

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[1:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Everyone now has the books in front of them with an agenda, including Percy, in spite of the fact that somebody went and locked them out of their offices.

MR. WICKMAN: We figure someone snuck down on the third floor there and was paying us back for the empty rum bottles we left in their wastepaper baskets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have regrets from anyone else, or are we all here?

MR. BOGLE: Dianne Mirosh is not here yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mirosh? Okay. She may or may not be coming? Don't know. Okay.

Well, welcome back. It's been a nice long break since Friday. When we first met I didn't have much of a chance to talk about hardly anything; there were so many things that had to be done in a short space of time because of some other commitments. The thing I just want to briefly point out to all members of the committee here is that I've only been around the place going into my 11th year, but my understanding of the operation of the Members' Services Committee is that the last manifestation of this group was able to get in some very significant advances in terms of bettering not only constituency offices and service to constituencies but also in terms of the members themselves. One of the real reasons for that was that there was, indeed, a significant desire on the part of all members of the committee to work on a positive basis together.

For those of you that haven't yet had the opportunity to sit on committees of the Legislature, I want you to know that by and large -- well, all the time -- it's an interesting experience. But one of the interesting challenges for each one of us is to put aside our political philosophy or our background or some of our more fervent things for a bit so we can be a bit more dispassionate in here in committee than we are, of course, on the hustings and to some degree in the House.

I think the other thing that's transpired is that with the passage of the amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act this last week there's now a very significant additional challenge given to this committee, because it is indeed significant that in terms of that legislation the challenge is handed on to this committee to deal with members' salaries and cabinet salaries. That's not a challenge that was given lightly, and it certainly wasn't a responsibility that was given up, you know, without some kind of other negotiations going on, I'm sure.

Nevertheless, having said all that, welcome to the next few years in this committee. I'm sure that given the individual capabilities of the members, we're going to have a lot of fun in here too.

So, approval of the agenda as circulated? Are there any other items that need to be added to the day?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, the memo I sent you requesting a number of items be placed on here, they're all on here with the exception of one, and that could have been some confusion. When I talked in terms of review of caucus budgets, I assumed you had that under 6(i). I was talking in terms specifically of a review of this fiscal period's caucus budget, particularly as it pertains to the Liberal Party.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that could also be picked up in that same section.

MR. WICKMAN: Or if you'll allow me at that time to introduce the item, that's fine, as long as there's an understanding that I have a provision on the agenda to introduce it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Six and (i) -- Clerk and Wickman. Thank you.

Edmonton Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Just one item for the list at the end, if we can, related to cycling on the grounds, if it is appropriate that we deal with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cycling and recycling.

MS BARRETT: Cycling and recycling indeed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okey doke; [7](b). Now, we don't know how much of this we'll get in here today, but we're also on deck to meet again tomorrow morning.

MS BARRETT: Oh, goody, another meeting.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, while we're on the subject of tomorrow's meeting, could you comment on the hour at which we'll meet tomorrow?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's sort of in at the -- whatever develops in terms of the afternoon consensus to meet tomorrow at 9, 9:30, 10 o'clock.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I'd like to suggest, if a suggestion is strong enough at this time, that from the practice point of view, when we are meeting in the mornings we do it at 10, and that gives us an opportunity to return some calls to constituents on other matters prior to coming in.

MS BARRETT: "Fine by me," she says, groaning.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Agreed on tomorrow's time?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: I have one other matter for the agenda, Mr. Chairman. Either sometime today or tomorrow we should begin to discuss what process we're going to follow relative to the matters that are now part of this committee's responsibility.

MR. WICKMAN: I would think, Mr. Chairman, that comes under item 4, Business Arising from Session. At least that was my interpretation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, no. It may or may not arise there. This is one to make sure everybody's getting paid in the meantime.

MS BARRETT: Oh, that's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That one -- we kind of hoped it might get disposed of today.

All right. We then have Approval of Agenda, and of course as we work our way through, there might be some other items we call to mind.

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Approval of July 24 committee meetings.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Question. All those in favour of approving the July 24 meeting minutes, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Item 4, Business Arising from Session. Mr. Clegg, perhaps you would like to speak to the necessity for this and the proposed wording?

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, the Legislative Assembly Act was passed by the Assembly and came into effect on August 18. That removes the fixed salaries and allowances and expenses and deductions and other forms of remuneration for members and ministers and puts them at the direction of the Members' Services Committee effective August 18, which has already passed. Obviously, the committee will have to go into a lot of consideration about what they wish to set these allowances and expenses at. Meanwhile, it is essential that there is a confirmation, a continuance of those amounts as they existed in the Legislative Assembly Act prior to the passage of the Bill. And that is exactly what the order does. It just states that

the indemnities, salaries, deductions, rates, and allowances referred to in [the listed] sections . . . are continued in the same amounts as were in effect immediately prior to the commencement of Bill 24 of 1989.

So the amounts are continued now exactly as they were payable prior to that Bill being passed, and include all the various adjustments which have taken place up to that date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The effective date would be August 18 or August 19?

MR. M. CLEGG: The 18th, because legislation when it passes . . . The 19th was Friday, wasn't it?

MS BARRETT: No, the 18th.

MR. M. CLEGG: I'm sorry. The 18th was Friday; yes.

Legislation when it is passed is deemed to have been in effect from the very beginning of that day, which is rather a strange rule which I wish they'd change. But it does mean that every Bill is very slightly retroactive for a certain number of hours. So it has to be effective the 18th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The 18th.

MR. M. CLEGG: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So on your section 4 here in your binder, item 2: the day will be the 18th. Okay, folks.

MR. McINNIS: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Moved by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Minister.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'll wait for the seconder. I want to raise a question about this, that's all. I'll second it as well, if you wish. We don't need it anyway, but . . .

Now, this would be the 'omnibus' . . . Am I right?

MS BARRETT: Omnibus.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much.

MS BARRETT: You're welcome.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that. It's important that you guide me.

This will cover everything. We're not going to have a situation here, Mr. Clegg, of coming back in three weeks or two months and now saying that unfortunately we've forgotten something? Do we have to specify these phrases in here, or do we just use the correct word for it to say that it just continues in principle, period?

MR. M. CLEGG: We have listed in this all the sections which are mentioned in Bill 24.

MR. KOWALSKI: This is all-inclusive, all-comprehensive; it's not a question of having to come back and . . .

MR. M. CLEGG: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The members are covered and the cabinet are covered and the Leader of the Opposition is covered.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay.

MR. McINNIS: We couldn't make the members and the cabinet the same through this? [interjections]

MS BARRETT: He's a mover.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there questions?

We have a motion before us to approve this Members' Services order.

SOME HON. MEMBER: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A call for the question. Will all those in favour please signify? Opposed? Carried. May the record be shown as unanimous. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll sign this one today. Thank you.

Well, what's the pleasure of the committee? Do you want to

deal with this next part of it now, or do you want to hold that till a little later in the meeting?

MS BARRETT: We might as well hold it, because it's coming up again, you know, by request of Percy. So I think hold it and come back to the whole thing.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry; which item is coming up by request of me?

MS BARRETT: Travel Bonus Points.

MR. WICKMAN: I didn't have that.

MS BARRETT: Do you not have that on your agenda?

MR. WICKMAN: No. Mine's a different item than that, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Oh, all right. Fine then. Shall we use mine?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, that's 5(a).

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry I don't have copies of this, but I got this originally from Rod, so I think it would be identical to what you handed out at the last meeting. I'll just read out the motion again:

Bonus travel points earned from travel paid for by Legislative Assembly funds may be used:

- (a) by a member for travel within Alberta related to the business of the Assembly or duties of the member; or
- (b) in respect of points earned from out-of-province travel by a member for travel outside Alberta to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association event or to represent the Assembly, the Speaker, or the association; or
- (c) by the Leader of the Official Opposition for travel within Canada related to the business of the Assembly, duties of the member, or the office of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Although this motion doesn't show in our minutes because I'm not sure it really actually got dealt with as a motion -- oh, I know what happened; I withdrew it in fact. That's right. That's why it doesn't show. The intent is the same as that I expressed during our last meeting. So I'll move it.

Do you need copies? I can run a photocopy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we need copies.

MS BARRETT: Oh, all right. Rod will run them. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You have additional information?

DR. McNEIL: Right. I committed to provide some information to the committee about the administration of air travel. That's why we have this handout.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; so Clerk, Taber-Warner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Is that all, David?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, that's all.

MR. BOGLE: I wanted to ask a question for information. That is, how is the third party dealt with relative to travel points?

MR. CHAIRMAN: First -- Clerk, do you need to explain or speak to this? It's been distributed.

DR. McNEIL: Basically, this summarizes the present situation in the way the system works. As stated in the past, only the individual can accumulate points, and they cannot be pooled. They are only for tickets where reservations have been made; they can't be accumulated on open tickets. At this point in time we are collecting information on bonus points from members who have collected them. We've asked them to provide them with that information.

We are presently trying to deal with the airlines or a travel agent to set up a system where they will provide us with information directly on all our staff, on all the MLAs and staff who have accumulated bonus points. The alternative to that, if the airlines cannot do it, it is to work through one travel agent for booking those flights, and that travel agent would provide us with that information on individuals. However, to this point it's been up to the individual member to keep us advised as to the bonus points they have accumulated.

MS BARRETT: That's the way the feds do it, isn't it?

DR. McNEIL: That's my understanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So you have this one information sheet which the Clerk has just spoken to. The other one is being circulated now, which the Member for Edmonton-Highlands spoke to briefly and read.

Now, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, at the appropriate time I would like to make a motion or an amendment to Pam Barrett's motion that -- we can use first names in this committee, eh?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. WICKMAN: ... Ms Barrett's motion -- and I really didn't hear her motion.

MS BARRETT: It's the one I read out. You've got a copy of it in front of you now.

MR. WICKMAN: You mean the one going back to the minutes?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, doesn't that just apply specifically to Ray Martin going to one area of the Northwest Territories?

MS BARRETT: No. If I might, Mr. Chairman: what happened is that because there was, I guess, some confusion at the last meeting about this, I withdrew the motion and instead requested approval for a motion to allow Ray Martin to use his bonus points to travel to an opposition leaders' meeting in Yukon. That was approved, and that's all that was approved.

MR. WICKMAN: Ms Barrett, I would have to say that in my view this committee is a committee of Members of the Legislative Assembly. It's not a question of what's good for the New Democrats but what's good for the Liberals and what's good for

the Tories. I think by the very fact that you single out the Leader of the Opposition -- I think that's incorrect. It has to be a system that takes into consideration the concerns of all three parties, and I prefer to see just each caucus make that decision themselves as to what they want to do with their points.

MS BARRETT: Well, I think that's [inaudible]. I mean, I'm not in principle opposed to it, but I think there was a problem with that from an administrative perspective.

DR. McNEIL: I don't think it was so much an administrative issue really. It was a question of what was appropriate: what was appropriate travel on Legislative Assembly business, and the definition of "appropriate travel."

MR. McINNIS: I think the last comment the Clerk made encapsulates my concern. As long as you can define what's appropriate Legislative Assembly business, I don't think there's any problem with it. What we want to avoid is a situation where people use bonus points for taking a vacation, basically because that creates in the public mind a notion that travel is being done for that purpose. Whether, of course -- I don't believe anybody would actually do that. But if we have a definition of what's appropriate business for the Legislative Assembly, then... You know, the system now is that the Speaker approves requests like that; it's just a question of where the funding comes from. If it can be taken from bonus points, then so much the better for all concerned. I think that would avoid some of the distinctions we have to make under the existing policy, bearing in mind you can't pool the points within the caucus -- you have to be an individual who has the points -- and they would have to have a proposal that appears to make sense to the satisfaction of the Speaker. I think that's the best way around it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This whole bonus point scenario gives me a bit of a problem. I understand the airlines cannot give you a second card for your travel points, and I myself have a substantial number of travel points already built up on three airlines because I've done extensive traveling. But it's really something that happened prior to me coming into the Legislature.

MR. McINNIS: You can set up a new account.

MRS. BLACK: No, you can't. You can't get a second account under your personal name. [interjection]

MRS. BLACK: For each airline?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: If you'd show me how you did that, I'd be prepared to do that, because I don't want to put my own personal travel points on legislative business.

MS BARRETT: I don't blame you.

MRS. BLACK: And that's the thing that rather confuses me on how these things can be transferred, because the bonus system allows you to transfer it to your family, I believe, and you can

designate a person. I understood it was only within your immediate family that could use your travel points.

MRS. MIROSH: Right. That's what it says here in 3.

MRS. BLACK: So I don't know how you can designate these to be to a member of the Legislature.

DR. McNEIL: That you can only... Mr. Chairman?

