suggest, to move, that VISA be expanded to cover all cab fares within the legitimate traveling expenses, not just those in Edmonton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was the intention to have it just simply in the capital city, or was it to be used capital city plus at the member's own place of major residence getting to the airport or something?

MR. TAYLOR: Well, that's what I'm thinking of. It's the proper end of air travel or bus travel. You take a cab to the bus depot or to the airport, then maybe take one from the bus depot or the airport to wherever you work, so why isn't it all part of . . . I think it would make it simpler. I've been using it that way, I must confess. I didn't think it was wrong till I was reading it here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, I hadn't thought of it beforehand, but I think Nick's got a good point, you know. Who is to say that if you're from another riding outside of Edmonton, you haven't got valid business there as well as here? Just because the dome is in this city doesn't mean that this is the only place where valid business goes on. I mean, most members have their own cars. They use them when it's okay to use them. When you can't, whether it's that the car won't start in the dead of winter or it's in getting fixed or what have you, I mean, you've got to carry on your life. You don't pick up the phone and start canceling all your appointments because your car is sick for the day. I think it's a reasonable motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that if taxi fares are legitimate anywhere, why can't they fit onto the VISA? I mean, wherever they are legitimate. What's the problem? [interjection] Oh; well, then . . . I thought Mr. Taylor was putting it on the basis that it's a nuisance changing the mode of recovery of the cost from a chit to a voucher just because you're in a different place. I wasn't understanding that he was proposing to expand the times when taking a taxi was legitimate. If it's the former, I don't see a problem. If it's the latter, then more of a discussion must take place.

MR. TAYLOR: No, I'm only talking about where it's legitimate now. I'm saying . . . Pardon?

MR. BOGLE: It's only legitimate in Edmonton right now.

MR. TAYLOR: It's only legitimate to put it on government VISA today, but it's legitimate to submit . . . If you take a cab to the airport here in Edmonton, you put it on the government VISA. When you get off the plane in Calgary and you go to your place of business, then you put it on your own VISA. Then submit it a month later. That, to me, doesn't make any sense. I'm saying that as long as you're on government business or on MLA business, you should be able to charge the cab fare. I'm not talking about going out Saturday night to raise hell or anything like that.

[Mr. Bogle in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just before Edmonton-Highlands, could we have an explanation from Dr. McNeil on the terms of reference of the existing program, as to where a taxi is indeed legitimate for usage and reimbursement?

DR. McNEIL: Okay. The way the decision was made under this order was that the cost of taxi travel in the city of Edmonton and surrounding areas -- my recollection of the thinking surrounding that was that it was people driving their cars to an airport somewhere out of Edmonton, flying to Edmonton, and then coming to the Legislature or traveling within Edmonton while they were on Legislature business here in Edmonton. I think that was the thinking at the time.

MS BARRETT: Okay. To further what David has said, the policy as it stands right now is that the Legislative Assembly budget estimates allow for the refund of up to two taxi trips per day taken in or around the city of Edmonton by MLAs as long as they're on business. Now, I think even though Nick may have stumbled onto this, and it might be bigger than what he originally thought, I still think that the issue should be contemplated, inasmuch as there are . . . To assume that the only government business or MLA business being done that would justify the use of a taxi when necessary be done in Edmonton and area only is bizarre. I mean, this is not the only place that people do business, and I think that, by and large, people don't use taxis all that often. We all go to other centres; everybody travels in this job. If they don't, well, there's something very unusual about them.

Generally speaking, if we've got a policy, why not make it a fair policy? I don't know if Nick planned to propose the motion in the way that he did, but it has the effect of saying that the Leg. Assembly budget would be picking up the tab for taxi fares which might be incurred to a maximum of two per day by an MLA. That is the effect, because once you sponsor that, then it doesn't matter whether you pay cash or pay on your MLA VISA card that is meant for, you know, buying gasoline, oil, et cetera, and taxis within the city of Edmonton or to the airport. It basically just expands it and says that taxis are a legitimate use by all MLAs within the province of Alberta. I'm sure it would have a monetary implication, but I can't imagine it's going to be that large.

DR. McNEIL: I was looking for this, and I couldn't find it; now I have. Members' Services Order 4/83 1(1)(b.1) says: reimbursement for the cost of taxi travel in the City of Edmonton and surrounding areas, subject to the submission of supporting receipts.

So that's where it's derived from. The original authority for taxi travel is within Edmonton and surrounding areas. So what this would require, then, is a change in the MSC order which would translate into this.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Why don't I have the motion reread by Terry, and then we'll go to Barrhead?

Terry, would you reread the motion, please?

MRS. THOMPSON: That cab fares be legitimate for all areas in the province.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That cab fares be legitimate for all areas in the province.

MR. TAYLOR: No, no. That's not it. That the government VISA be used for all legitimate cab fares in the province. In other words, where it's already legitimate to charge some other way, like you've got the two trips a day or . . . Wherever it's legitimate to charge your cab fare today in the province, we'd be able to charge . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair is a little uneasy with the interpretations it's getting as to how broadly the present policy reads. Some clarification from the committee would be helpful. Well, I have Barrhead on the list. Are you ready to go, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much. There is a bit of background and history, Mr. Chairman, with respect to this matter. It certainly has been discussed by Members' Services Committees in the past, and there was a very restrictive interpretation given to taxicab fares in the past simply because all Members of the Legislative Assembly are also eligible for an expense allowance. Now, heaven knows that the expense allowance is very, very modest compared to the expense allowances found in other jurisdictions in the country of Canada. But in the past the Members' Services Committee restricted utilization of taxicab fares to the manner in which the Clerk has just given the interpretation; that is, solely in the Edmonton area, and never had that been permitted in the past, and only simply because of the existence of the allowance, the expense allowance that all members currently have.

It may very well be that the motion brought forward by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon today is a good one and a fine one, but I just wanted to give you that particular interpretation. I might make an off-the-cuff statement that if Alberta's answer to Billy Joe MacLean over there -- I'm sure it would be a misunderstanding on his part more than anything else.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, much the same thing. Dr. McNeil read the order. That was my understanding of it, that it was to deal with those taxis involved in Edmonton. If it's been going through otherwise, it would probably be related to a charge-back to an office expense or something like that; not to your MLA operation but to you as a leader or back to a caucus office or something like that, not out of an MLA expense. Now, that's not saying that it's wrong. I'm just saying that it's . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Well, this is why I wanted to move it. I think it's easier for accounting, it's easier for the whole system, if we allow any taxi fares that are allowable anyhow in another expense form to be charged to the VISA account. It just seems to

me the easy way of doing things.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I think . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands is on first. For clarification?

MR. WRIGHT: Yeah. I think we all agree on that, but the question has developed a second part; namely, should the legitimate use of the taxi be extended beyond what it really is now? Although, perhaps, to catch up with you: with what you've been assuming it is and using it to be.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, mine gets charged -- I didn't mean that I was charging . . . I charge it back through as a leader traveling here or there. But what I'm getting at, it sounded to me as a rather silly system, that when I'm in Edmonton, I get it paid for by the Legislature, but when I'm in Calgary -- and after all, there is a Calgary south legal office -- I put it through . . . It just seems to be a silly way of handling things. Why don't I just put them both . . . As a matter of fact, I've caught myself occasionally charging, because, you know, you're absentminded, you're sitting in a cab, and you give the cabbie this card, and, "Oh, no; here's my other card."

