

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

2:04 p.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll officially declare the meeting open and ask you to look at the agenda as presented. Approval to move the agenda? Moved by Alan that the agenda be accepted as presented. All in favour? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Can we move on, then, to item 3, Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes, the December 9 minutes. Page 1, page 2, page 3, page 4, page 5, page 6, page 7, page 8, the final page. Any errors or omissions in the minutes? Ready for a motion to accept the minutes. Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

All in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MR. FOX: Bob, would this be an opportunity for questions arising out of the minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. FOX: I believe you sent a letter to the then Attorney General expressing our concern as a committee about the delayed proclamation of the Conflicts of Interest Act. I'm wondering if you received . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I did. I spoke with him when I sent the letter, and I've had two discussions with the new Minister of Justice. It's my understanding the matter will be dealt with next week, at least that's the intent.

MR. FOX: It will be discussed. So we can expect a response to our letter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm hopeful that our request will be accepted and that the coming into force of the Act will be moved ahead from April 1 to February 1 as this committee unanimously requested. You all have a copy of the letter I sent, I believe.

MR. FOX: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

One other matter since we're on the agenda business. Under item 6, Request for Special Warrants, we had well over \$62,000 in special warrant requests. Due to an inadvertent mix-up between my office and Diane's office -- in the past items like that, from our perspective, were dealt with by Louise. Diane didn't know that. Diane forwarded them on, so my secretary didn't see the package. Consequently the requests for special warrants were not signed off, and requests were then being made during our preparation for supplementary estimates for that approximate amount of money. Of course in my mind the special warrants had been passed and approved and there was no need for any additional funding, so I was arguing that something was wrong. When we finally got it worked out between Diane and Wendy in my office and myself, I had a chat with the Chief Electoral Officer. He and I decided that really there

was no need for a special warrant or supplementary estimates as he has funding in his existing budget to cover that shortfall.

MR. FOX: For the record you're talking about enumeration and by-election costs over the fiscal period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the special warrant was to cover enumeration and by-election costs. The dollars left over in his budget are primarily budgeted moneys for enumeration that we had built in.

MRS. GAGNON: So the confusion resulted in an overall savings, you're saying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. It worked out well.

MR. FOX: Does that mean the Klein government saves by accident and not by design?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It means we've got great people working for and with us. It's just part of the process we're working out. Things are coming along fine.

Are there any other questions out of the minutes?

Okay, back to the agenda, item 4. We do have the Chief Electoral Officer coming to join us this afternoon at 4 o'clock. Is that correct? We also have a call in to Dixie Watson from the office of the Ombudsman to discuss the transfer of dollars from one of their codes to two other codes. We don't have confirmation on when she's able to come yet, but it would be later this afternoon. So my thought was that it might be appropriate for us to go in camera. We can do one of two things.

Yolande, you need to leave today by 4 . . .

MRS. GAGNON: Twenty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. My thought was we can either go in camera now and deal further with the request by the Chief Electoral Officer for remuneration for the work he did on the Electoral Boundaries Commission or move right on to our budget and deal with other agenda matters. I'm in the hands of the committee. What's your preference? Yes, Derek.

MR. FOX: I would suggest we go in camera now and deal with an outstanding issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is that a motion?

MR. FOX: I move that the committee go in camera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

All in favour? Thank you. Let the record show carried unanimously.

[The committee met in camera from 2:10 p.m. to 3:23 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much for joining us. I really didn't expect both of you to come over, but we're pleased you have. We're dealing with item 6, which is a request for transfer of funds, if I can find my tab 6.

MR. HYLAND: It's the one after 5 and before 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Alan. There it is.

Harley, would you like to lead us through it, please.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The budget for the Ombudsman at the present time is within the scope that we laid out last year. A couple of areas have caused us a little concern. Number one, legal services. I did not hire a lawyer for the first few months of the year, and we had to out-source. Secondly, I had a number of very technical legal problems that had to be addressed and took those outside on purpose because the competence -- I don't like the term "competence" in the total sense. The skill level of the lawyer I have on staff wasn't specific in the area that I needed this legal opinion on. So I did out-source it, and we now have that bill in. I am going to be short in terms of contract services. Because we didn't hire a lawyer for the first little while and I downgraded one position from a senior manager 2 to a manager 3 and I have hired other people at lower incoming costs because of the skill levels coming in -- they weren't around for 10, 12 years. You're paying at a higher rate than if they're new people. So I do have the money in the budget to transfer. I need \$10,000 to be transferred with your approval from group 1 to group 2 to cover this legal process that I had to go outside.

Secondly, I'm requesting \$19,400 to go from manpower, group 1, to fixed assets on the computer. One of the things that's starting to happen -- and I think you're going to find with all the committees coming in -- is that the computer companies and the developers of the hardware and the software are not going to be supporting if you let your software get behind times. You have to keep up, and failing to keep up is going to cost in the long run because the companies themselves are now refusing to support previous software. For instance, we're going to be going to a 4.0 WordPerfect Office upgrade. If we do not go to this 4.0 and we stay at the current one, which is 3.1, which is just the technical jargon, they will not provide the support if the computer system breaks down on the software side.

There's another area. We are now at the point of looking at our memory. Our memory needs to be upgraded within the computer system itself. Really what it is in terms of memory is just another file cabinet, but it's a computerized file cabinet as opposed to a physical file cabinet. If we do not upgrade our memory, then in fact we're going to get to the point of having to remove files out of the memory system and put them onto hard copy in advance of when we thought we should be able to do so.