My understanding is that if you earn bonus points while traveling on Legislative Assembly business, only you can utilize those points on other travel for the Legislative Assembly. So what we're talking about here is individual members accumulating bonus points and using it for their own travel on Legislative Assembly business. My understanding was that you could have more than one card with an airline, so that you could have one card that related to your Legislative Assembly travel and another card that related to personal travel, and that we would administer and control based on that Legislative Assembly card. That's what we're trying to work out with the airline now, so that we would get information back from them as to what bonus points each member had accumulated in each month on each airline.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would like to book [inaudible] in this swamp.

Okay. The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. The matter that's being discussed at the moment is another agenda item, if you're...

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we're basically talking here about the motion Pam has presented here for the Bonus Travel Minute or Order. If you look at (a) in the motion -- and I'm speaking to the motion now:

by a member for travel within Alberta related to the business of the Assembly or the duties of the member.

I think that's very, very self-explanatory. I presume that those people who would use airlines back and forth would, if they belonged to one of these particular clubs, have points. So if you had to go elsewhere throughout the province, you could use that instead of buying another ticket. That is very clear to me.

The second one:

in respect of points earned from out-of-province travel by a member for travel outside Alberta to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association event or to represent the Assembly, the Speaker, or the association.

There would be a very small handful, presumably, of Members of the Legislative Assembly who would qualify under that one, because very few Members of the Legislative Assembly would fit those categories of being selected to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association event. There would be very, very few; just a handful that it would apply to.

The third one, (c),

by the Leader of the Opposition...

is very restrictive; it's for one individual. It deals with within Canada related to the business of the Assembly, duties of the member, or the office of the Leader of the Opposition.

First of all, I'm going to ask the question: when Members of the Legislative Assembly represent the Legislature to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, are not these tickets now purchased by the Legislative Assembly office on their behalf? If they're purchased by the Legislative Assembly office, then how could a particular MLA earn points with respect to

that, if these tickets are purchased for them under the global purchasing mechanism?

MR. HYLAND: When you check in at the counter, you give them your number. Then they'll put it into the system.

MR. KOWALSKI: And that's permitted under the rules to do that? Okay.

Well, my other point, then, is that under (c) it's restricted to one person. If we want to do this in terms of a policy for all Members of the Legislative Assembly, should it be restricted to one or should it apply to all of them? And if it should apply to all of them, is there not a way then of wording a motion that, in essence, would allow all members -- "related to the business of the Assembly or the duties of the member," almost as (a) is, but we'd just change it for travel outside of Alberta as well? Isn't that the easiest, simplest way? It then becomes applicable to everyone and it's not restricted just to the one office.

But it still goes back to the point Mr. McInnis raised in terms of what is this official business all about, and that's a definition matter.

MR. McINNIS: If we went Ken Kowalski's way, it would just be a matter of changing "Alberta" to "Canada" in point (a). Then you'd be listening to Solomon in the Chair deciding what's appropriate business again.

MR. WICKMAN: Why not just take out "within Alberta" totally? Then all you need is the (a) section "by a member for travel related to the business of the Assembly . . ." and so on. [interjection] Pardon me?

MR. McINNIS: I said "within Canada."

MR. WICKMAN: But, Mr. Chairman, you could incorporate (b) into (a) in that fashion, in that if there was a conference by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association outside of Canada, it would then be covered in that one short statement. I don't think there are that many points accumulated that it's going to allow MLAs to fly around the world in any case.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, I have thousands. I'm not sharing them.

MR. WICKMAN: Just flying back and forth from Calgary?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yes. I think, Percy, that in the current order -- if I'm not mistaken; Mike might know the answer to this -- the CPA and whatever else is already covered in an excellent order, so I don't believe it's necessary to do that. I think "within Canada" is a very reasonable sort of compromise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had requests from -- maybe that wasn't for using travel bonus points. We've had members going to Australia. That's been one place. The United States is another. So you know, from time to time we've had enough problems trying to figure out who can go where, let alone on whether you're using caucus funds or using bonus points. The other example I had: I did have someone wanting to use his bonus points to go on a holiday with his spouse, and I don't think that fits into what we're about here, to say the least.

MS BARRETT: Can I comment on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MS BARRETT: I think what John was saying about section (a) with "Canada" substituted for "Alberta" is very good, but there is another issue here, and that is that it's very difficult to define what "the business of the Assembly" is or under what circumstances it's appropriate, et cetera, et cetera. But we also have, I think, several examples in recent Canadian history of parliamentarians who abused any privileges they had getting the boot, and the honour system does have that sort of disincentive built into it. It then, I think, means that nobody has to grapple with very detailed criteria.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So what we have . . . Oh, yes. Calgary-Glenmore. Thank you.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I'm a little confused, too, related to "the business of the Assembly." I have very little opportunity to use my bonus points, if any. If we're looking at savings in government dollars, if there are members who have been invited to go outside of province, or even within province, to speak at conferences or what have you, based on whatever committee they're representing, would this be part of it: "related to the business of the Assembly"?

MR. KOWALSKI: Or "the duties of the member"?

MS BARRETT: Or "the duties of the member"; yeah.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, I think this should be clarified, because sometimes we're sent there on behalf of the minister as well. Is that part of it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. That's government . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: That's when you should have another [inaudible].

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any trouble with this, but I keep on wondering why you as Speaker have to okay this. If the honour system is to work, why don't the leaders of the appropriate parties approve it rather than the Speaker having to get in to approve what is business and what isn't business? The leaders should know, and as you said, Pam, that puts more pressure on the honour system. I think it will work better that way. Having the Speaker do it almost gives you an out that you can blame somebody if something happens.

MS BARRETT: Good point, but I don't think this section implies that the Speaker makes a decision; it's silent on the matter. So the honour system won't be invoked.

MR. HYLAND: No. That's in our other stuff, I think.

MS BARRETT: Yes. This would override it, I assume.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I respect the points made by

Ms Barrett. I think there is a built-in honour system. I believe there's a built-in checkpoint. If members abuse privileges, it becomes apparent in due course, and the public knows how to deal with that if the courts don't deal with it. But it's dealt with, and politicians have fallen by the wayside in the past because they have abused their rights.

I tend to feel that we're adults. You put in an honour system, and you assume that discretion is shown by individuals. For example, if Dianne Mirosh has a special interest in health care, which she does, if there's a conference which is very, very vital in Switzerland, if it's beneficial, just like representatives from hospital boards can attend those conferences to gain knowledge, why shouldn't a Member of the Legislative Assembly, using their points, be able to do that? So I wouldn't even say to restrict it in Canada. I would leave it loose and assume that we'll all act in an honourable fashion. Those that don't pay the price in their own way.

MRS. MIROSH: I'm with you on that, Percy.

MS BARRETT: Sorry, Percy. I don't know. I mean, I've got a real interest in political economy and especially in the Labour Party itself. I mean, I could go to London every week, and you know . . . I mean, I just don't think that's appropriate. I think that's . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, I know. But first you'd have to have the points though. You wouldn't have that many points.

MS BARRETT: Yes, I know.

MR. HYLAND: You'd never get that many points because you're always driving. You don't like flying.

MS BARRETT: Dollink, I'm going to get on a plane in a few weeks. You just watch me.

No, I think the Canadian restriction is really appropriate. I mean, if there are special events that are outside Canada, surely we know about them well enough in advance that if there's really an urgent and pressing need we can come back to this committee for a request. I think the Canadian restriction is appropriate.

MR. McINNIS: I'd like to agree with my colleague on that. The honour system is one thing, but there's also "lead us not into temptation." It does seem to me that this is primarily a benefit which will accrue to people who represent constituencies outside of Edmonton, because they travel that way, and to put the whole scope of international travel on the table I think would be perhaps a little too tempting without some further group to come through -- within Canada or internationally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MRS. BLACK: What's the question?

MS BARRETT: As amended? Who amended it, by the way?

AN HON. MEMBER: Percy.

MS BARRETT: Percy, did you amend it?

MR. WICKMAN: No.

MS BARRETT: May I then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services amended it.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: The amendment would basically read that bonus travel points earned from travel paid for by Legislative Assembly funds may be used by a member for travel within Canada related to the business of the Assembly or the duties of the member.

MS BARRETT: Would you be striking (c)?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes; (b) and (c) would go.

MS BARRETT: Great.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I will move an amendment to the motion. The amendment would be to strike out "within Canada."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, first off, that's the second amendment. The first amendment needs to be dealt with. The first amendment.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The first amendment reads as inserting within clause (a) "Canada" instead of "Alberta," and deletes (b) and (c). So that's what we're now voting on.

MR. BOGLE: Just before we do that, because Percy's amendment really takes out the word "Canada," could we hear his arguments, just possibly to save time.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, my understanding of parliamentary procedure, Mr. Chairman -- and I'm sure you're a greater authority on it than I am -- is that the latter amendment in this particular situation would apply first because it has a direct impact on the earlier amendment. In other words, if you deal with the earlier amendment and it's passed, it knocks my amendment out of the ballpark.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Except, you know, if you do deal with it that way, there's no "within Canada" to delete. Because the motion presently as proposed . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. Mine should read "to strike out," because you've substituted "within Canada" in place of "within Alberta." The intent of my amendment was to strike out any reference to "within Alberta" or "within Canada" so it would just read "by a member for travel related to the business of the Assembly or the duties of the member."

MR. CHAIRMAN: With due respect, the notice of motion you gave me on your subamendment deals with a phrase that is not in here at the moment, so your proposed amendment would be totally out of order. So your supposed amendment isn't there

until we get this one.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, I understand what you're saying. I'll move my amendment after this amendment is dealt with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Now, we're dealing with the amendment as proposed by the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. I believe you understand it: (a) becomes "Canada" instead of "Alberta," and the other two clauses are deleted. Those in favour of that amendment, please signify. Opposed? Carried.

Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay then, Mr. Chairman, if you'll accept my amendment now, my amendment would delete "within Canada" so that the amended motion would read "by a member for travel related to the business of the Assembly or the duties of the member."

Again my argument would be that we're all adults. We've all sworn an oath to uphold our office and not breach public duty and so on and so forth. So basically it's an honour system, and I don't see any difference between traveling to Newfoundland to attend a conference or going over to London. When you talk in terms of amounts of dollars or amounts of points involved, there isn't always that much difference. In fact, you can fly on Air Canada into the United States for the same number of points as it takes to go to Toronto. So there is nothing magical about the borders being Canada. There are at times good conferences that are very meaningful to one's particular interest within the House that are held in other parts of Canada.

And I don't buy the argument about placing temptation in front of us. We've got to resist that temptation. If we can't resist temptation, then we shouldn't be in a place where we're influenced by it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's get to the further amendment. Call for the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the amendment as proposed by Edmonton-Whitemud, please signify. Thank you. Opposed? Okay, let's see your hands for those opposed. It's tied. I guess we cast the deciding vote in committee. Well, in the House all members have to vote. In committee I don't believe all members have to vote. So in this case it's the Chair that decides.

The amendment is defeated.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, with everybody's permission, I'd like to change the subject for a minute and go off our agenda.

We have an item under 6(j), Pension Indexing. Now, this is all initiated by Anders Aalborg, a former cabinet minister in the Social Credit government here. He is sitting in my office right now. What he wonders . . . Okay, I'm really asking to go back to the agenda itself, because I want to bring forward a subject because I've got somebody sitting in my office waiting. I forgot to do it at the beginning of the meeting. The item is on the agenda, 6(j), and I'll tell you what the request is about -- not only what the request was under yours, Percy. Anders Aalborg came to see me on Friday and said, "Look, when you get to

Members' Services, could you ask the committee if I could come and make a five-minute presentation either on Monday or Tuesday?" I said that yes, I would ask, and I forgot to ask at the appropriate point in the agenda, so I'm asking now.

MR. McINNIS: I think we all received a letter from him, didn't we? He feels he's been shortchanged by \$9,000 or something since he retired.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anders Aalborg?

MR. McINNIS: I don't know how widely it was circulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, first off, let's get some more background. Yes, he's a former Provincial Treasurer. He's been writing to the Provincial Treasurer, to the Premier, and to a number of members -- perhaps not to all members. Perhaps he didn't get the new list of members, so the new ones might not have had the previous correspondence. He has been around for the last week or so and obviously has spoken now to all three caucuses, I assume. He's certainly been to the Speaker's office, and at that time I said I would bring the matter forward to the Members' Services Committee as well. So obviously there's a certain amount of legitimate, understandable lobbying going on. I believe we would deal with it under 6(j) as to whether or not we'll invite him to come. I would assume the committee hasn't got too much to lose by inviting him to come, except it sets another precedent about what other groups this committee is going to be open to lobbying on, and that's the principle of it before we say yes to whether or not we're going to have this individual come.