[Dr. Carter in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we know you're well organized, especially in the leadership kind of thing. Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, MLAs do get an allowance for their automobile, and perhaps we might be criticized if we also can take free taxis at will too. I suppose a compromise situation would be that taxis to and from the airport, any airport, on business would be legitimate within Edmonton, so that people don't have to bring their cars up in order to get from their place of residence to the Legislature, which is the original reason, I think, for it being different in Edmonton from elsewhere. But I think the motion on the floor contemplates just relying on the responsible approach of MLAs not to abuse it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point about to and from the airports is the difference.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, could we maybe entertain, because it's more complicated than that, to table it till tomorrow so we can try to come up with a motion? Because the other thing about this cab fare business, if you argue that it's not payable whereas storing your personal car is payable, you end up charging the government two or three times as much to store a car at an airport than you would be if you took the cab.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Charging the Assembly.

MR. TAYLOR: Pardon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Charging the Assembly.  
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Following the hint from Nick, I move to table this matter until tomorrow morning.

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

you. Opposed? Carried. For tomorrow.  
All right; 3(b). [interjection] Yes?

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, on 3(a), I'd like to move that the eligible expenses associated with the use of the MLA VISA credit card include the purchase of tickets for regularly scheduled long-distance bus transportation within the province when on official business. Now, we already have a Greyhound pass . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Free.

MR. PENGELLY: . . . free, and this wouldn't include the city buses. There are some members who use the Red Arrow and not the Greyhound.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I hear some hear, hears. Call for the question?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, other than Greyhound, I guess, is . . .

MS BARRETT: Yes. Well, obviously we don't need Greyhound; we've already got theirs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, shouldn't it be put in, then, that this is where current privileges are not provided?

MS BARRETT: It doesn't need to. It's already passed anyway, Gordon. You can't change it unless you bring it back.

MR. WRIGHT: Sure we can, if we embody the intent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee prepared to have us put that addendum in, that it's not with Greyhound but where it's not already covered?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; then that is taken as a subamendment passed after the fact by Edmonton-Strathcona. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Does anybody ever use that free Greyhound one?

MS BARRETT: I do.

MR. TAYLOR: I did the other day, and I had a hell of a time. As soon as I got there, I got arrested and run out of town.

MS BARRETT: I'll tell you, it's the only time you can ever read, Nick. You should take the Greyhound.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Universal gasoline credit card project, 3(b).

David.

DR. McNEIL: We have instituted a three-month pilot project with five members for a universal credit card with Peterson Howell & Heather Canada Inc. -- here's an example of the card -- which will allow the member to purchase gas, oil, fuel, and so on at Petro-Can, Texaco, Shell, Sunoco, Irving, Turbo Resources, Federated Co-op, Tempo, Husky, Mohawk, Esso.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're going to have to talk louder, David.

DR. McNEIL: Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or Nick is going to have to come up and sit beside you.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. I've turned it up now. All I got was CFRN.

AN HON. MEMBER: At least it's not CBC.

DR. McNEIL: We've instituted a pilot project for a universal gas credit card among five members of the Assembly. We will assess this over a three-month period and bring the assessment back to Members' Services for a decision as to whether or not the committee would like to proceed with implementing this type of card. The advantage of this is that rather than keeping individual receipts, the member will receive from us each month a summary, an invoice from the company which will list in a very detailed manner the amount of gas, where it was purchased, and the cost. All they will be required to do is sign off on that, send it back to us, and it will be processed, so it will remove the necessity of keeping individual receipts for each purchase. Treasury has advised us -- and we've implemented that with their approval -- that they will accept that approach to authorizing the expenditure.

MR. WRIGHT: Is there a service charge paid by somebody for this?

DR. McNEIL: The service charge is paid, in effect, by the supplier, not by us.

MR. PENGELLY: Does that include Fas Gas too?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. PENGELLY: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: What about Turbo?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, Fas Gas and Turbo.

MS BARRETT: Oh, really? Right on.

DR. McNEIL: It also includes Bi-Lo and Gasex.

MRS. MIROSH: Then we wouldn't need the VISA.

DR. McNEIL: That would remove -- at least in terms of gas, oil, and diesel. It could also be used for car rentals as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't tell us that.

MS BARRETT: Since when does the Assembly pay for that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's tough enough taking a taxi, let alone . . .

Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: I just wondered if David would indicate which five members are -- I am one -- who all is on the pilot. How long do you intend it to last?

DR. McNEIL: Three months. And the individuals on the pilot are Dr. Carter, Derek Fox, Mr. Bogle, Dr. Elliott, and Mr. Campbell.

MS BARRETT: When do we get the report, please? In three months from now?

DR. McNEIL: Three months. Yes.

MS BARRETT: Good enough.

DR. McNEIL: So, at the end of September.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.  
RITE line installation, 3(c).

DR. McNEIL: The RITE line has been connected with a total of 42 constituency offices. The list is under the tab. The criteria for installation were members of the Members' Services Committee and those installations where the cost of installation was minimal; I think it was \$5 or less. The cost of installation in some rural areas could be up to \$450, so in terms of the pilot it was determined that because Public Works, Supply and Services were absorbing the cost of installation and operation, we'd minimize that cost and after six months make an assessment of the value of having a RITE line. The main criteria there will be an assessment of reduction in long-distance charges as well as discussion with the members' staffs in terms of the value to them of having the RITE line connection.

Rod, is there anything to add? You had some liaison with this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the cost being covered by . . .

DR. McNEIL: Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that itself would get it out of their budget.

MR. WRIGHT: Does the RITE line work out of hours and weekends?

DR. McNEIL: No. It's during government hours.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, this should help considerably. Okay. So all these are now in operation?

MR. SCARLETT: No. They're just now starting to hook them up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you see that the listings are there in your binders, so that covers a fair chunk of the province.

MS BARRETT: What's happened at my constituency office -- if I want to phone Calgary, can I pick up the phone and dial a RITE number and ask to be connected to a number in Calgary?

MR. SCARLETT: Your constituency office is not considered a government number, and in order to go through the RITE line service, you have to have one government number somewhere. So unless you're dialing a government number in Calgary, you can't be connected.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If she was dialing a government office, she could be.

MR. SCARLETT: If it was a government office, she could be.

MR. WRIGHT: But if you are dialing a government number at the other end, then you can dial anywhere and get on.

MR. SCARLETT: That's right.

MR. WRIGHT: I see.

MR. SCARLETT: And this is the advantage of the program. This now makes constituency offices basically a government number.

MS BARRETT: Right on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So this is reassessed again in how short a space of time?

DR. McNEIL: Six months.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Six months from now. So we're talking about year-end?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Any other discussion on 3(c)? If not, we'll go on to 3(d): after-hours service. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: This arose from a specific concern that Ms Barrett had with respect to her inability to receive calls to her phone. We resolved that, I believe, by having a private line installed. The difficulty existed because of the common number for all the ND caucus, where anybody who phoned in after hours -- unless the line was switched over to this building, the line would ring in the Annex. Now, you can switch it over to this building, but then it doesn't ring over there in the Annex. So to solve the problem, we requested a private line be installed, which is acceptable under a Members' Services order.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: So is it the case, then, that this really only affects the New Democrat caucus?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, because individual members in other caucuses have individual numbers which ring in their own offices or office locations.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Well . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Obviously, it's been satisfied for me. Sometimes I feel like I live in this building, and now there's no reason to go home. There's a shower here; I can sleep in the sick room. I've got my own telephone, and it rings constantly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Where's the shower?

MS BARRETT: In the basement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Down in the . . .

MS BARRETT: Yes. There's no reason to leave this building anymore, and it's become a prison.

Nonetheless, it does occur to me that if other members have the same problem, if they happen to spend a lot of time here, that problem can be satisfied by going to you. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, or a request.

MS BARRETT: Yes. Good.

MR. WRIGHT: Solved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry?

MR. WRIGHT: "Solved," I said. Highly revolutionary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Solved. Here we are again; we're well again.

Satellites: 3(e). Whether this really belongs on our agenda, goodness only knows. But what's the report on it?

DR. McNEIL: I'll have to take a flyer on this one. The reason for the decision to be using the low-power versus high-power satellite was cost and access. It was in Alberta. The memo that Mr. Young sent to Gary Garrison, I think, summarizes those reasons as to why the ANIK-C satellite is used instead of the ANIK-D.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A saving of about half a million dollars on satellite time alone.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. HYLAND: If we change, then we can't get onto ACCESS.

DR. McNEIL: The ANIK-D satellite will broadcast to other provinces, but then that's not ACCESS's mandate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's bad enough doing it here.

MR. WRIGHT: Do I gather that for only half a million dollars, we can bring question period to every household in Alberta?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not . . .

DR. McNEIL: No, because ANIK-D covers less of Alberta than ANIK-C does. ANIK-D covers -- I don't know what the overall coverage is, but it covers the west, whereas with ANIK-C

you've got a broader coverage within Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we're getting a better coverage in the province by staying where it is. Okay.

Westlock-Sturgeon, does that satisfy you, the report on that?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I think I had read it before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We're at 3(f), EDP constituency pilot.

DR. McNEIL: Okay. Under tab (f) there is a two-page report summarizing both the progress on the EDP pilot project as well as the EDP strategic plan. With respect to the EDP pilot project, I guess we have two weeks remaining in the project. The appropriate hardware and software were selected, modified, and installed; operators were trained; the network hookup among the constituency offices and Edmonton was completed; and applications including word processing, file management, and communications have been implemented in the constituency offices.

The general reaction, I would say, has been enthusiastic. We had one difficulty with one of the pieces of software, which caused somewhat of a delay with respect to the communications aspect of the process, but that was something we had no control over. It was a technical issue related to translating from one word processing language into another, which is something that's just really developing as a field of expertise in software.

I believe that at the end of this month we'll be starting to assess the project to be able to come back in September to Members' Services with a recommendation and advice as to how people reacted to it and the recommendation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon, Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. TAYLOR: The problem may be not so much in relation to [inaudible]. But we still haven't been able to get our office connected up with my office in town here. They keep saying the equipment is up. Then they told the operator that it was all going to be canceled, they would come up and get everything out, and it was all through by the end of August, and I couldn't figure what the hell that was all about. So it's been rather erratic as far as . . . I've got a computer out there that's self-contained, but I've got a phone that doesn't work, and it's been that way for three months. I can't figure it. You know, even the normal bureaucratic slowness should have done something. The phone should have blown up or it should be working. There's no way that I can access my computer or my word thing in town yet. For a while I was told that it was all through: "We're going to take it out." I did some calling around, and now they tell me they're starting up again. So I just . . .

In other words, I'd hate to see a final report in September, because, in fact, I don't think I've had an experiment. All I've had is a bunch of equipment dumped in my office and plugged in but not connected to anything.

DR. McNEIL: I guess it was my understanding that there has been some messaging back. At least, at the last meeting I attended, there was an indication that there had been some messaging back and forth.

MR. TAYLOR: Yesterday they sent a message to our computer, but we haven't figured out how to get back. But that was a first, you know, and after all this time we've got one on the

computer screen saying "Call."

DR. McNEIL: Well, I'll have to look into that specifically.

In terms of the length of the pilot project, the budget that we have allocated to it -- the report indicates that originally there was \$63,268. As a result of the budget exercise, that was reduced to \$53,000, and our estimate is that we will expend that between now and when the report is completed for this committee. So in terms of continuation of the project, I don't really think that's feasible, because there are no dollars for it. Individual members could rent the equipment for a longer period, but we won't have all the interface equipment, so that would be probably an academic exercise.

MR. TAYLOR: Do you think you could find me a supplemental, Mr. Chairman? This is what I suggested, that we pick up the rent. My information from the centre was that the equipment that descrambles -- or whatever it is -- here in Edmonton, in order to hook up to our Edmonton office, would be taken away. So you could do all the renting you want, but the key piece of equipment -- therefore, not only could I not rent that key piece of equipment, but they wouldn't allow me in to install it, even if I found one, which I found. So the equipment -- it doesn't look as if it's possible to continue on your own allowance, because they won't...

DR. McNEIL: Only certain aspects of the thing could you...

MR. TAYLOR: I see.

DR. McNEIL: You couldn't continue the communications because of this particular piece of software.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, to make it a good experiment it would be nice to see it working for, you know, at least a few days before you called it quits.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Let's go through the other members who want to speak, and then come back to this. Then David maybe can answer the questions all at once, please.

Cypress-Redcliff, and then Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. HYLAND: My questions were answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Is there a variety of equipment installed, different...

DR. McNEIL: There is a variety of equipment, with the proviso that it's all IBM compatible.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. Does that rule out Apple?

DR. McNEIL: No, we have an Apple Macintosh that's being assessed by Public Works, Supply and Services. They're connected into the system, and they are trying to use an Apple Macintosh. There's been some difficulty in terms of making it compatible.

MR. WRIGHT: Perhaps that's the one out in Westlock, is it?

DR. McNEIL: No.

MR. WRIGHT: Another question is: you're getting by without a manager?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, because we're getting...

MR. WRIGHT: A paid manager, that is.

MR. McNEIL: Yes, a paid manager, because we're getting the funds from Public Works, Supply and Services for the person who is, in effect, doing that.

MR. WRIGHT: Right. And the equipment itself is mostly freebies, I suppose?

DR. McNEIL: Well, there's some freebie equipment. But we're paying about \$3,000 a month overall for the cost of the pilot, so there's a fairly high cost of the exercise, even though we are getting some equipment that's free.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. What else? Any other questions? What are we going to do with this? Carry on with it? Try it? And you've made...

MR. TAYLOR: I will work more closely with Dr. ... I didn't realize he had such hands-on, or I would have talked to you before. That was one of the things I was trying to find out: who knew what. Now that you're doing the engineering, I know where to call.

DR. McNEIL: Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: Actually, you might want to plug it in and see what happens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. Might we move on to our next agenda item?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect to the day care issue, in your file you'll notice that there's a report and there's also an item of correspondence. Okay. David McNeil.