At any rate, since the former member says he'll be here tomorrow as well as today, perhaps some signal can be made that the committee will deal with it a little bit later in its agenda at the appropriate time, as was going to be.

MR. McINNIS: It's not just a question of lobbying. It's also a question of jurisdiction. What authority do we have over pension indexing?

MR. BOGLE: None.

MR. McINNIS: It's an entirely different area.

MS BARRETT: None?

MR. BOGLE: It's the Provincial Treasurer and the government.

MR. McINNIS: It's not a part of the new matters that have been referred to us by the Assembly.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Chairman, if that's the case, I'd like to move that we deal with this matter now, that we bring it up to this point in the agenda, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion on moving it on the agenda? Okay, all those in favour? One, two, three, four, five. Opposed? Okay. We're now going to just deal with the (b) portion of Pension Indexing, in my opinion, because I assume there are some other pension indexing questions the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud wants to raise.

Let us deal specifically with the matter of Mr. Aalborg. All

rightly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, could I say something here? For fairness for all committee members, if there is some paper as a background on this, we don't have it in front of us. I didn't come with any paper. Some of my colleagues said they've never heard anything about this before. So we've got the matter here before us. I sincerely hope we'll have a good explanation of what it is that we're talking about here.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I have the complete package that I had intended to circulate later. I'll just do it at this time. Mr. Aalborg was in to see me as well. This package contains not only information pertaining to his situation but information pertaining to other items on the agenda. So maybe it's appropriate I just have them distributed at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, whoa. What other items on the agenda?

MR. WICKMAN: For example, the items dealing with the fax machine and such. Like, I developed a package for items related to the agenda that I've asked be brought forward as background material.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, what have you got there for Aalborg? Thank you. We just need to deal with this one. You'll find, hon. member, that as we go along we just get deluged with pieces of paper, and then to keep the organization of it, it's . . . That's why we've developed the binder system and so forth. So if we could just have that portion related to Mr. Aalborg.

Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Red Deer-North.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. It is the case, then, is it -- maybe David or Mike can let us know -- that the issue of pension indexing is not in our jurisdiction but instead is within the jurisdiction of either the Assembly itself or the Provincial Treasurer? Is that correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's my understanding. Legal counsel.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, indexing of pensions, I believe, is covered by regulation, by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, pursuant to the M.L.A. Pension Plan Act.

MS BARRETT: Well, in that case I don't see the purpose of entertaining a presentation by Mr. Aalborg. That's what I would suggest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North, followed by Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. DAY: That's my point, Mr. Chairman, what Ms Barrett has just brought up.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, first of all, there is no indexed pension plan in the province of Alberta that I'm aware of, Mr. Chairman. What happens is that annually, or at the will of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, a recommendation is made to adjust pensions, but that's not based on a statute requirement that says pensions are indexed. There can be this MLA pension plan, I guess, but the government may by regulation for the pur-

pose of maintaining approximate parity of the cost of living make adjustments to the amounts payable to the pensions, but the operative word there is "may." There's nothing that requires it to be done. There is no formal policy for indexing of any pensions whatsoever. It is something that has happened sometimes, depending on the economic situation, and other times it has not happened. So to even talk about a policy of indexing, such a policy does not exist, and it's not required under a statute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the point at which this committee may have to deal with it is in looking at the whole range of compensation issues that are now referred to by the Assembly under Bill 24, which I have down as item 6(c) here -- I guess that should be 7(c) under Other Business -- because we really can't suggest a method to deal with an historical wrong Mr. Aalborg sees. We might be able to recommend to the Assembly that some different procedure take place in respect to pensions in the future, but it's probably better grouped with that item than on its own.

As for talking to Mr. Aalborg, I imagine he would feel better if he talked to the Legislature committee, but there isn't a whole lot we can do about it. I think he should know that before he meets with us so he's not under any misapprehension that we can help him particularly.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I speak to this item because I had requested it be placed on the agenda, and I have two issues that I see. One is the latter one, as referred to by Mr. McInnis. On the question as to how indexing the pension benefits pertains to MLAs on a broad basis, I concur with him that that should be addressed in conjunction with other benefits that pertain to the MLAs, and that in my opinion should be a new item which can become 6.3 -- you know, the whole question as to how we now deal with the action as pertaining from the piece of legislation we had agreed to pass in the House. So we should look at that. I just assume, Mr. Chairman, that that will be on the agenda, even though it's not here, seeing it wasn't dealt with under 4.

The second point I would make: I did meet with Mr. Aalborg, and I'm very sympathetic to what he is saying. If in fact there has been shortchanging in the pension indexing, as he claims, in comparison to other provinces, and the Act is very specific that it has to remain within parity -- very specific -- if that hasn't happened, he has a legitimate argument. If he has a legitimate argument, then it applies to all Members of the Legislative Assembly that have been here for a period of time. So from that point of view, it should be corrected. Would we not have even the authority to make a recommendation to the Provincial Treasurer? I asked the Provincial Treasurer to send me his response to the request, and all I got was a copy of a letter, one sentence, that said "Your request is denied." That was addressed to Anders Aalborg. So that didn't give me the information I was looking for. Have we not got the authority that we could hear Mr. Aalborg and then decide on that whether we want to recommend to the Provincial Treasurer that he should in fact review the request made by Mr. Aalborg?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you're dealing with three items at once within two sentences. One, according to what was read out in the Act, we do not have the authority. There is no

automatic indexing. We have the other issue as to whether the committee wishes to hear Mr. Aalborg or not, and what was developing here was no, the committee does not feel it's within our jurisdiction to do that.

We will come back later on to the other items to hear from you, but with respect to Mr. Aalborg, we are staying on topic there. Are we going to have this gentleman come to see us now or tomorrow or not? The last I was picking up was no, so there needs to be some . . . Will we put this just as a question, Pam?

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of Mr. Aalborg coming to the committee, please raise your hands. Opposed? Thank you. The request is denied.

Would you be good enough to deal with . . .

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I sure will. I'll explain it to him as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, before we go on to the next agenda item, it would be appropriate, in my view, if we as committee members ensure that we are familiar with the mandate of the committee so we don't inadvertently stray over into the territory of another jurisdiction or body. While it could be argued -- and the argument coming from the former member has some tug on us -- that this committee could recommend, that could be the precedent used for virtually every issue affecting former or present members of the Assembly. We could get ourselves into some difficulty. So I'm merely echoing a word of caution about presentations or petitions that we individually or collectively might receive from individuals or groups asking us to take up a cause. I think that while it might be easier at the moment to say "Yes, we'll review your concern," we create a greater problem and thus set a precedent for ourselves and our committee in the longer term.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, just on that point. As a new member not only of the committee but of the Legislature, it might be beneficial if we had a summary as to what falls under the auspices of this committee so we can make sure we address those areas of concern and only those areas of concern. I think we should maybe do that fairly quickly.

MR. McINNIS: We have the consolidation of Members' Services orders. It pretty much indicates the scope. What else is there beyond that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Legislative Assembly Act; to some degree Standing Orders, which notes the territory where we do not go in that sense.

Parliamentary Counsel. Any other places?

MR. M. CLEGG: I think that covers it, Mr. Chairman. Essentially the mandate of the Members' Services Committee is to consider and make recommendation of the areas where they are empowered to make orders under the Legislative Assembly Act and also other matters where there is some direction sought in the general administration of matters affecting members by the general office. I don't think that necessarily the order-making

power is the total scope of the activity of the committee, but clearly matters which are entrenched in legislation and cannot be changed by the committee the committee may wish to discuss, but it can't do anything about them. The Legislative Assembly Act does contain a couple of sections which specify what orders the committee can pass.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's possible that Mr. Aalborg, when he learned we had provided a benefit to former members -- i.e., the two trips per year back to Edmonton -- may indeed in this case have sent a false signal and a feeling that, well, if the committee could deal with matters relating to former members on travel, possibly the committee could also deal with them on pensions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, perhaps Parliamentary Counsel by tomorrow could extract a brief guideline to help bring members up to speed.

MR. M. CLEGG: Yes, indeed, Mr. Chairman, I will.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Extracts from [inaudible]. Okay?

I wonder if we might deal with item 5(b) on our agenda. Then we'll have a brief break.

MR. BOGLE: I recommend that 5(b) be postponed to a future meeting. We have not yet had a discussion on that matter. So can we just put in on the pending agenda list, please, and then we'll bring it forward when we're ready?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is that agreeable?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there no one suffering inconvenience in their constituency offices at the moment? Thank you.

Okay. We stand adjourned till quarter past two.

[The committee recessed from 2:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; we're now on agenda item 6(a). Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, this is a continuation of the very brief discussion we had the other day. There is the information here in the package. It's not handled the same everywhere, but the example I use is in the province of Saskatchewan. Now, my feeling is such that we have staff within constituency offices, and under the current contract they're entitled to a benefit of a life insurance policy; they're entitled to, you know, their holidays and that type of thing. But they're not able to access into the extended health care plan. Even the basic health care plan they can't access like a civil employee can. I feel those members within constituency staff who are regarded as employees, who are not under contract that we may see in some constituencies, be allowed to access. They would pick up their own portion of the premiums for the benefits just like any other employee of the provincial government would. Then of

course the government would pick up the employer's share, like they would for any other government employee. I'd like to see it done in such a way that the option is there for the Member of the Legislative Assembly to decide as to whether they want to put them under that type of contract or they prefer to keep them under the existing type of contract.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I'm not sure what Percy is getting at here, but I've been talking to Bob about this. I don't know if you're aware that last year -- or maybe it was two years ago -- after lengthy debate, we approved two types of employment packages. One is a fee-for-service, which is straight payment for service and nothing else. The other, which is an option for MLAs to exercise, allows the employees and the employer, the constituency office being the employer, to cost share certain contributions such as unemployment insurance and health care and also have tax . . .

MR. WICKMAN: No, health care is not there, Pam. It's not there.

MS BARRETT: Health care isn't?

MR. WICKMAN: No. That's my concern. They're not allowed to access health care.

MRS. MIROSH: Not if they're on contract.

MS BARRETT: We approved it. I'm sure we approved it.

MR. WICKMAN: If you look at your material -- and it is distributed -- there is a memo from Rod Scarlett that points it out very clearly.

MRS. BLACK: Where are you looking, Percy?

MR. WICKMAN: It's in your package under 6(b). Well, mine's under 6(b).

DR. McNEIL: May I comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: The contract that was approved by the Members' Services Committee, which we call the Group II contract, which is an employment contract as opposed to a fee-for-service contract, included the following benefits: sick leave -- that's six full days -- annual vacation leave, statutory holidays, and in lieu of other benefits, which we call miscellaneous benefits, shall not be entitled to Long Term Disability, Health Plan, Dental or Insurance benefits, but in lieu thereof shall have an additional supplement to their income in the amount of 1% of the employee's base wage . . .

So there was a percentage on salary in lieu of those benefits. That was the decision made by the committee.

MS BARRETT: God, I thought we had health care.

MR. WICKMAN: My argument, Mr. Chairman, would be such that instead of giving that additional percentage on the salary, they should just have the right to access those benefits and then benefit by the employer's share as well. Because the benefits that I'm concerned they should be entitled to are, you know, the basic benefits most employers give or should be required to give. All employers should be required to give rights to pension plan, right to health care, and that includes dental of course. Those are the two basics.

DR. McNEIL: There's another point. They also get Canada Pension Plan and UIC contributions.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, that's right, and tax deduction at source.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: I just thought that health care was . . . I thought we had included that.

MR. HYLAND: Just a question to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud then. Percy, are you suggesting that these extra things you're requesting come out of the \$30,200?

MR. WICKMAN: No, I'm not, because the employee has a responsibility to pay his own share. That would be deducted from the employee's paycheque just like it is for us when we receive our cheque. The employer's share is taken from the government just like it is for any other employee. In other words, it wouldn't be charged back against the constituency budget.

MR. HYLAND: So you're over and above the constituency budget.

MR. WICKMAN: That's right. The employer's share only; the employee's share would be the responsibility of the employee.

DR. McNEIL: In the instance of the constituency offices, the employer is, in effect, the constituency office. Therefore, the funds to pay the employer's share of the benefits that are presently paid come from the individual member's constituency allowance. This is a fact. I'm just saying this is what was determined in the past by the committee. That's just factual information I'm placing.

MS BARRETT: Is that the way all government departments are too?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, very brief. The Clerk just basically pointed out, I think, the point of information in fact. These are not government offices, and for Mr. Wickman to use the phrase "government offices," then it has to be put in light of what they actually are. The employer in this case is the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud; that's who the employer is.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, a couple of arguments. Those people that work within caucus, whether it be for the Liberals, the New Democrats, or the Tories: that's not a normal government office, yet those employees access those benefits. Constituency staff, in my opinion, is no different than employees that work for a caucus.

Now, if it's seen that this should, in fact, be charged against the constituency office, so be it. When we develop the new constituency budgets for the upcoming fiscal period, then that's one of the items we would have to take into consideration, but if it makes it easier for the Clerk to have them charged back directly to the constituency office, fine. I'm just concerned about the welfare of those staff people that do work in the various constituency offices throughout the province. I don't think this is a fair situation for them.

MS BARRETT: Well, I agree with those comments. I have a question for Ken, actually. When you do your estimates on a department-by-department basis, the department is actually responsible for the employer's share of the benefits that go to employees: is that correct?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, that's correct. That's a negotiated item with the Alberta union of public employees.

MS BARRETT: Yes, but what I'm saying is that the aggregate amount doesn't come out of a different fund. In fact, it comes from each department's estimates.

MR. KOWALSKI: Department portfolio, yes, that's correct.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, right. Okay.

DR. McNEIL: The constituency office allowance from which constituency staff are paid is set up -- I'm quoting from the Members' Guide, which isn't a legal document.

These funds are used to secure office space, including furnishings, to retain office and secretarial assistance, and to provide related services.

So any funding for that purpose comes from the constituency office allowance, and these contracts were developed based on that assumption, that that money to pay for constituency staff comes from the constituency office allowance. Now, in strict legal terms the contract with the individual employee is with the Legislative Assembly Office, but the authorization for funds to pay that individual comes from the constituency office allowance.

MS BARRETT: Is there a motion on the table?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that this item be referred to the Clerk to allow the Clerk to bring forward an amended contract which would allow for the provision of building in other work benefits, employee benefits that are normally applicable to staff within government departments, caucus offices, cabinet offices, and so on. Speaking to that, Mr. Chairman, the reason why I'd like to see it handled on that basis . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Whoa. Whoa. The Clerk cannot bring in the motion. He can bring in background information, documentation, and so on. That's the only . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Well, that was my motion: that the Clerk bring back an amended contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He can bring back information.

All right. Let's go on.

MR. WICKMAN: That he bring back information relating to an amended personal services contract that would be used for draft purposes, incorporating the provision for those benefits. Mr. Chairman, I do it that way just to follow the practice that was used the last time around, where the committee requested a contract and then the committee members looked at that contract and said, "Yes, that contract is fine." At that particular time, I guess, no one eyed the fact that there were certain elements of the contract that maybe should have been desirable to have been in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: A point of clarification. By what date or by which of the next meetings would you like to specify?

MR. WICKMAN: Not tomorrow; the meeting after.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, can we also get some amounts related to that for either a global amount or a per caucus amount?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BOGLE: Just for clarification, Percy. It's my understanding that as the other employer benefits come out of the constituency allocation per member, that the intent of your request is that -- and following the remarks by Cypress-Redcliff -- the dollars would come out of the constituency office allocation.

MR. WICKMAN: Through you, Mr. Chairman: yes, Bob, they would. Then I would hope that we would take that fact into consideration when we're developing the new constituency budget for the forthcoming fiscal period.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, just to add something to that. In the number of years that I've worked on negotiating employee benefit programs -- I don't know which one we have or who our contract is through, but a lot of them do require that these people be full-time employees before they qualify under the various dental plans, health groups, long-term disability programs. So could we look at our existing program and see if there are any constraints such as that in it before we carry this further?

MR. WICKMAN: Normally a minimum of 15 hours a week, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Sometimes 20.

DR. McNEIL: Just a point of information. All our benefit programs are linked in with the government benefit programs, so the rules, limits, that apply there would apply to us. I believe there's the opportunity for prorated benefits. I'm not, off the top of my head, certain as to what the lower limit is in terms of hours per week.

MRS. BLACK: Could you check that out?

DR. McNEIL: Yes. That would be part of it.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you. Great.

DR. McNEIL: Just one other piece of information. Just on a preliminary basis we've done a bit of calculation in anticipation of this item. Roughly, additional benefits would cost the member's allowance about 6 percent of the employee's salary. So the average salary right now is about \$20,000 per annum for constituency staff; that's full-time people. So you're talking about 6 percent, 7 percent, additional costs to provide those benefits. But we'll provide you with a more detailed analysis at the next meeting.

MRS. BLACK: Great. The next meeting but one.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion basically to table it? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Edmonton-Whitemud, 6(b).

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, 6(b) again is a continuation of previous discussion we had at the very limited meeting. It calls for extending the equipment or furniture package to include a fax machine. Two arguments I would have. One is that I think fax machines are becoming such a common method of communicating; I think there are economical advantages, or it's the convenience of it. One of the things that I look at is that all you have to do is look around government offices; look at offices around city hall. Almost any office where you have any type of senior person at all, that type of equipment is there. They're going to have their fax machines, and here we're talking about a body that is elected representatives, and I don't feel we as elected representatives should shortchange ourselves. By not allowing ourselves those types of pieces of equipment, benefits, whatever the case may be, that are normally available within the bureaucracy -- I just find it difficult to understand why there would be any reluctance.

Now, I understand that there is the concern about furniture being surplus furniture and such, but that has been exempted in the past. The last computerization package, for example, doesn't deal with goods that have been declared surplus. I recognize we're not going to have surplus fax machines in a warehouse. It wouldn't mean that the government would actually have to go out and purchase fax machines. I'm talking in terms of this being part of the basic furniture package, that it would not be charged against a constituency budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion.

MR. McINNIS: I haven't got any objection to that. What about those of us who already purchased fax machines? Do we get reimbursed if this goes through?

MS BARRETT: I'd like to respond to that query. We've been around this table a few times before on the computer issue. I had to bite the bullet because I had already bought two when we decided to go for the computerization, so I guess I would certainly vote against that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Against what?

MS BARRETT: Against reimbursement to constituency offices that have already purchased fax machines. I took a dive on computers, so fair's fair, eh? [interjection] Yeah, gee. Aw.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Public Works, Supply and Services, followed by the Clerk on the study. Good enough.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, before too long this committee will have to sit down and look at the overall budget of the Legislative Assembly, and it would seem to me that the appropriate time to look at matters such as this would be in terms of the whole budgetary process when we look at the overall limits allocated for constituency offices and what's entailed and the like. So, again, in essence what it would be is just a deferral of any decision-making in this matter until we go through the budgetary process to see what the parameters would be.

DR. McNEIL: My point was just that there are not funds allocated in this year's budget for this purpose.

MR. WICKMAN: I have no problem with that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HYLAND: Didn't we talk about this last year? When we got into the computerization, it cost a little more. We thought maybe we were going to get some, but the computerization cost a little more, and we used up what we thought were the funds to be used for fax machines. Maybe year-end we'll have a better idea of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Public Works, Supply and Services, is this a motion, then, to defer, to table till next?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, until the budgetary process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the understanding will be to discuss it again in budgets?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Motion by Public Works, Supply and Services: those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Item 6(c). Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry. I'm not certain how we got (a) and (c), but they both relate to the same matter. When we covered 6(a), Mr. Chairman, we did, in fact, get into item 6(c).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So that we're taking as being deferred along with (a). Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So items 6(a), (b), and (c) have been tabled.

Now on (d): Report on Request to [Public Works, Supply and Services] re Constituency Offices RITE Line Installation. Clerk?

DR. McNEIL: A number of meetings ago the committee requested and I recommended, I believe, that before we proceed any further with RITE line installations, there be some analysis of the cost savings of installing the RITE line in the constituency offices. We have the background here in the first part of this decision item. We conducted a study for three months in the early part of '89 comparing the costs of calls to government numbers in Edmonton for those offices that had RITE lines versus those that didn't. There's a statistic there in part two that says that the average cost per office for a RITE line for calls to Edmonton was \$14.20 versus \$38.15. That's monthly cost with a RITE line.

In addition to that, coming out of the constituency computerization project, there was a recommendation that in those offices that did have a computer, in order to minimize the communication costs with the caucus offices here in Edmonton, a RITE line be installed in those computerized offices. The toll charges for the one month that we tested those eight offices that were on the pilot project, in terms of communicating back and forth, were almost \$1,000. So based on the obvious difference in costs here between the RITE and the non-RITE offices just in their calls to government members in Edmonton — that was the way we analyzed it — and based on the fact that we have a project proceeding with respect to computerization of constituency offices, the administration is recommending that we enter into further discussions with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services with respect to installing RITE lines in the remaining constituency offices. What I'm suggesting is a discussion between ourselves and PWSS to determine a schedule, the technical requirements, and the budget implications of such a proposal and report back to this committee with a recommendation.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Discussion? Question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Can I ask now, Mr. Chairman: what is the impact of that decision?

AN HON. MEMBER: The information comes back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At a future meeting we'll go forward with it.

MR. WICKMAN: But in principle, the concept has been approved?

MS BARRETT: Uh huh.

MR. HYLAND: This is the list, the one that we've got?

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that list I think there are already 40

offices.

DR. McNEIL: There are 40 offices at present we have, right, and it will be extended to all offices. The proposal is to proceed to investigate that recommendation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; 6(e). Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: EDP Strategic Plan. Over the past year or so, because of difficulties that I guess we've all encountered with the state of EDP development in the Legislative Assembly Office, we've been working in concert with staff from Public Works, Supply and Services on a strategic plan for the development of EDP resources in the Assembly over the next three to five years. What we've been trying to do is put together a proposal in a broad sense that would try to deal with all the issues that need to be addressed by the Assembly in funding EDP resources. We interviewed members; we interviewed caucus chiefs of staff; we interviewed staff of the Legislative Assembly Office, the Speaker: as many people as we could cover to develop what each individual thought the needs were. Then based on that, first came the document that staff over at Public Works, Supply and Services developed, and then subsequently that document was taken by our director of information systems, Bill Gano, who started in April, and he's worked on developing a refined document.

We developed an executive summary, which is the three-page document here, and I have copies of the more complete document. My purpose today is just to table this information. We've created a strategic plan with the steering committee, of which the chiefs of staff are members, and our intention is to meet among that group and review this particular strategic plan and then report back to this committee, not tomorrow but by the next meeting. Hopefully we can achieve consensus on this overall plan, but the plan in itself is just a directions document. The essence of it will be in the budget process through which the recommendations in this plan would have to come to fruition. But what the plan does and what this executive summary does is just identify the broad needs and suggest the broad directions. The plan itself — I've got copies here to hand out — I don't think is a document that members will necessarily want to get into the guts of. I would expect you'd want your staff to do that. The next step is then for us to meet with the staff to review this document, but I wanted to bring it to this group first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What do you want, one for each caucus at this stage?

DR. McNEIL: I can give one to each member. I have sufficient. You'll note that it is set up as a draft.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any comments with regard to this being handed out for your homework, not necessarily for tomorrow morning, and for your each individual caucus chief of staff? We'll come back to it.

MR. McINNIS: We'll receive this as information and come back with a decision later on.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We might move on, then, to item

6(f); 6(f) in your binder also gives you some other information. Okay? Are we ready? Okay, 6(f).

MR. McINNIS: I've got a question under 6(f). Ours is one of the constituencies presently using equipment which meets the Assembly's standards and which will "eventually be purchased" by the Legislative Assembly Office. When is eventually?

DR. McNEIL: If you're on the list this year, there's a meeting of the constituency computerization steering committee this Thursday. At that point there will be a discussion, and each chief of staff has been asked to come to that meeting with the priority list for their caucus in terms of the order in which the equipment will be installed in the offices. There will be some agreement at that time as to the pace, the timing of those installations in each caucus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you'd like to go on and give the rest of the update report and then take the questions.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. Basically, this information item advises the members that in the pilot project constituency offices the equipment has been installed and is working, that for the 35 offices that are scheduled for this year, the orders have been placed for that equipment under the standing offer, and that the planning process to put that in place is being initiated with respect to the chiefs of staff, in terms of the scheduling, the training of members, the setup of the equipment and so on, and that the chiefs of staff will be able to keep individual members advised as to the scheduling and the progress of this particular program, computerization of the offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Calgary-Glenmore, 6(f).

MRS. MIROSH: I just want to know: what kind of computer equipment are we getting?

DR. McNEIL: The standing offer was AST 286 microcomputer. There is a base printer, a dot matrix printer, an Epson, or if the member chooses to pay an additional \$731 to get a laser printer, then that \$731 would come out of the member's constituency office allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Other questions with regard to this?

DR. McNEIL: Most members have opted to buy the laser printer because of the additional capacity that that provides the office with in terms of the type of document and the quality of document that can be produced. So we have standing-offer bids on both types of printers. From the feedback we've received from the eight offices that are operating, they're quite satisfied.