DR. McNEIL: Members might want to refer to the correspondence first in terms of -- the original mandate of the committee was to:

prepare in consultation with the private sector and non-profit organizations and present a plan for consideration of a child day care service at the Legislature.

The memo we're in receipt of indicates that "there is no vacant space in the Legislature." We did not receive this indication till fairly recently, so what we did is proceed in a more generic way to estimate the potential costs of child care service in the surrounding area, and not nail it to a particular site. So we made a number of assumptions, and maybe the best bet would be to just go through the report.

In terms of precedents, there aren't any examples where a Crown department, agency, or Assembly directly administers a day care service. There are some day care services provided for

Assemblies: Ottawa, Queen's Park, Newfoundland, and Manitoba are provided by the provincial government. Even Newfoundland and Manitoba are provided by the provincial government and accessed by Assembly employees there. At this point in time there's no specific government policy with respect to day care for employees, as far as I could determine, and that issue is still under determination.

We looked at day care in the downtown core and identified two centres where there was available day care: two spaces at Oliver and 22 spaces at Pinnocchio. In terms of our analysis we looked at the city of Edmonton 1988 study, which is relatively current, and determined that we would base our own assessment on the information we could get from them. So the assumption we made in going through this exercise is that a centre would be located in the government area, licensed for 60 preschool children -- this is considered the optimum number for cost efficiency for a day care centre -- care for children aged 19 months to five years inclusively, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., operations on weekdays. Because provincial standards are currently under review, the Department of Social Services day care licensing branch suggested we should apply the city of Edmonton day care standards because of the uncertainty about the provincial day care standards, and the day care centre can be managed by either a registered nonprofit association or a commercial firm. So those are the assumptions in the exercise.

In terms of looking at approaches to doing this, we identified three options. The first option is one where the employer -- in this case the Legislative Assembly -- would make space available, but that space would be charged to the entity running the day care at cost and the Assembly would not make any expenditures for developing the day care in the first place. So everything would be provided by the provider of the service -- the costs to start up, the costs of operating -- and there would be no government subsidies to assist the centre. Under those assumptions . . .

MR. WRIGHT: And would the operator pay a rental?

DR. McNEIL: The operator would have to pay a rental, yes: the real cost of that space.

Under that set of assumptions we estimated that the start-up costs for that kind of situation would be between \$285,000 and \$640,000, and the annual operating costs of the facility would be between \$429,000 to \$517,000. That translates into an operating cost per child of at least \$596 to \$719 per month, and that does not include the development costs that the operator would have to bear.

The second option was the situation where the employer, in co-operation with the day care provider, would develop a day care facility, paying all or a substantial part of the start-up costs; in other words, to develop a facility to the level that it could be occupied by the day care service provider and then operated by that individual. So the employer, in this instance, in contrast to the first option where the employer didn't pay any of the start-up costs -- in this option the employer pays the start-up costs, and that estimate is \$285,000 to \$640,000, depending on the complexity, the level of services provided in that day care. And again the annual operating cost is between \$429,000 and \$517,800. The monthly fees in this case would be between \$596 and \$719 at the maximum.

The difference between option 2 and option 1 is that that \$596 to \$719 excludes the development costs. In option 2, because the development costs are paid by the employer, the costs

would be between \$596 and \$719 per child.

Option 3 is the situation where the employer, in co-operation with the day care provider, would develop and maintain the day care facility, paying the start-up costs, providing the facility rent free, and providing other free services such as maintenance, utilities, garbage removal, telephone, photocopying. This might also include a provincial subsidy. This is the model that's followed by the House of Commons day care facility and the proposed Canada Place day care and the proposed day care centre for the city of Edmonton. In this instance we're talking about the Assembly as an employer. We're talking about start-up costs of between \$285,000 to \$640,000. We're talking, too, an annual operating subsidy of between \$184,000 and \$273,000. In this instance, because of those subsidies the estimated fees would be \$340 per month per child.

So in terms of developing a day care facility for the Assembly, we're talking a significant number of dollars.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. WRIGHT: I think, Mr. Chairman, that if this venture goes ahead -- and I think some such venture should -- it's important that it be available to all government employees, not just us, the employees in the Legislative Assembly building; that's maybe a sort of elitism, I suppose is the word, that's not right.

As to the cost of subsidy in option 3, is this any different from what the private operation would obtain from the government by way of the regular day care subsidies anyway? I mean, the difference in terms of subsidy is not great, is it?

DR. McNEIL: Well, yes, there's a significant difference. You have to differentiate between the Alberta annual operating subsidy which day cares receive now, which is \$80 per month per child, and these sort of indirect subsidies that the centre would receive, such as rent, utilities, photocopying, garbage collection, and so on, if that facility was in a government-operated . . . I think we have to talk about the Legislative Assembly, because I don't think we can here talk about a government policy or doing something with respect to government.

MR. WRIGHT: No. I suppose I should rephrase my question in the sense that under option 3, would the \$80 per child still be paid to the operator?

DR. McNEIL: Well, that would be a decision that the Department of Social Services would have to make. Right now my understanding is that it applies to all day care operations in the province but that right now they are reviewing their policy, and they've really put a freeze on providing support to any other facilities until that policy review has taken place. So that \$80 a month we're talking about is the annual operating allowance that is paid by Social Services now to day care facilities. But there's a whole other subsidy that we're talking about, depending on what option we choose, relating to start-up costs, relating to operating costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And space availability.

DR. McNEIL: And space availability is a whole other issue.

MS BARRETT: Well, that's where I'm more interested, in fact. I think it certainly looks feasible. It needs a little bit of work



yet, obviously, but given Ernie Isley's memo, it occurs to me to inquire as to whether or not there's any space available in the Annex. And if not, then is it outside of our jurisdiction to ask that we look at space anywhere in the Government Centre? Because it's my understanding that there's space available, for instance, in the Seventh Street Plaza. That's basically at the heart of Government Centre both federally and provincially, and if it's within our jurisdiction to ask, maybe we should have a look around. I think the issue here is to have child care that is available near the place of work for all the people who work in Government Centre, and even though my amendment didn't pass last time we talked about this, it was not excluded that it would be available -- I mean, there was no specific exclusion for other government employees. So I wonder, can we check that out or ask that that be checked out? Or are we starting to take over Ernie's job here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's the whole problem.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Once it moves out of the Legislature Building -- and even aspects of the building we don't have control over. So then it's got to be a proposal that goes over to Ernie's department to deal with in terms of for the whole government complex. If it's Seventh Street Plaza, then we'd be looking after the students from Grant MacEwan college as well.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, but they're going to build a new facility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, but . . . [interjection] There's a time line.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think there's a real problem with the Legislature Annex building -- it's got some difficulties involving the structure -- as to how long that building will be around. So if you're going to put that kind of money into it, and then discover that you either have to do something very drastic with the building . . .

DR. McNEIL: Just to underline that point, in terms of starting up such a facility, if you talk about the Annex, you're talking about \$300,000 to \$650,000 capital expenditure to get the thing ready before you can do it. And that's an estimate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Plus all the parking problems. But that's beside the point.