Our director of information systems has developed a number of particular software packages; for example, to do mailing lists and mailing labels and so on, given the software we've purchased. We have them set up for the office with the capability of doing certain kinds of tasks that they do a lot of, like mailing lists. We also have the capability now -- there's a certain piece of software where he can work with the individual in the constituency office and what is on the screen in the constituency office also appears on the screen in his office. So he can troubleshoot from his desk, in effect, in terms of assisting the constituency secretaries with any problems they're having in

their office. That's one of the advantages of having compatible equipment. That makes it a lot easier to do that kind of thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'll note under section 6(f), page 2, slated for '89-90 fiscal year we had to have the three Liberal constituency offices. So that negotiation will take place. I assume Edmonton-Whitemud would be one of them, since he's at the table. That doesn't necessarily follow. Okay.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry; I missed that remark.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In your binder, section 6(f), page 2, constituencies slated for equipment this year. If you go down the whole list, at the last there it has: three Liberal offices. So in discussion with the Clerk and Bill Gano, if you have that straightened away, so you'll know which ones are going to be there.

Okay. Then that leaves for the next year -- we'd hopefully be able to have enough money to do it.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, maybe the Clerk could respond to this. It's my understanding that according to this report and discussions I've had on the matter, any constituency office will be able to access it even during this period of time, this fiscal period, although the initial costs for those members would have to come out of their constituency budget. In other words, say, in Edmonton-Whitemud I'm not one of the three slated; I lost the draw. But if I still wanted to access that equipment, I could access it and pay the leasing cost out of the constituency budget.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. We have arranged for a leasing situation where a portion of that lease -- if you look on the third page here, the very last item, to pay a certain monthly charge, of which a portion of that, \$150 a month, goes toward the purchase price of that equipment so that next year when funds are allocated, you would receive from the budget for computerization for next year, assuming that it's approved, \$150 a month times the number of months you've had that equipment.

MR. WICKMAN: So what you need from me is a list -- Nick Taylor already has his, of course -- of which seven are going to get theirs under this program and which of the four remaining want to utilize the program charged against their own constituency.

DR. McNEIL: That's right.

MR. WICKMAN: And you need that by when?

DR. McNEIL: Well, we would hope that your chief of staff, in meeting with us on Thursday morning in this constituency computerization meeting, would have that information.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I'll point that out to him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, can I just ask a question on the prices of computers? Are these just an estimated price, or are these the contract? To the Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Sorry.

MRS. MIROSH: I'm just wondering about the cost of these computers. Is this just an estimated cost that you've slated in the budget, or is this an actual . . .

DR. McNEIL: We went out to the marketplace to 160 suppliers in Alberta. We got 30-something bids. We analyzed those bids, and this was based on the winning bids. This is not from one organization; it's from three or four different companies supplying different portions of the equipment: the software, the hardware, the printers, and so on.

MRS. MIROSH: It's my understanding that the price of these are dropping dramatically, and I'm wondering if we could do better.

DR. McNEIL: We would take advantage of any price reductions given by the firms.

MRS. MIROSH: So we're not locked into the pricing.

DR. McNEIL: Well, not on the downside. We are on the upside but not on the downside. I guess we would have to go to the marketplace again, to be fair to the suppliers, and that would, I think, stall the process significantly. We've already ordered the 35 for this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But again, you need to stress how many bids . . .

DR. McNEIL: As I say, we sent out to 160-plus suppliers, and we got 30-something back. So this is based on a fairly elaborate process last fall and early spring in terms of going to the marketplace and getting the lowest bidder who met the specifications in each component of the package.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. May we move on?
Legal Aid Costs for MLAs, 6(g). Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my understanding of the situation or procedure at the present time is that if a cabinet minister is involved in an action, there is protection, and I think when there's a third party involved, there is an action. Now, I'm going to have to get some advice here to make sure I have it interpreted correctly. But when you have a situation where you have two Members of the Legislative Assembly involved in a civil matter when there's a legal dispute, there is no provision at the present time to cover the legal costs involved. Is that correct so far?

MR. M. CLEGG: If the dispute relates . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What's the dispute?

MR. M. CLEGG: It depends on the dispute.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, there are two going on right now within the House, where two MLAs are suing another two MLAs.

AN HON. MEMBER: There is?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes.

MR. McINNIS: Is it something they said?

MR. WICKMAN: I don't know the nature of the lawsuits or that. But it's just what they call litigation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, wait a minute. Whoa, whoa. Thank you. The Chair has just declared a 10-minute break.

[The committee recessed from 2:53 p.m. to 3:02 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. Those members who were on the previous existence of this committee realize that from time to time we either have to have coffee breaks, or the chairman is suddenly visited with some affliction where he must visit the washroom in a hurry, and that allows us some time to catch our breath.

Mr. Wickman, with respect to this item.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to move that this item be tabled to allow the Parliamentary Counsel to report back to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Motion to table. Those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried. Thank you. We'll have that conversation. Thank you.

Item 6(h) . . .

MS BARRETT: It's dealt with, isn't it?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman . . . I'm sorry; are we at item 6(h)?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Item 6(h): there isn't written background information, Mr. Chairman. The intent of this is to provide a greater resource for the leader of the New Democratic Party and the leader of the Liberal Party, being the two parties within the opposition, to allow those two and only those two, because government members of course do have access to those type of resources -- it's to allow either of those two members or leaders, when they're traveling throughout the province on government business, to be able to take an aide with them, a resource person. Not a family member, nothing like that; an aide or a travel person to allow them those backup resources that are so often required. For example, if Ray Martin has to fly to Grande Prairie . . .

DR. ELLIOTT: Please. Brooks. Send him the other way: Brooks.

MR. WICKMAN: Brooks, wherever. Sometimes it's difficult, you know, to have those resources at his fingertips. It's fairly customary for persons in those positions to have not an entourage with them but at least one person to provide that assistance and to provide that continuity. I would say from the top of

my head that we're looking at a situation that may run, based on the amount of travel that a leader would do in the province of Alberta, maybe \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year per person.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So that is manifestly clear on page 12 of the little green book, which says:

Regularly scheduled air travel service between any points in Alberta for travel on official MLA business. The Assembly pays for a maximum of five return trips in a fiscal year . . . for each Member.

Five. And then

A Member who is the leader of an opposition party is entitled to unlimited regularly scheduled air travel within Alberta.

So what the request is now is to add an executive assistant.

MR. WICKMAN: Right; exactly.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, what prohibits that now? What prohibits an assistant traveling now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our own direction, which says no for it.

DR. McNEIL: The opposition budgets rate up to two components, a component per member, \$36,000 in one instance and \$32,000 in the other. Then there's a leader's allowance, and that leader's allowance can be allocated however the caucus wants to allocate it. So nothing would limit an executive assistant traveling with the leader; it's up to the caucus to decide how to allocate the funds that they were provided by the Assembly.

MR. WICKMAN: Except not enough dollars.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's a different matter.

MRS. BLACK: That's my point, Mr. Chairman. It is not prohibited at this point.

MR. WICKMAN: No, it isn't, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hold it. Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: This is something we have to address when we look at the budget soon. We've got an agenda item that looks at next year's budget and this year's budget, this one coming. That is where the funding for staff travel has always come from: from caucus budgets. The thing that I think has to be dealt with is the travel arrangements for MLAs, the five free flights. I guess that's a year old, two years, something like that. It was unlimited prior, if I'm not mistaken. As a new member I've done four trips already. That was preessional, just to get around the province once and get to meet a very few people. So it seems to me like five trips a year isn't going to fill the bill. I think that's the type of thing we should look at under this. But the staff has always been part of the caucus budgets and, I think, should be kept there.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has raised an extremely valid point. Maybe rather than trying to relate it to the Members' Guide, which I'm attempting to do, because those provisions within the Members' Guide at the present time, of course, aren't charged back against the caucus budgets, so it's sort of like bonus or

gravy -- I guess I was trying to extend that gravy. But if the approach should be that it should be incorporated within the new up and coming budget, that's fine, because I can recognize what he's saying. He's the critic for environment, for example. Being critic for environment for the New Democrats or our critic for environment within the Liberal caucus calls for a great deal more travel because of these projects that are going on, particularly up north, than it would for a person that may be critic of some other area. So to restrict that person to five trips on government business within the province in the year may be very, very limiting. So maybe that whole question of travel provisions should be looked upon. If you're from outside of the city, you don't have a problem, because there is no restriction. You can fly as often as you want, so you can combine the two.

MR. McINNIS: To Edmonton.

MR. WICKMAN: To Edmonton, yeah. But then, of course, yeah, you still have the problem of Edmonton up to Fort McMurray or Edson, wherever you may be heading.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's also the provision in there for other mileage, but this is just with respect to air. Right?

MR. WICKMAN: With respect to air. Because, you know, I guess driving is one way of getting to certain places, but particularly when you get up north, I'm not sure it's that feasible to start driving back and forth.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, our item here is 6(h), Travel, Opposition Leaders.

MR. WICKMAN: Could I suggest that that simply be tabled to be discussed when we deal with the 1990-91 budget?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At a future date rather than in this next item. Okay. Tabling.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, we must have two lists here now. We've got a list that we've tabled, and we've got a list, I think, of about three items so far for the budget that we should have separate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: I missed out on the comment, Mr. Chairman, where you said for future, not in this discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you'll see, hon. member, that the very next item we have here is the '90-91 Budgets, and this is just the preliminary here. So what we were talking about here is when we get into more detailed discussion at a future meeting.

With regard to things coming up in future items of budget, what I have here, and I'm sure Louise has it in far more precise terms, but my understanding is that items 6(a) and (b) and (c) fall within that budget discussion, and now 6(h) as well.

DR. McNEIL: And 6(e) will as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Yes, that's right.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, could I ask if I could bring my motion forward that I intended to bring back dealing with this particular fiscal period, prior to our discussion on the 1990-91 budget?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which motion?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, when I sent you the memo, I indicated a number of items I requested be on the agenda, and one was a review of the caucus budgets. That's not on the agenda, and you said it could be incorporated under this particular item, 6(i).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I have you here to discuss that after we have the overview as to what the process is by the Clerk. Okay?

MR. WICKMAN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 6(i), Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Just for information, we've sent out a budget package to each caucus and to all the managers in the Legislative Assembly Office requesting the preliminary information on each area's requirements by September 5 with the target of a no-growth scenario in the initial approach, which we've done in years past. This is just really to initiate the process, to get people thinking about the requirements for next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To take them further through how constructively [inaudible] around the table in their caucus. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I know that our chief of staff is beginning to work on that process, and I assume other chiefs of staff are as well. It's my understanding that the chiefs of staff have been asked to submit the detailed breakdown of the proposed budgets. Is that correct? I guess my question is, why are we doing that? We agreed some years ago in this committee that it's not the business of the ND Party what's happening in the Liberal caucus budget nor the business of the government what's happening . . .

MS BARRETT: That's a good point.

MR. BOGLE: . . . in another. We set our budget based on two factors: the number of members we have times the amount of money, and the leaders. Wouldn't it save everybody a lot of effort, unless there's some legislative impediment that I'm not aware of that requires us to go through this detail, to allow our caucuses to submit the global budgets? If the suggestion is that it be based on zero growth, it's very simple. We can use our limited resources in a more beneficial way to our respective caucuses.

DR. McNEIL: That's been our expectation in the past, which is, in the final analysis, that the caucuses would submit just their normal budgets, but the detail was provided for the caucus's own benefit if they wanted to go into it. But we don't require the detailed information from each caucus; that's more for the managers in the Legislative Assembly Office.

MR. BOGLE: So, clearly, if we wish to submit, as a draft at

this point in time, a no-growth budget with the same dollars as we had last year, this meets all the requirements of the Treasury and Leg. Assembly staff.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, partly on the same thing, I would think that the only portion of the caucus they should be submitting would be new requirements or replacement of dated equipment, that kind of stuff, for the capital budget rather than trying to . . . Sure, we have to internally itemize the caucus budget to arrive at our amounts, and I can think of at least one -- what do you call it? -- printer that somebody should have somewhere.

DR. McNEIL: Oh, yeah. And in relation to that kind of equipment we'll be working with the individual chiefs of staff within the bounds of that EDP strategic plan to get more specific in the overall needs relating to EDP.

MR. HYLAND: That's out of the general budget, not out of the caucus budget.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the comments made by Bob Bogle as to how we determine the expenditures within our budget; it's the business of our caucus and so on and so forth. However, I just assume we're talking in terms of some type of provision to allow for that base to increase. I'm not sure if there's a formula, that, you know, you take the existing budget and increase it by 8, 9 percent, whatever the case may be. And then anything over and above that -- extraordinary type items, replacement of equipment, whatever -- the chiefs of staff would have to argue for that. But the base budget, there shouldn't be any question of having to argue or rationalize that. We just agree here that that budget will increase by a certain percentage for the caucus, and then that should be done, and then the caucuses determine how those dollars are spent.

Now, putting the caucus aside, a question I have in the overall budget which would also fall under the Clerk: what about the constituency offices? Aren't those budgets reviewed on an annual basis?

MS BARRETT: Separate.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, that isn't down here. That's not on the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That becomes part of our budget.

MS BARRETT: We're not dealing with the budget yet.

MR. WICKMAN: I thought we were dealing with 1990-91 budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, just the very preliminary building blocks of it.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, this is general. I'm asking: do we, in

fact, each year review the constituency budget to increase it to consider that there are costs in goods and services and employee benefits and compensation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We certainly review it.

MR. WICKMAN: So that's done automatically?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we review it. Now, let's be crystal clear: review, yes. You then said, "review and increase." That doesn't necessarily happen. But review, yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. When do we review?

DR. McNEIL: There's a review within the budget process as it proceeds. There are a number of components of that constituency office budget that relate to the cost of postage, that relate to the number of electors in each constituency, and so on. There is a formula that applies there. Then there's an overall allocation per member in the constituency office budget. That is something that's reviewed by the committee each year to determine whether or not that is appropriate. That will take place in the overall budget process as it evolves.

MR. McINNIS: As a new member of the committee I'm trying to figure out the budgeting process as well. Alternately, there's an estimate book for the Legislative Assembly which comes as part of the budget package. I assume that's the responsibility of this committee, to put that book together and to get it before the House, and then it's up to the House whether they deal with it or not. In the initial phase, unless there's some history I'm not aware of, I wonder why we would direct the caucuses to go to zero in their initial submissions if they feel that there's a case to be made for more or less. Could they put that forward and then just look at it and seek justification or whatever? Then they could come forward with whatever they think is the correct amount as for the administration and other elements.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You certainly can do that. I think, and as the Clerk gives you that signal, it's the signal that I've given to the components within the Legislative Assembly in regard to my own administration. It's at zero, and that's what we're attempting to do here. So I'm glad you raised that point.

MR. BOGLE: Just very briefly, building on John's comment, it goes without saying that we try very hard to make sure that once the arguments are made by the various caucuses, we derive our figure based on the formula that I have earlier mentioned. It's only if a member representing a caucus is adamant -- if there is to be an increase, as an example, and I'll use last year's budget, because that's something that did occur, where a former representative of the Liberal Party argued that his caucus did not want the increase, although he was cautioned by both the ND and the government members on the committee. The members reluctantly allowed that motion to go forward, and therefore there really is a two-level or a two-tier support package today. So, you know, we'll help drag someone to the well, but we won't make him drink.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Further discussion? We'll be back to budgets, rest assured.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. But, Mr. Chairman, do I get the opportunity now to make my motion dealing with budgets?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you can make a motion indeed.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my motion is going to be that the previous decision made by a member of the Liberal caucus to freeze the 1989-1990 budget at the previous level be rescinded. Speaking to it -- and if I have to grovel a bit on this one, I'll grovel a bit on this one -- I think that was a very, very serious mistake that was made in the process, by my calculations to the tune of something like 32 grand, and it's caused us real, real difficulties. I wasn't here, of course, in those days, so I can't really be accountable for a decision that was initiated by that member and as to the rationale. But I think it was a mistake, and I'm not afraid to admit it was a mistake. That \$32,000 could mean another one and a half researchers within our caucus. When we talk in terms of fairness, and I'm pleading now with the committee, let's face it: the New Democrats saw their increase, I believe, of about 9.2 percent; the Tory caucus budget was adjusted in accordance with that formula; and because of actions initiated by a member of the Liberal caucus, ours, of course, wasn't. So I'm asking for your understanding, I'm asking for your sense of fair play, recognizing that we're all Members of the Legislative Assembly, all trying to do a good job, all entitled to proper resources on a proportionate basis. To make ours proportionate now, we have to undo an error that was made by a previous representative on this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, Percy, what would be . . . Because our budget passed as submitted, then we would have to special warrant. If this motion goes, we'd have to special warrant the additional funding. I guess that's the question to . . .

MS BARRETT: Well, if that's the case, I'll make a pitch for a special warrant too. Sorry.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk, is that your understanding?

DR. McNEIL: That's my understanding. A special warrant would have to be put forward for additional funding.

MR. WICKMAN: Are you saying that a special warrant would have to go to cabinet?

MS BARRETT: Yup, that's the way it works.

MR. WICKMAN: But if this committee recommended to cabinet that the issue . . . I find that difficult, but if that's the process, I guess that's the process.

MS BARRETT: The budget was passed, Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: For \$32,000, cabinet would have to pass a special spending warrant when we see other situations where millions and millions of dollars are spent?

MS BARRETT: And it's all done through special warrant.

MRS. BLACK: We've just passed the budget.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, the budget got approved.

MR. WICKMAN: So I need two steps in one: that we rescind the previous decision, and secondly, that we recommend to cabinet that they issue a special spending warrant to accommodate that increase of \$32,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be the process because, as I say, we're well into this fiscal year, and where else do we rob Peter to pay Paul?

Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Is \$32,000 the right number?

MR. WICKMAN: By my calculations, and maybe the Member for Edmonton-Kingsway can correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is it was based on . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Kingsway isn't here.

MR. WICKMAN: Edmonton-Highlands. . . 9.2 percent of the previous year's budget. In fact, I do have that page of the budget here.

MS BARRETT: No, you're wrong. I think the figure was from \$32,000 to \$36,000. If that comes to 9.2, then that's accurate, but that's what it was.

MR. BOGLE: It's based per member, Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, yeah. But see, they were at 16 members. Now, when this was dealt with, there were four members, and I'm talking about the base here of that \$320,000. It should be 9.2 percent of that \$320,000 would be on the same proportion as the New Democrat adjustment was at that particular time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

DR. McNEIL: There are two components to the budget. One is the number of dollars allocated per member, and based on your caucus's decision when the budget was put together, there is \$32,000 per member allocated to the Liberal caucus. So there would be eight members times \$4,000 difference, which is \$32,000. I can't recall now what happened with respect to the leader's allowance.

MS BARRETT: Three percent, and it was denied by Nick.

DR. McNEIL: Okay. In that case, following through on your logic, there would be a three percent addition to the leader's allowance. I'm not sure what that number is -- it was \$192,000 or something like that -- but I could calculate that out to the dollar for you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would just like an understanding from this committee or an agreement that they are sympathetic towards my presentation and that we'll take steps to correct that error that was created by a member of the Liberal

caucus. I understand that there were attempts to forewarn the individual that it was an error and that it would make things difficult for us, and I appreciate those attempts that were made at that particular time.

MR. McINNIS: Well, the way it's presented, this is a political question. We're politicians around this table, so I guess it's appropriate that we deal with it. The member comes in now and says that we were in error back then and we'd now like you to straighten out the error for us. I'm not so sure that it was an error, given that they got to go through the campaign saying: "We refused the increase. We're responsible with the taxpayers' money, whereas the rest of you aren't." And then to come back and get the money as well, that's a cake and eat it too type of position, if you can have it one way before an election and another way after an election. It seems to me it's one thing to take the courageous step of refusing taxpayers' money, but if you are going to take that position and take it to the electors, then the very least you can do is live with that for a year. I would have no objection in trying to overcome this difficulty when we do go back to the estimates; that's the responsibility of our committee. But, Percy, you've got to take it to cabinet in terms of having this thing done, and I'm not so certain that I would like to sign my name to that petition.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional comment? We have a motion before us to rescind the previous action. Is there a call for the question?

MR. McINNIS: Wouldn't the motion be more properly to ask for a special warrant?

MS BARRETT: I think you would have to overturn the estimates for that decision. I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it makes for an interesting . . . Legal counsel?

MR. M. CLEGG: The estimates can't be overturned or changed. What essentially the motion will be is to request an additional sum of money equal to what was foregone. I think it essentially is understood from the way the member has expressed it that it comes to the same thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So Edmonton-Jasper Place is right. If we make it into a motion, the mover would then have to put it in the positive form, being a request for an additional amount of funds. It came to, guesstimated, \$32,000.

MR. WICKMAN: Let me word it in a sense that I'll move that we recommend the special spending warrant in a sum equivalent to those dollars that had been previously lost because of a motion put forward by a member of the Liberal caucus. Just to sum up discussion on it, I appreciate the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, but please don't hold it against me. You know, for whatever reason -- I can't explain -- it was error. I'm groveling; I don't know what more I can do. It was a bad decision at that particular time. Had it been me, I would not in fact have proposed that particular course of direction. I'm not sure that there were political points made out of it. I don't think there are political points made out of that type of thing.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, are you kidding?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, just hang on. I've got my hand up on this one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, hon. member, before you I recognize Grande Prairie, Cypress-Redcliff, Edmonton-Highlands, Calgary-Foothills.

The motion cannot ramble quite the way it was; it just has to say a set amount. We can do the research on the figure when and if the motion passes. It would say "in the amount of approximately \$32,000," and somebody else can go through the calculations and give us what the figure is. But that's what the motion would be. Is that roughly agreed to?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. Agreed, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, let's start with Grande Prairie; Cypress-Redcliff, Edmonton-Highlands, Calgary-Foothills, Red Deer-North.

DR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Chairman, with your guidance, I would like to move the request that this topic be tabled for further study.

MS BARRETT: Till when?

DR. ELLIOTT: For further study. It's a tabling motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is tabled. So those in favour of tabling . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, a tabling motion should have a time on it or you can't . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no.

MR. WICKMAN: You can debate the time aspect of a tabling motion.

MS BARRETT: A tabled motion keeps coming back . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It keeps coming back.

MS BARRETT: . . . every meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair would see it as coming back tomorrow and then, after that, coming back at the next meeting.

The motion to table: those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: So it comes back tomorrow, then, automatically.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 6(j), Pension Indexing. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, you certainly can't say that you haven't been on the agenda.

MR. WICKMAN: A person had to do something while they were sitting in the House there listening to these half-hour speeches.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask that this item be dealt with in

conjunction with item 6(c).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 6(c) . . .

MR. McINNIS: There are two item sixes on here.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. It would have to be 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Constituency Staff Contract?

MR. WICKMAN: No, not Constituency Staff Contract.

MR. McINNIS: It's the cycling . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you; 7(c). We have two sixes; now it's a 7. All right. All things being equal, we have finished with section 6.

Now 7, Other Business. I now have here Interns. The next item is bicycling on the grounds, subsection (b).

Pension Indexing. It's a matter of dealing with the matter that was dealt to us by the Legislature.

MS BARRETT: Bill 24. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Here we go: 7(a), Interns. Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I understand that the interns selected to start, I assume, in September have not been designated their caucuses yet, and that one of the reasons -- and this is all sort of secondhand stuff; this is hearsay -- is because of a motion that I brought a couple of years ago to this committee relating to a desire for chiefs of staff to have some sort of input in the selection of the interns. I don't have a copy of that motion, but I think it was about as vague as that; maybe a little more precise. In any event, nothing has happened, and I have proposed that the four finalists go to a draw for their caucus designation. Chiefs of staff have been dealing with this, and our chief of staff isn't here; I see yours is though. Would it be appropriate to ask if anything has happened since I last heard, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead and ask.

MRS. AINSLIE: No. We had a meeting about a week ago, and at that time we couldn't come to any agreement. The Liberal and ND caucuses feel that it should be a random draw, and we're of the opinion that it should be a selection method. It's down to draw versus selection, so it was decided that we would come back to it.

MS BARRETT: Aha. So we're the referees?

MRS. AINSLIE: That's right.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Well, then, I'll just go ahead and move that the intern designation be determined by a draw and that the instructions come from this committee to that effect.

MRS. BLACK: What are those interns all about?

MS BARRETT: Well, they're little doctors who . . .

MRS. BLACK: Can you address the subject matter with me?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, okay. Leg. interns are hired by the Assembly through the Speaker to participate as staff, basically, for a 10-month period after they have completed one or more degrees. I think it is university exclusively. It used to be that we had eight, then six, and now we're down to four. That four might have been a relatively appropriate number, considering the configuration in the Assembly prior to the March election, because there were four caucuses, in fact, represented in the Assembly. So eight or four worked out quite nicely. Eight was much better, I must say -- hint, hint, hint. But I guess we'll deal with that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Budget discussion.

MS BARRETT: We'll deal with that under budget discussion.

The process used to be -- in fact, I'd been on the interviewing committee on Grant's behalf some years before -- that MLAs or their designates from caucus would come to meetings to interview applicants along with the Speaker, the Speaker's EA, and three reps from the three main universities in Alberta. Then what happened is -- I don't actually know. Some sort of problem happened a couple of years ago. It might have had to do with how the shortlist was arrived at or the designation. I can't remember, and I don't recall ever having it in writing, just being advised of it. In any event, then the question of the participation of chiefs of staff was raised, and we agreed that chiefs of staff should have some sort of say. Because basically what you're doing is getting an employee for 10 months; you should have some sort of say in this. That has subsequently been interpreted to mean that chiefs of staff should select from the finalists the one they want.