DR. McNEIL: That's the extent of it, the capital investment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon, with a question.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah, I have some little questions that enter my mind. I notice the federal government is going ahead with this type of thing in the centre downtown, and I see the proposed cost is around \$300 a month. Has any effort been made to see what the federal government's start-up and ancillary costs . . . In other words, where are they coming at?

DR. McNEIL: Their capital cost to develop the facility is \$500,000.

MR. TAYLOR: I see. And that's right downtown.

DR. McNEIL: In Canada Place.

MS BARRETT: So that doesn't make any difference; that wouldn't figure into it then.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. Well, I was thinking that because we've got parks and everything else around here, maybe there's a little less . . .

DR. McNEIL: Yes, and that was . . .

MS BARRETT: Under construction. That's right.

DR. McNEIL: That was the extra cost to develop that space in that building for a day care centre: \$500,000.

MR. TAYLOR: Is that going to handle the neighbourhood or just federal employees?

MS BARRETT: Just federal employees.

MR. TAYLOR: Just federal employees?

DR. McNEIL: Yes. My understanding of that is a 70-place day care.

MR. TAYLOR: It seems to me you have to handle the neighbourhood, or otherwise you get accused of elitism.

The other thing I was going to ask: the federal building over here, will they co-operate? If the federal government is keen enough to put a day care centre in their new building down here, are they not going to still have some employees within our ambit here? There's a federal building up at the upper end. Is that going to be occupied or sold or what?

MR. WRIGHT: It's going to be bought by the provincial government, isn't it?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: There's not going to be any federal employees around here at all?

MS BARRETT: It's going to be owned by the Legislative Assembly, I understand, within a few years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, by Public Works, Supply and Services.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. TAYLOR: I was hoping to get Mulroney to pay to build our day care centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the long term that may be a possible area to go to. If indeed the Annex has to go at some time, that would be the building that's got space.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I'd like to get another opinion. I'd like to see one or two private operators asked by this department to see what they think the costs would be. Not

that Isley's department isn't -- but after all, there aren't many provincially run day care centres in Alberta, and I don't think some of the professional private operators would even charge you, or at least very minimally. I think they'd be willing to come in and look at your space and put a budget out. I was wondering whether we could, say, get a couple of private operators -- just pick them out of the air -- that would come in and give us a budget of what they thought the costs would be and what the operating costs would be.

I was going to say also that the private operators are fairly familiar with accessing government funds, so they could actually come out with a net as to what it would cost mothers and users of the day care. I think they're so used to figuring out how to extract the maximum amount out of the public sector that they would approach it from a little different look than we do. Also, when they look at the capital structure -- my experience of asking somebody at DPW to build a day care centre is that I would think you'd get something like the Taj Mahal whether you wanted it or not.

DR. McNEIL: I think that in going out to any private operator, one of the things you have to define very specifically is the standard against which they're operating. When you look around the city and evaluate the private day care operations and what they're charging per child, we're talking \$300 to \$400 per child. In a lot of instances those are situations where they're using a community hall at low rent; they're getting certain services provided by the community. As soon as you move into the downtown area, you're talking about possibly having higher rent, much greater...

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe we're misunderstanding each other. That's exactly why I said, go to a private operator. They do operate in public buildings, community buildings or whatever it is, and therefore, they would be able to tell by looking at the space we could supply here what their costs would be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But that's our initial problem. We don't have any space to supply.

MR. TAYLOR: Even with buying this new building?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you want to wait five years.

DR. McNEIL: I think that's '92 they're talking about.

MS BARRETT: It's pretty long term, Nick.

MR. TAYLOR: You're saying there's no space on the legislative hill, in other words. I don't understand. What's the point of all this report if there's no space? I thought we were going to try to make space.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the point was to get started on doing the analysis. That was done, and then the memorandum has arrived in terms of the Legislature itself.

MS BARRETT: Well, I recommend what we do -- and I'm sure we can achieve agreement on this -- is write back to the minister and ask him to contemplate, in conjunction perhaps with David McNeil, the possible allocation of some space in the federal building prior to the province acquiring it. It's my understanding -- I think he said so right in his estimates, and I recall a lot

of hands beating on the desks when he said that the current Annex is slated for demolition and the acquisition of the federal building will constitute what amounts to a new annex building for the purposes of the Assembly. Now, I assume he also meant that it would be used for other government purposes as well, because that's a pretty big building.

Why don't we ask him to take that into account? If we're talking about looking at a government-owned property, we don't have a lot of options, and we know that the Leg. itself is out now. So why don't we ask him to look at that and see if there's a preacquisition feasibility statement that could be made and brought back to us in six months' time? Nothing in this world happens fast, as far as I can see. Even if we had an agreement that we could use the Leg., we'd be fighting for a year as to which space is going to be allocated. So why don't we ask him to do that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we take that as a motion to refer and...

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. TAYLOR: She took the words out of my mouth, because if we're going to retrofit some of these buildings -- destroy one, rebuild it, and remodel a federal one -- now is the time to fit in one of the designs of a day care centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll take it as a motion to refer. Something like a motion to table for further information. All those in favour of the motion? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

New Business. Might we take a look at bicycle paths for a moment.

MS BARRETT: I started to circulate -- oh, good; it did make its rounds -- a little document that was put together by the director of the Edmonton Bicycle Commuters association, I think it is. He was involved in an incident here a few weeks ago, which really doesn't need to be referred to any further than that. But he makes the point that there is an awful lot of use of the north side of this building as a connecting point for the bicycle paths between the 109th Street bridge and the rest of the bicycle path as it proceeds east into Capital City Recreation Park. You know, sure enough, the guy is right. After he gave me a call one day, I just watched out my window for 15 minutes and saw dozens of bicycles coming across the north end of the grounds here, just outside the north doors. So the reason I asked that this be put on is so we could maybe look at making a recommendation again to good old Ernie, the public works minister, with respect to establishing a legalized bicycle route.

The fact of the matter is that there is a sign outside that says don't bicycle along here. You know, there's a pretty good reason for that; there's a lot of pedestrian traffic as well. But it does seem to me there's got to be a chance for a middle ground here so that there is a section upon which bicycles can go. Let's impose speed limits if necessary. I certainly get intimidated by those professional cyclists when I'm out for one of those rare things called a walk. But generally speaking, I think it can be accommodated so it's not strictly illegal. I thought I'd ask the committee if we could make that sort of suggestion to the minister and see if he would come up with a policy that would accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the other thing we

should look at is that I think sometimes the way these people run these skateboards, they're just as dangerous as bicycles. I've seen some of the cyclists go through there. Some slow down. Some go like hell; some don't. You might be able to accomplish just as much by getting them to slow down as to try and stop them altogether.

MR. PENGELLY: Maybe we could hire one or two of them for lifeguards out there too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, the notice says no cycling in the pool area. I've always taken that to mean right around the pool but not the roadway that runs parallel to and in front of the Legislature Building where the Premier's motorcar should be going. I think that's all that's necessary: to exclude the bicycles from just around the pool area, because there is a bit of a hill there and they do come down the hill at a lick. It's no great imposition to ask them to use the roadway, which in theory has a 20 kilometer limit anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The roadway down in front of the Leg. Annex.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that might be the other thing, or try to . . .