The problem I see with that is: what if all three caucuses want the same person? I don't know how you can ever resolve that except by luck of the draw. It's the only way I can see to fix the problem. We used to have the system where in fact the finalists drew sticks to see where they would be designated. In fact, our hon. member here came through those ranks; didn't you?

MR. McINNIS: Uh huh.

MS BARRETT: That's what I think.

MRS. BLACK: See; you went to the wrong party. [interjections]

MS BARRETT: Well, yeah, generally speaking. I don't know that the rule is hard and fast. In fact, the chairman can give you much more information than I can on that sort of detail. But it really has come, I think, to a crisis point now, because there are two parties wanting to go one way and one party wanting to go another way. The reason I take the view that I do is simply because -- I mean, we're going to find ourselves inevitably in a situation where every caucus wants X person, and they can't have it. The only way to resolve it is to go to a draw, as far as I'm concerned.

MRS. BLACK: What are the duties of these interns?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rod, you used to run the program.

MR. SCARLETT: The duties of the intern can be pretty much

whatever the caucus wants them to do, outside of working in direct political work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So research, preparation of speeches, columns, or whatever.

MRS. BLACK: Well, usually an internship program is with an end result that these are people that will come on board down the road.

MS BARRETT: Sometimes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the other thing we do in the program is make certain that -- because we've been able to get some corporate sponsorship, to a limited degree, from Benson and Hedges, from Petro-Canada, and from Canadian Airlines -- they go to at least two other provincial Legislatures and the federal House of Commons and Senate while they're with us, so they have some kind of experience there. They're also taken into some dialogue and discussions where they can meet with some department officials. They're also taken into Calgary so they're able to meet with some parts of the corporate sector and other groups as represented there.

MR. SCARLETT: And they attend leadership or any party conventions that happen during the year, as approved. We don't pay for them. They're extended free entrance to those conferences.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In times past when we had larger numbers, we used to have it that they would be assigned to the government caucus for half the year and then to an opposition caucus for the other half.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you're then swapping caucuses halfway through the process. But because of fiscal restraint and other matters, and the decision of the committee, the program has been pared down considerably.

I have here Edmonton-Jasper Place, Taber-Warner, and then Edmonton-Whitemud.

MRS. BLACK: Just before we leave, Mr. Chairman, who pays for these interns?

MR. SCARLETT: It comes out of a special budget allocation out of the Legislative Assembly budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it comes under our own office.

MR. McINNIS: I have an interest in attempting to keep the selection and assignment criteria as nonpartisan as possible in this program. Each of the caucuses has a fund to hire research staff, people who do political work in the caucus. If we move to a direction where the caucuses are involved in selecting people either from the whole population or from the ones who were selected by a third process or a second process, it amounts to essentially hiring another researcher. And if that's what we want, I think just throw the money in the caucus budget and we can go ahead and do that. On the other hand, if we want a first-class educational experience, which is what this program has

been, I think then the caucuses have to be prepared to step back to some extent. I think the motion before us does that, at least according to the practice as I understand it. I think there are other things to be said about it, but I support the motion that's here today.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak against the motion. I think it might be well for both Pam and John to go back and read the minutes of some of the previous discussions we've had in the committee on the subject. It's been discussed at length. Pam is correct; the program was cut back from eight to six and is now at four. The intent of the motion, in my view, is very clear: the caucuses would have some say as to who they would have. You don't get that by drawing names out of a hat; it's hit and miss. Therefore, the intent is clear, and I see no reason why we as a committee should change the intent we originally agreed to. If the three caucuses can't agree, then so be it. That will be an easy decision to make when we come around to our next budgetary item, when we're dealing with the 1990-91 budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would have some real difficulty with, you know, the concept of just putting names in a hat and drawing. You know, in those types of positions, working within a caucus, you have to have some political leaning. What would happen, Pam, if you got an extreme rightist?

MS BARRETT: We've had them. We've had them in our caucus when I was a researcher -- one I worked with.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, but under your proposal we could get stuck with that person.

MS BARRETT: Now we get to the bottom line. [interjections] That's right. Come on, it worked out fine. They're trustworthy people.

MR. WICKMAN: I would sooner sit down, as far as a caucus group, and try and discuss and do some judging: this person plugs in here, this person there. You know, we work it out.

MR. McINNIS: I don't know how helpful this is, but these types of programs exist in quite a few provincial Legislatures and in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Everybody who is selected is thoroughly indoctrinated in the importance of keeping confidential things confidential or the importance to the existence of the program of their observing confidentiality. So far as I know, there hasn't been any incidence in this Legislature, but I could be wrong. Maybe somebody's holding a story of intrigue and other things that makes them leery of using what was essentially the time-honoured system of assigning legislative interns. Essentially it's a type of contract where the intern agrees to suspend whatever political belief and political activity they have during the time they're in the program in order to gain the confidence of the members so that they may observe what the members do and learn about the process. At the time I went through the program, I was a card-carrying New Democrat, but the Tory caucus was good enough to take me in . . .

MRS. BLACK: We did?

MR. McINNIS: Yes.

. . . and teach me everything they knew. In any event, that's the way things were done.

Now clearly, some people around this table have an expectation that the program is to run in a different way, and I just don't understand how it's supposed to run. It seems to me if you want research help and to hire guns with the right political philosophy, you obviously go through your own recruitment process. But if you're going to have interns, you've got to somehow be open to people coming in who are politically naive and maybe even have some experiences elsewhere. The important thing is to make sure they are aware that they have to suspend their own activities and suspend talking or writing about what they learn while they're an intern.

MS BARRETT: Could I make a couple of comments?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's Public Works, Supply and Services, and then perhaps we can see if we're coming to summation on the motion.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, for clarification, for my understanding. Do I take it, then, that at one time the process was by the luck of the draw, and then we had a discussion on this in the last couple of years and a motion was presented and was approved by this committee that, in essence, we go through the mechanism of consultation of the chiefs of staff of various caucuses? Did I hear . . .

MS BARRETT: That's what I want to address.

MR. KOWALSKI: . . . the Member from Edmonton-Highlands say that she was the one who moved that motion?

MS BARRETT: Yes. But I was going to address . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. So now we're back to saying, "Well, now we want to go back to the luck of the draw." Just so I can understand this.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. KOWALSKI: It seems that there are about 10 or 11 of us who are elected members of the Legislature of the province of Alberta sitting around a table and spending half an hour on this major, momentous decision. But I've got the background before the motion comes. We'll guide it accordingly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North, then Edmonton-Highlands, and then we'll call the question.

MR. DAY: First a question, Mr. Chairman. Who determines whether the four or eight or 16 people, or whatever the size this group is -- who determines who these fortunate people are to be selected in this program? Not to which caucus they go. Who determines that?

MS BARRETT: May I describe that committee? It's comprised of a representative from the U of A, U of C, and U of L; an MLA from each caucus or her or his designate; and at least . . . What?

MR. BOGLE: I hate to interrupt you, but I think [inaudible]

there was a significant change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the way it used to be.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. BOGLE: There was no caucus input in that original process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. For one year.

MS BARRETT: No. For one year. That's why I made the motion that I did, because of that. But it was not meant to be that . . .

MR. BOGLE: This year if I have to go back to the former chief of staff, I will. There was no input by the caucuses on the original part of the selection. That was one of the concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the ones who came up and who have now finished.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the new batch there is indeed.

MR. BOGLE: Those who have just finished -- how long had they been here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Since last September to the end of June.

MR. BOGLE: Well, we'll bring it back tomorrow, if you like, but my understanding from my former chief of staff is that there would be no input by the chiefs of staff representing our caucuses on the initial round of selection.

MS BARRETT: That's correct.

MR. BOGLE: When they became involved, we were down to the short list.

MS BARRETT: A year and a half ago. That's right. No, that is, in fact . . . Can I take my turn now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're in agreement on this. That was for the group who have completed as of June of this year.

MRS. BLACK: What about the new group?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The new group they've been involved with.

MRS. BLACK: The chiefs of staff?

MR. BOGLE: Who was involved from our caucus?

MR. SCARLETT: The chiefs of staff were involved from the final 16; a short list of 16 out of 32 applications. We cut out 16 who either did not have all their papers in on the application or who were so far out on academic standards that it was not conceivable that they would be possibly grouped into that final 16. It's a slight weeding out, but it really wasn't a shortlisting per se. What we did was get the 16 candidates that were qualified

and had all their application papers in.

MRS. BLACK: Who did the slight weeding out?

MR. SCARLETT: That was done by Michael Ritter and Karen South.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who are in charge of administrating the program.

MR. SCARLETT: And then that list of 16 went to the caucus so as to determine an interview list of eight, in which the caucuses then interviewed those eight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And there was no input from the university this year?

MR. SCARLETT: No input from the university at all.

MR. DAY: I think that answers my question, and we could get a flurry of discussion going on it.

In light of what's already been brought up about the voting on possibly the existence of this program, first of all, it's a nice program to have, but I don't think the future appreciation of the parliamentary system in Alberta or Canada hinges on it. Secondly, just as we are considering this issue, even within caucuses you don't have 100 percent confidentiality and solidarity at all times from elected members. I can also share from firsthand experience -- not myself having been involved -- that even on the intern program, when you have people who are philosophically opposed to the groups with whom they're working, you also do not have 100 percent confidentiality and integrity at all times. That's something to keep in mind as we come to a vote on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, the issue before us is not whether or not the program continues; it's the selection of the interns for this year.

Edmonton-Highlands in summation.

MS BARRETT: Okay, great. It's true the discussion has jarred my memory about what caused all of this. I had started to describe the configuration of the selection committee and I was describing something that had had that configuration at least since '82, at least since I walked into the building. Then what happened is that a year and half ago, for some reason I cannot explain -- and I'm not responsible, so I don't have to -- it didn't happen that way. What's happened since in fact is, because of my motion having been interpreted in a way that was never really meant to be, the university participants on that committee have pulled out, which is a real pity, you know, because it is meant to be not just a sort of political education and an education to acclimatize people to what goes on here; it's also meant to further their careers and maybe get them involved. It has an academic component and a subsequent component, and the academic component has been damaged by all of this.

Although -- I mean, I stand by my original motion from I think it was about a year and a half ago -- there was no caucus involvement at all, and that was not right because hitherto there had been a caucus involvement in the selection process. But to argue that the logical consequence of that motion is that now we must go to a system of designating by caucus the four finalists,

to me is not obvious. It seems to me that if we had the involvement of the caucus representatives -- which we did -- in this process of going through the 16 CVs of the qualified applicants and the whittling down to the finalists, surely that's enough caucus involvement; that now what we should do is go to a draw to determine the caucus allocation for each individual.

And she rests her case, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Those in favour of the motion please signify. Opposed?

MS BARRETT: No! Ten to two.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Does someone have an alternative proposal?

MR. McINNIS: Were you thinking of like a modified sort of draft system: first round, second round, third, or more?

MS BARRETT: I've no idea.

MR. McINNIS: How would the selection process work in that case?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think actually that the Chair directs that this be brought back on the agenda tomorrow. We've put more than enough time in on it for today.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Cycling on the grounds.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Mr. Chairman, you will recall that a couple of years ago I raised this matter, and we thought we'd brought it to a satisfactory conclusion by way of correspondence with the security folks outside and through the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services. At that time I don't believe you were the minister. In any event, I got a letter on June 23 from a constituent who was cycling across the grounds and was stopped by a security guard who insisted that she walk her bicycle past the building. Now, she points out that, you know, she's been doing this for ages and she's never been stopped before. She says: "I was not in the pool area, or stunting with my bike, but he insisted that I get off and walk."

I think we had come to some sort of conclusion about this before, and that is that, you know, cycling across the grounds should be permitted, and perhaps the problem is simply that some of the security personnel assigned to the grounds have not been advised of this or whatever. I didn't know what to do with it, so I thought I'd bring it to this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's fortunate that we have the minister on the committee. He can review the files on it.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'd be very, very happy to take a look at that.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, take it as notice and have a discussion on football fields.

MR. KOWALSKI: You're going to have to be careful, though, with security around a building, because one has to be intelligent about how you allocate these rules. You have the provision of a person who might have a weapon that they would choose to use and their escape plan would entail a bicycle. That is a possibility that exists. And when you talk about security, it's a lot more than simply a person saying, "Well, you can't ride your bike." Security people have always had an understanding of the permutations and combinations they've gone through, and you do have the possibility of a person wanting to do something and creating some kind of activity that is not inconducive to a criminal activity and their escape plan is the bike.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I think this issue is a little bit different, if you don't mind a brief response here.