MR. WRIGHT: But allow them in front of the Legislature, because I think that's where true commuters are now and again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or if you end up having to paint lines on pavement, you know, then you're in trouble. You don't want to really have to start putting paint out front there.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh no, that's not necessary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If they came down the front of the Annex, actually they could then go around the east side of the building and come around the south side. Because there's oftentimes, as you know, hordes of people out at the front, but you could do the access around the building.

MR. HYLAND: They might be better to come straight down behind the Annex and then around.

MS BARRETT: Well, it seems to me it's an either/or situation. But it's true that cyclists come off the High Level and cross right in front of the Leg. I see nothing the matter with it; I haven't been knocked down by any bicycles. But one of the things I would want to see or have contemplated is, you know, signs that tell the cyclists to slow down because we on pedmobiles are just as vulnerable as they on bicycles are, but at the same time not try to achieve the impossible, which is to get rid of cycling across the grounds at all. I just don't think that's feasible; I don't think it's going to happen. So I'm asking that we request the minister to look into making it feasible and safe for both parties. The third party that almost doesn't count at this point is cars, because you don't have cars except for either the Premier's or the Lieutenant Governor's actually in that section in front of the grounds. I mean, I don't want to set the agenda for the min-

ister. I just think this committee would be wise to ask him to come up with a policy that accommodates reality and personal safety for all parties.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we take this as a motion to refer it to the minister for discussion?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I'd like to add the suggestion that the bicyclists be free to go in front of the Legislature, because it's hopeless forbidding them. They'll go there anyway, whatever we'd say.

MS BARRETT: It's very clear by the pictures.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. But I think they will quite easily, without much trouble, refrain from going down alongside the pool.

MS BARRETT: Might I just add. You know those new signs where we've got the handicapped parking on the east side of the building? Signs like that saying "Cyclists slow down" or "Use your common sense" or something like that might be enough. Then around the pool have signs saying "No cycling." Surely if people are really interested in using it as a route path, that's one thing, but you know, if they're cycling around the pool just for the heck of it, then I think we should be prepared to enforce it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So if the motion passes we'll do it along that line, and we'll also include the matter of skateboards in the discussion.

MS BARRETT: Good. I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I've got one question we could add to that: whether they'd meet with the city somehow or other, because it's the approach to the High Level Bridge that they're shortcutting through. I don't have the faith in signs the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands might have. I'm often here working in the evening and chatting with some of the cyclists, and they seem to be in a hurry to get from A downtown to B on the southside or wherever, and this is a natural shortcut to the front of the High Level.

I was wondering if he worked with the city in any way that they could approach the High Level from another direction where they wouldn't be cutting through the grounds. Then all you would have would be people jacking around on bikes and around . . . I don't think they're coming through the grounds because they like the smell or they take a look at the Lieutenant Governor's car; it's just the shortest point between where they get dumped off and that. In other words, the city dumps them on the edge of our property and then picks them up on the other edge. If you could talk to the city, maybe even give them a little bit of a grant to help them, there could be another bike path -- I don't know; I haven't been up in the air -- to bypass the Legislature.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'll take this document with me and show Ernie, because there's the other problem, as you point out, of how dense the brush is there as they're shooting out onto the 109th bridge.

MS BARRETT: That's true.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll take this as a motion, then, and carry it forward, and I'll discuss it with Ernie.  
Those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

The next item is technically . . . Just very quickly, it's the matter of a Members' Services order revision taking into account changes in the postal rate.

Edmonton-Highlands, would you be good enough to move it, please? Thank you.

MS BARRETT: You know, I went to this fund-raising thing on Friday night, and they forgot to tell me until I got there that I was going to be asked to sing a song in order to raise money. I raised \$475, if you can imagine, by singing two songs. But I would have appreciated prior notice. Nonetheless, for the benefit of members at this table . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Were they clean?

MS BARRETT: You bet; they were clean songs. Beatles songs and Hank Williams Jr.

MR. HYLAND: Were they paying you to quit or to keep on going?

MS BARRETT: No, they paid Terry Cavanagh not to sing. Now, isn't that something?

MR. TAYLOR: They could have raised another \$900 if you'd stayed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Meanwhile, I apologize for getting things out of order. But let's have the motion.

MS BARRETT: That's right. Well, I had to tell the story, because I've been taken by surprise. But it is nonetheless my great pleasure to move that Constituency Services Order MSC 2/83 be amended in section 1(3)(b) by striking out "\$0.7850" and substituting "\$0.8098," to be applied to the 1988-89 fiscal year. For those of you who also didn't have prior notice of this motion, I can figure out it's to accommodate the facts of the new postal rates to the budget of the Assembly.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a comment?

MR. KOWALSKI: No, I'm going to second it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, good. I'll agree to that.

All those in favour, let's signify. Thank you. Opposed? Carried.

I wonder if we might take a 10-minute coffee break?

[The committee recessed from 3:24 p.m. to 3:37 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I gather a motion has been circulated, the capital residence. Taber-Warner, are you speaking to this?

MR. BOGLE: I'll move the motion and give a brief explanation, and then we'll all come in and put our . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you can get Westlock-Sturgeon in with us on it.

MS BARRETT: Hey, Nick, come on back to earth. Beam me down, Scotty.

MR. BOGLE: I'll move that the Members' Allowance Order MSC 3/86 be amended by striking out sections 2 and 3 and substituting:

2 The allowance for a Member for a temporary residence provided for by section 41(1) shall be

(a) at the rate of \$75 per day in respect of each day of a sitting during which he was a Member and maintained that residence, and

(b) in respect of a period of an adjournment of more than 8 days during a session of the Assembly, or when the Assembly is not in session, either

(i) \$75 a day that the Member is in or near Edmonton on public or official business and maintained that residence up to 30 days in any period of 3 months or part months, or

(ii) for a Member who represents a constituency which is outside the boundaries of the City of Edmonton, and who owns or leases in his name the temporary residence, an allowance of \$750 per month or, in the case of a part of a month, \$75 per day in the part month up to a maximum of \$750.

A Member cannot claim more than one per diem in respect of living expenses for a particular day while on public or official business in the City of Edmonton.

The motion would be, if passed, effective today.

Background. At the present time a temporary residence program that we have in the province of Alberta allows members who have their temporary residence in the city of Edmonton or near the city of Edmonton up to 30 days in any three-month period of time; in addition to that, a member who sits on any of the select standing committees where there is a requirement to stay in the city overnight, additional claims. Therefore, it is quite possible -- and it happens in a number of cases -- where a member does claim for more than 30 days in a three-month period of time, if you're adding the two together. The alternative which is being proposed is contained in point (ii) of the motion -- that is the new section -- which would give members the opportunity to opt for a slightly different plan. I must stress that it would be optional, that there's nothing that would force any member to move from the existing plan, which gives maximum flexibility. But if a member chose to do so and chose to go to the option of 10 days per month or \$750 per month, then that member would forfeit the right to claim for any of the amounts that would be applicable for work on the select standing committees. And I'm talking about the \$75 per day amounts, not the \$100 which is the honorarium provided to members.