MR. KOWALSKI: Oh no, I appreciate that. Please do.

MS BARRETT: A gazillion people ride across the grounds every single day. I can see them from my office, so I know that to be the case. It's just this odd incident that happens every once in a while, and I suspect it's an issue related to communication. Maybe I should just talk to you privately about it.

MR. KOWALSKI: Sure.

MS BARRETT: All right.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, while the minister's doing that, perhaps he could look at these goddamned skateboards and these kids on skateboards when you try to walk by. At least you can dodge a bicycle. Those things, even if the kid isn't on them, they're . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair hesitates to call you to order for saying "goddamned," but I'm sure you'll withdraw it. Thank you very much.

DR. ELLIOTT: I just want to make the point, Mr. Chairman, about safety. We've talked about security, but there's a time in the morning here when trying to get from the annex to the building above ground -- it's almost worth your life to cope with the bicycles as they come across the front of the building and down that sidewalk out behind the annex. I just object to it, just like I objected to having to make the run through here past the media to get from that door to that door, and I thank you for the arrangements you've made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, okay. The matter will be Public Works, Supply and Services'.

MR. WICKMAN: I just run those bicycles over.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're lucky you can do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to say you're a two-wheeler, but you're four-wheeler. As I recall, I think bicycles really were supposed to be behind the building at that time in our correspondence. Sometimes it gets so thick out there with people and especially young kids running around, it's asking for trouble. All right, that's taken as notice.

The next item of business, 7(c), the implications of Bill 24.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I could. I've been wrestling with this in the back of my mind as we sit here, and I've raised a number of points dealing with the pension indexing and different other matters. You know, I think it's an issue that has to be dealt with, and I've thought of the various ways we should be looking at it. I would propose, if you would accept the motion, very simply that we establish a three-member committee with a representative from the three different caucuses to come forward with recommendation to this committee on the whole question of the impact of Bill 24 and also with the question of the pension indexing.

Just speaking to it very briefly, Mr. Chairman. This is always a touchy one. It doesn't matter how you deal with levels of remuneration for elected representatives. I've seen task forces that have been set up in the past. In Calgary, for example, they set up a task force, recommendations came down, and there was outcry in any case. I've seen the city council in Edmonton deal with it; there was an outcry. When elected representatives periodically review their benefits, which has to be done periodically, you anticipate a degree of an outcry. If it's done properly, that can be minimized. All I'm saying is that all we've got to do as a subcommittee is equate what's happening in the province of Alberta, compare it with other provinces, and make sure there's care within the system.

I can point out, for example, one area that I feel is very, very unfair: the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has a caucus of a total of 16, as compared to the leader of the Liberal caucus, who has eight, which is 50 percent of that number, yet his additional benefit is only 25 percent in comparison to the Leader of the Official Opposition. There I see an area that is very unfair and has to be corrected. The pension indexing: based on the information I've received, I think there may have been some unfairness created there in the past. I think we just have to look throughout the entire area and come forward with recommendations. I would have to say from the Liberal caucus point of view that I will be prepared to participate in that type of subcommittee structure, and I would visualize each caucus would then decide. Pam and John would decide which one of those two. The total caucus would decide as to who their rep is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the committee was struck, and it has to be members of this committee. I don't know who else from your caucus it would be. Anyway we have a motion before us.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'd like to propose an alternative in the context of a discussion. Obviously I'm not trying to get another motion on the floor at this point. I mean, what is being proposed may seem reasonable, and it's certainly better than, for instance, this committee working on recommendations, but I suspect a better route would be to strike an independent committee of people who met the approval of all members of this committee, a committee comprised of people who are not MLAs, although they could be former MLAs. The reason I think that's very important is because I always feel conflict of interest in dealing with these issues. You know, it's not like you can have a workable mechanism between ourselves and our constituents in terms of, say, collective bargaining or coming to some agreement on what's appropriate for pay and benefits for the work we do. I would think an outside committee whose recommendations would be binding would have the effect of taking that decision-making out of our hands and would be more appropri-

ate to take away the conflict of interest we have, simply because there is no way we can deal with our employers, you know, in any other way. There's 2.4 million of them. I can't see another mechanism that would leave us in a situation where we wouldn't be in a conflict of interest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two or three things. Firstly, if another committee was formed other than the people around this table, unless you have somebody who maybe has just been a member of the Legislature, has quit since the last election, who's going to know the hours it takes to sit here? Who's going to know the time it takes when you're at home, the calls you get all the time, and all that sort of stuff? Nobody knows that. You know, if you get a so-called independent committee, you get a judge or something, all he knows is the time he sits on the Bench. He doesn't know what ours takes and all that sort of stuff. I think ultimately we're responsible. If a committee comes in, no matter who it's composed of, and says the remuneration will be X, if it's way high, they'll say, "Well, you rigged the people you put on the committee to get it up." If it's way low, then our colleagues say, "Well, you rigged it; you picked the wrong one." What do you do? It's a no-winner. So we're the ones that ultimately have to accept or reject a report. We might as well set the report. Then we know where our parameters are, and we can answer what our reasoning for coming to that decision was. But to give it to somebody else I don't think ever works out, because nobody really understands what this job, business, whatever you want to call it, is all about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: The difficulty is that I'm not dealing with my motion, and I don't have one written in fact. But to answer the concern, you're right about the rigging. I hadn't thought about that. But in fact you could strike this independent committee with very specific instructions that it shall survey all members of the Assembly in terms of, you know, hours put in, how many days a year you get off, average length of the working day, travel time, whatever. Similarly it could be instructed to survey ministers in terms of their additional work and an analysis of the staff relationship in the ministerial office in terms of burden felt by the minister, et cetera, et cetera. Those instructions could go to a committee.

The other thing you could do to resolve the ultimate difficulty -- which is that even if you do go outside to this committee, the report still has to come back here -- it poses a superficial problem, I think, insofar as if the committee is struck with the predetermination that the findings of that external committee are binding, then there is no consequent decision to be made upon receipt of that report.

So I'm not saying the points you made weren't valid. They are absolutely valid. But I think there are sort of objective ways this could be done, just like there are objective ways that the CPI is determined. There are objective mechanisms for a number of determinations. It seems to me that the potential for conflict of interest is the one that we should most eagerly attempt to avoid.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, Calgary-Foothills, Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. BOGLE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that several other provinces have been moving in the direction our Legislature moved through Bill 24. In other words, we are not breaking new ground. I'm wondering if we in turn can learn from some of those jurisdictions as to how they handle the issue. Saskatchewan quickly comes to mind, because I think they've recently gone through the process. It might be helpful if you were to check through your office, Mr. Chairman, and find out. Does Saskatchewan, where its version of our Members' Services Committee has this responsibility, strike an outside, independent, nonpartisan committee, or is it a responsibility they take on themselves and make a decision and go from there? I'm wondering, in light of that . . . Well, there may be others who wish to speak. That may be some information we want to obtain before we finally vote on the motion.

MS BARRETT: I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could find that out, if not today, tomorrow morning before we reconvene. That's one possibility.

Calgary-Foothills, Barrhead, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MRS. BLACK: Well, Mr. Chairman, I was actually going to suggest something along the same line as Mr. Bogle has. But I do feel that this committee was struck through the Legislature and it's an all-party committee, so I don't think from that element that there is a perceived conflict of interest in there. I do feel that our names were put forward from our various parties because they assumed we had a responsibility to make sure there was fairness for all. I think that perception would be there, and certainly we all have to be mindful of the decisions we make in here and how they will affect all members of the Legislature, not just a party. I think that's something that when we look at outside considerations, possibly we are looking also at the response. We have to make sure that we are responsible enough within our own committee to keep that in mind at all times, that we are going back to the major shareholder, which is the two million people in Alberta. I think that's something we keep in mind in all facets of the dealings with this committee. So I really don't think there's a conflict of interest there, because it is an all-party committee and I'm sure we're all looking for the best interests of all parties. But I do like the idea very much of looking at what other jurisdictions may have in place and may have done in the past or are presently doing.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm speaking in favour of the motion put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to create a subcommittee of this committee to come back with a recommendation. In the end it will be this committee, as a result of the responsibility delegated to it by Bill 24, to make that decision.

Perhaps I could just share a little story from my past in response to something the Member for Edmonton-Highlands has said in terms of an independent committee. In the fall of 1979, the First Session after the election of 1979, an independent committee was struck by the government of the day to write a report. This was going to be the binding report. Well, just by coincidence there also was a by-election that year, and I happened to be participating in that by-election. I want the Member for Edmonton-Highlands to know that irrespective of what any independent committee separate from the Legislature might say or do, the onus of responsibility will still fall back on whoever the

elected people are. During that by-election, after the Legislature at that time dealt with this report, it came about that the MLAs of the day were going to get a raise to the glorious sum of \$18,000 per year. I attended a whole series of public forums during the by-election, and I can assure you that no matter how one attempted to say it was an independent committee that was making the recommendation, you as the government candidate were the one that was going to get hit over the head. As each night wore on, the biggest protagonist they had in all this was one of the other candidates running against me. He just happened to be a Liberal by chance. But you know, it was an independent judge who had made this recommendation, and just by chance he happened to be a Liberal judge. Of course, the retort I got back from the Liberal was, "Well, I imagine he's pretty darn Liberal in terms of the enormous raise you are now going to get as a Member of the Legislative Assembly."

It's a no-win situation. It's very difficult subject matter for all of us to deal with. I'll conclude by reiterating, one, I think there's great merit in what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has said; and secondly, if any individual on the face of the earth is undercompensated for what he or she does, it is Members of the Legislative Assembly. And that's not only in the province of Alberta. As far as I'm concerned, that's anywhere I've seen this, period.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to make it quite clear that my motion doesn't represent a money grab. I think what it does is represent the opportunity for evaluation, for fairness to correct some injustices that may be there. I would hope, no matter what the outcome, if the New Democrat representatives can't feel they can support it, if it is passed, they would participate in that subcommittee, because their input would be very, very valuable.

But there are the areas I've pointed out that have to be looked at: the question of the leader of the Liberal Party, for example -- restoring the \$32,000 into the Liberal caucus, although that falls into another area. But that's still a point of fairness.

MS BARRETT: Lest we forget, eh?

MR. WICKMAN: The points made by Bob Bogle, the research and that. Yeah, of course that has to be done. The way I would see it happening is the three-member committee would sit down and we would have a plan of action. The first thing we would do is do that comparison as to what's happening in other parts of the country, what's happened in Saskatchewan. You know, how have they handled that type of situation? I don't think it can be this large. I think there can be difficulties in trying to bring all that information back and sort it out. I think a committee this size simply deals with the recommendation and then they make their decision based on that particular recommendation.

With all respect to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, I can recall the independent committee that was set up at city hall, and they were to review what was happening there. After interviewing each alderman -- and despite the fact some of us pointed out that we worked up to 70 hours a week -- their main recommendation was that it continued to be a part-time job. The aldermen weren't upset that they recommended 5 percent more or whatever, but they were upset by that recommendation. It was an insult to them. That was an independent committee which had labour representation, representation from the Fed-

eration of Community Leagues, from the Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired, a judge. You know, there simply is no easy answer to this whole question. At least a three-member committee is small enough that we can start analyzing some of the detail and look at what's happening elsewhere and then come back with that recommendation. I would assume we would go through our respective caucuses before we come back here, and then this committee can decide. If they don't like the recommendations of the subcommittee, so be it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you prepared to vote on this motion in this period of time, or what?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, when I talked a few minutes ago with respect to support for the motion, I was making my comments on the basis of representation from three different caucuses. I did not hear the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud at first say that it would be one person from each caucus. Perhaps I misunderstood that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, it was three. One from each caucus.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, then, I would like to propose an amendment to that in terms of the makeup: that it be two from the government caucus and one from each of the other two caucuses.

MR. WICKMAN: I would have difficulty supplying more than one.

MR. KOWALSKI: You're not part of the government caucus, Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: So you've pointed out in the House a num-

ber of times.

I don't have a problem with that amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have an amendment. Speaking to the amendment? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I don't want to move the motion to table, because then no debate is allowed. Would the committee members agree to waiting on this issue until tomorrow, until we've had a chance to at least get a report from some phone calls made to other Legislatures? We'd probably have it by 10:30 or so. Would you agree to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sounds like a motion to table to me. Until tomorrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: Until tomorrow.

MS BARRETT: So moved. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. For clarity, we do have an amendment on the floor, which is two, one, and one to the original . . . Okay.

MS BARRETT: Motion to adjourn.

MR. KOWALSKI: It's unanimous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The committee adjourned at 4:20 p.m.]