This motion is here at the request of several government members currently renting space in hotels or apartment hotels who have suggested that if there was greater assurance they would, in all likelihood, then move to an apartment setting and have some permanency in terms of their temporary residence in the city. But again I stress the fact that it is proposed as an option plan so members would have the opportunity to pick and choose. If indeed the motion is passed, great care would need to be taken in terms of the communication to all members of the Assembly so they clearly understand what opportunities they now have and what is being proposed so that each member can

determine which of the plans would be most advantageous for that member.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I speak in favour of this motion. It seems to make sense. The current system says you can charge up to 75 bucks a day, and that's for food and shelter, and what you need to do is go through the rigmarole of proving you were in town. Now, a lot of MLAs travel to town. Let's use one example of the Member for Vegreville. You know, he dashes off at 5 o'clock in the morning, runs into Edmonton for a meeting and may go to another function. Sometimes it's really nice for that guy who has to shave a lot to have a place to go to where he can have a shower in the middle of the day. What's he going to do? Go and spend X dollars to rent a room so he can just go for a shower? That gets sort of silly. I think the thing here is that it probably would cost negligibly more to the taxpayers and, at the same time, be reasonable accommodation to out-of-town MLAs.

Now, I think there might be some question as to maybe you would want to have the monthly rate slightly less than you're allowed to claim on a daily basis to the maximum, because rents are not ordinarily \$750 a month. Quite frankly, I'd love to live in a place that's worth \$750 a month; I can't afford it. But I know also that if you're trying to move out of a hotel into an apartment, you also incur costs of, you know, buying furniture, linens, cutlery, and you name it. I suspect that overall it's not like there is a financial incentive but rather it just makes sense and takes a little bit of red tape out of it. I'd be very surprised if it ended up costing much more than 5 percent beyond what is currently paid out to allow out-of-town MLAs to come and do their business in Edmonton when the House is not sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I agree with everything Ms Barrett says, Mr. Chairman. But this doesn't follow from that, because the \$75 a day includes subsistence. So the \$750 a month would be paying subsistence as well as rent, even though the member is eating at home. That's not fair, I think -- not fair to the taxpayer anyway. So I think we should postulate a figure for rent -- say, \$500 a month -- which the member can opt to have and then can charge up to \$250 more.

MRS. MIROSH: Try and find a place for \$500.

MR. WRIGHT: Pardon.

MRS. MIROSH: I said: try and find a place for \$500 a month.

MR. WRIGHT: It's quite easy, unless you're really . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Within walking distance?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, unless you're really looking for something reasonably fancy. And you can claim the extra up to \$250 more for subsistence when in town.

MR. BOGLE: I'd like to respond to the two previous speakers, because I think both have made some excellent points that bear consideration by the committee. I'd like to begin by picking up on some comments Pam made about Derek Fox, who may come in early in the morning for meetings. He might be here most of

the day, and during that time he's incurred one, two, or even three meals. If he, in turn, travels back to his constituency that evening, he is not able to claim the \$75 a day at the present time, because to claim it you need to sleep over.

MR. HYLAND: Or even meals.

MR. BOGLE: Pardon me.

MR. HYLAND: Or even meals.

MR. BOGLE: You cannot claim a part of. The way the order is currently worded, if you stay overnight, you're eligible to claim; if you do not, you're not eligible. I suggest there are a number of rural or non-Edmonton members who do in fact come in for day meetings, must return home to their constituencies or other parts of Alberta, and therefore do not now claim any part. Therefore, I think it would equal out in the longer term.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I feel that the MLAs that do travel from out of town to Edmonton are here generally 10 days out of each month anyway and sometimes more, so they're in fact paying that additional cost if they have to stay in motels if they're here for more than 10 days. This is a maximum of 10 days. And I think, in all fairness, MLAs who have had to get residence here have actually saved taxpayers dollars by a monthly rent. I know I did. The first year I stayed in a hotel. The cheapest accommodation I could get was \$50 a day, plus meals. It adds up very quickly. And I really feel this is very fair to taxpayers. Seventy-five dollars a day or \$750 a month is substantial and certainly doesn't give you a posh place to live by any means when you have to pay for your meals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have to factor in your utilities in most cases.

MRS. MIROSH: Right; utilities. And you have to have a place within walking distance if you don't have a car. If you have a car, then you have to maintain a car on top of that. So it is quite expensive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes; in short, to say I support the motion. I am one that travels in and out. I think the alternative is nice to have. It's not going to hurt anyone, because those that think it's better to stick under the old pattern can do so, whereas those that are trying to get some sense of permanency -- and I think Pam outlined that being in town encourages or helps that too. I support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A call for the question then. All those in favour of the motion? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

The last item I have for this afternoon before we discuss the agenda possibilities for tomorrow. A few years ago, about three years ago, I attempted to take a course in French language instruction. At that time I requested the Members' Services Committee if I could indeed use money out of my own communications allowance as an MLA to pay for the course, and

that was turned down. So I went ahead and did it on my own. The only trouble is that I should have paid more attention to the course or taken a longer course. It helped improve my reading skills but not my listening or speaking too much.

So I just want to raise this issue again. Can we at least have notice of discussion of this at some other time, that if a member wishes to take French or some other language and there's money in one's communication allowance, whether or not one could go ahead and use that money for that purpose? What we're talking about is the cost of the course.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I certainly see there's justification for learning the other official language, but I have some doubt about excursions into third languages.

MR. BOGLE: Just to give the other side of the coin. If I represented a constituency with a large Ukrainian population, it may be very astute to have some knowledge of that language. And I don't see any difficulty, if we're going to . . . I think the basic concept is fine if we're talking about the communication allowance of a member. Currently members have to decide how best to use the . . . That's one of the three components in the member's service allocation. I don't see any problem with that at all.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, I see. Out of the existing communications allowance?

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, well. Sorry. I was wondering . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Not any additional . . .

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, to get the discussion on the floor, I would move that one be allowed to take a second language, the tuition fee to be covered from our existing communications allowance. [interjection] And materials; yeah. No housing, but the cost of the course, which would be for the books or whatever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: It's with the specifics with respect to this motion, Mr. Chairman, that I raise this question. It would have to do with clarification of intent. I think that for any Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to broaden his or her horizons with respect to other languages is very important, but would this intent be to provide under the communications allowance the registration for any type of course? I do know that various members of the federal House of Commons have been known to spend their summers in France in the Loire valley studying the French language. It is only in that light that I raise the question. I would think there should be a few parameters with respect to this, because needless to say, it would be a very conducive environment in which to learn Canada's second language, the Loire valley in July, August, and September . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a lot nicer than Papua New Guinea in January.

MR. KOWALSKI: But I believe that's the intent of the motion, so it's only from that perspective that I raise it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Reasonable . . .

MS BARRETT: Reasonable tuition and material costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Within the country. Okay; reasonable is now . . . Is that a friendly amendment, Cypress-Redcliff?

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, I was going to say that I don't think it's too much out of hand, because in the communications allowance certainly nobody would bat an eyelash if you went out and hired an Italian or a Ukrainian or someone to write a page in your brochure that you sent out. That certainly would be communicating in that language. Personally I would trust somebody writing it a lot better than my personal linguistic . . . I think they're very close, but I can sense the hon. Member for Barrhead's concern, that we spend studying outside the province. Even there I can sympathize with him, but I think there'd have to be something in there to start out with anyway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if we have one or two other small matters we might deal with today which would lessen the load somewhat tomorrow. I think Rod had . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe we could clarify the motion so that we could learn English, too, you know.

MR. SCARLETT: One item that's been brought to our attention is the MLA and staff bonus points system.

MR. HYLAND: I thought some time ago we talked about this -- I guess maybe Nigel and Ken would remember -- on the former committee. We talked about the bonus point system, and I had thought at that time we had the understanding that we could use it if it was used for business, that it was foolish not to collect them, because they were there and they were free. And if we collected them, we could use them as, you know, an extra trip -- not a private trip, but an extra business trip. I had assumed that was already there.

MR. SCARLETT: There has never been a specific policy in place for the Legislature; we've adopted the government policy. I believe we discussed this back in '86 when Mr. Stevens was on the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How do you suppose moving this motion? Do you then see it as . . . Are you going to go out there and collect the bonus points and then shove all the bonus points back to our Legislative Assembly Office to administer, to apply it? Or individually are you going to do something with this?

DR. McNEIL: I know you can't do it collectively; it has to be individually. The individual member is the only one that can use the points he or she has accumulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, then, how do you control it? Is it just a policy? This is the policy. Okay.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I am of the view that there's a reason we are called "honourable members," and that is that you're supposed to respect the honour system when it comes to the spending of tax dollars. I'd be prepared to sponsor this motion. The one part I'm not sure I like is the "or upgraded service," because I think that if you're collecting bonus points, use them for continuing government travel. You save the taxpayers in the long run. But I don't know that you should be . . . If you collect enough points so that you can sit in business class for one or two occasions, that strikes me as a bit self-indulgent, especially when you can apply the bonus points to an additional trip. That's one more trip the taxpayers don't have to sponsor. I wonder if people would agree if we just took out those three words "or upgraded service." Then I think we should just adopt this as policy. We were stupid not to do it a long time ago, quite frankly.

MR. TAYLOR: I brought it up at the first meeting I was at.

MR. HYLAND: Some of us have been doing it. We haven't done anything with them, but I've got I forget how many thousand because of the trip Nigel and I took to the parliamentary conference. Because I had a number, I claimed both or all four tickets because I figured it was stupid to let it go to waste.

MS BARRETT: You bet. Hear, hear is right.

MR. HYLAND: I didn't know what I was going to do with them.

MS BARRETT: So with the nodding of the head, then, what I would move is that . . .

MR. TAYLOR: Wait a minute. I had another thought that might be better. It will be recalled that this was one of the first things I brought up when I attended a meeting, being fairly familiar, having had trouble with my employees in the past on this.

But we have a system that can be controlled. All tickets that we buy, we go through our enRoute or our own charge card. I think we should investigate, because I think the airline company will credit the bonus points to that credit card account; they will set it aside.

MS BARRETT: No, they will not.

MR. TAYLOR: You sure? Because then the Speaker's office does have them, and you can use them from time to time. I don't mean the Speaker's . . . Now, wait a minute. Let's be clear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Legislative Assembly.

MR. TAYLOR: I'll agree that the Speaker's office can't take them and then assign them to anyone else; it still has to be used by the person that flew on the line. But what you can do with it after you've got a few hundred points is go out and say, "Hey, you've just won five free trips to Calgary." Otherwise, it can be used that way.

Then the honour system gets pretty difficult because they're

building bonuses on bonuses now. If your account totals so much, you're getting bonuses, and it gets awfully difficult. It's a little bit like the third marriage, you know: there's his, hers, and ours. Where are the points going to end up? It's gets complicated. There are points for being in a hotel; there are points for using a car; there are travel points now for using your personal VISAs or MasterCard; for buying a meal I think you get a couple of points. So everybody's using their own coupon system.

So I think it would be worth while to ask Dr. McNeil to investigate the points crediting directly to, because they are changing. I know a couple of years ago you couldn't do that, but now they are charging points nearly every place. Royal Trust just came out with a new card. If you want to buy a MasterCard from them, every purchase -- it doesn't matter what it is; if it's buying a hoe or a bottle of fertilizer on the weekend -- goes into travel points.

MR. HYLAND: Bottle of what?

MR. TAYLOR: Fertilizer.

MR. BOGLE: That's what you call it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, if this carries, then we can check it in . . .

MR. TAYLOR: But I think it should be investigated, because that would certainly . . . Therefore, any enRoute or MasterCard you'd use would automatically take the bonus points. Because I don't want to go through that unscrambling mess when I'm back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, Edmonton-Highlands is prepared to sponsor the motion if we delete "or upgraded service." Is there universal agreement to it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No? What now?

MR. WRIGHT: Sorry. My idea would simply be to say "to standard fares on the business of the Assembly" instead of "free, discounted or upgraded . . ."

MS BARRETT: Okay. That's right. Go ahead and read it then. You move it.

MR. WRIGHT: So it would read:

. . . and staff of the Legislative Assembly may be accepted or redeemed for standard fares on the business of the Assembly. So cross out "free, discounted or upgraded service only for travel."

MR. CHAIRMAN: "Standard fares on the business of the Assembly."

MR. WRIGHT: Then I was a little mystified that it would be "cost beneficial to the Legislative Assembly." I think what we're trying to say is "will result in a saving to the Assembly." Is that right?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. WRIGHT:

... expected that it will result in a saving to the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreeable?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm not opposed to it. I just would like to echo the word Ms Barrett used in terms of reflection on the word "honourable." I think it's extremely important that all Members of the Legislative Assembly recognize the trust factor related to this. I'll just relate that recently in the government of British Columbia a deputy minister of that government's services was terminated by the government for abuse relating to this particular type of policy.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, and that's always within our power, too, you know.

MR. TAYLOR: Was that a minister there?

MR. KOWALSKI: Deputy.

DR. ELLIOTT: Ministers don't do those things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Other items? [interjection] Well, the first one was acceptance of the wording, and now voting on the reworded motion. Those in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Other items of business?

MS BARRETT: I'd just like to say -- we're coming to the end of this afternoon's meeting -- that tomorrow when we reassemble, for those of us who carry around those big calendars, it's not a bad idea, perhaps, Mr. Chairman, to bring them, because if I read David McNeil's reports right, it looks like we're going to have to meet again in September, that there are a number of things that are going to be reported on then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or late August.

MS BARRETT: Or late August. So anyway, just ask people to bring their calendars so we can try to book our next meeting well enough in advance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any notification of business for tomorrow? Agendas?

MR. BOGLE: Well, we have some new business and some old business tomorrow. I think part of that will depend on discussions we have this afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. So we'll be back here tomorrow morning at what time?

MS BARRETT: At 9:00?

MR. HYLAND: Eight-thirty?

MS BARRETT: I always lobby for the later hours.

MR. TAYLOR: At 9:30. Then we'll compromise at 9:00.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. Yeah. He says 9:30; you say 8:30; I say 9:00. I'll take the middle ground.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I am leaving the country towards the middle of the day, and I'd appreciate it...

MR. BOGLE: Eight-thirty?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's make it 8:30.

MS BARRETT: Oh, all right. Anything for you, Gordon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The meeting stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 8:30.

[The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.]