I think the biggest problem anybody faces with computers is that there's always an upgrade. There are always new things coming on the market. If we don't continually keep up, we're going to be stuck with a major bill down the path, and the more minor bill of \$19,400 will pale by comparison. That's what happened when I first came into this office and looked at the computer system. The computer system was archaic and incapable of keeping up. Because of the support this committee has given, we were able to upgrade, and now we want to maintain that level. If we delay keeping up, we're going to get farther and farther behind, and there will be a bigger cost in the long run.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's see if there are any questions. Can we deal first of all with the transfer to control group 2. That's the \$10,000 transfer. Any questions on that? Are we agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you need a motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can deal with one motion at the end.

Secondly, let's go to control group 3, the \$19,400 in fixed assets. Tom, your hand was up.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's for purchase of software?

MR. JOHNSON: No. There is some hardware in here, and that is a new file server, which is basically the memory. I think I described it as a file cabinet. It's an electronic file cabinet, and it allows the transfer of files from one server to the other. It's actually a big processor. I shouldn't say a big processor. It's a processor. It's small, but the capability is quite large.

MR. SIGURDSON: Who are you using for technician service?

MR. JOHNSON: Right now we've sourced it out.

MR. SIGURDSON: Bob, do you know if the government has technicians on staff to service? I know that we do in the Legislative Assembly. We have technicians that work upstairs and work on the computers for the Legislative Assembly.

MR. JOHNSON: If I may answer, Mr. Chairman, PWSS does have this particular support service. Leg. offices and others have found that out-sourcing is the best way. In fact, that's the technology now, because you're hiring a skill, and it's their responsibility to keep their staff up to full speed. If you hire somebody inside, you're always sending them out for more training. In the long run you're going to be spending more. In fact Leg. offices is now contracting with the same people that we're dealing with.

There are technicians around that help in terms of the plug-ins and all this, but the actual development of software, in our particular case the upgrades to the complaints system, are all out-sourced.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Don.

MR. TANNAS: Not being well versed in computers, you're going to 4.0 WordPerfect. Why aren't you going to 5.1?

MR. JOHNSON: The WordPerfect Office is a 4.0 upgrade. There is WordPerfect 5.1 and 5.0. This is the WordPerfect Office itself, which is leading towards getting desktop publishing capabilities. We're not going to do it all in one fell swoop. We're going to do a stepping-stone to that. The 4.0 upgrade is WordPerfect Office, not WordPerfect itself. Now, from a technical standpoint maybe I can turn it over to Dixie, and she can answer it even better.

MS WATSON: WordPerfect Office is the program that gives us our electronic mail. It gives us our calendaring. It gives us our directories for addresses and phone numbers which Harley uses extensively in his system. It gives us a notebook function to transfer text around. It's a program in and of itself. WordPerfect is strictly a word processing program. With this we have our calendars come up. Harley can go in -- he may decide Tuesday morning he wants an appointment -- and check very quickly through the computer to see what investigators are free and what investigators are not free, because their calendars are all merged. It also enables Harley, whether he's in Edmonton or Calgary -- or any of us investigators -- to quickly tell where everybody is.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to follow up on Don's, though. Wouldn't 5.1 give you those same options but more?

MS WATSON: They're two separate programs.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes; I know.

MS WATSON: There's WordPerfect, which is strictly word processing; in other words, creating typed documents like this. The WordPerfect Office is a completely different program. You don't do text like this at all.

MR. SIGURDSON: So 4.0 is not in 5.1.

MS WATSON: They're two very separate programs.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Got you.

MR. JOHNSON: This will lead towards the desktop publishing. We are hoping within a couple of years to be able to do our full annual report without out-sourcing, which in the long run will be beneficial, definitely a budget savings if in fact we can do it, and we're working towards that end right now.

MR. SIGURDSON: But for that you need 5.1.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, it goes beyond 5.1. What I'd like to do is do it in a stepping procedure. I don't think I want to come into this committee and ask for an awful lot of money for a major upgrade. I think we can do it as a stepping process and give us a better capability all the way up the line.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.
Don.

MR. TANNAS: Yeah. I have another one, and that is the saving of money. The point I'm trying to get to is that you've alluded to earlier years and that you're saving money by spending it, and now if we spend some more money, we're going to be saving some more money. Is that not akin to buying your wife a dress and then you find out you've got a purse and new gloves and all the rest of it? I mean, I don't understand the saving of money if you have to keep spending more money to keep saving it.

3:33

MR. JOHNSON: I think I understand where you're coming from, Mr. Tannas. I think the bottom line is: if you don't keep up with this particular system, you're going to get so far behind that the cost outlay would be like five dresses as opposed to one farther down the path. I don't know how else I can respond to it. You're spending money up front now that is going to save you money in the long run. We have shown, I think, previously to this committee that we have saved positions which are more costly than bringing in computer systems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one other question. If we were peeking at your 1993-94 budget, what would be under control group 3 for computers?

MR. JOHNSON: It would be back down to where we're not expecting a major increase in that area at all. We would be looking at this particular upgrade in it if we don't get it now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are we still on a scheduled upgrade? Do you have something built in to your 1993-94 budget or is it zero?

MR. JOHNSON: It will be basically a zero.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: In fact, if you wanted a quick, brief overview on our budget . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, only because of time.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move that we support the request for the second transfer within the budget as designated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the motion? Well, wait a minute. I'm sorry. We dealt with the first one.

MRS. GAGNON: And we didn't have a formal motion. Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we ready for a motion on both transfers? If you're ready to make that, go ahead.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. I'll move that.

MR. FOX: Do we need the numbers in the motion for the record?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We need the motion. If we can have one motion that encompasses the total transfer, and, Yolande, you're prepared to do that?

MRS. GAGNON: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So moved. Any further discussion? All in favour? Opposed? It's carried unanimously.
Thank you very much, Harley and Dixie.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got one call I've got to return. Excuse me.

[Mr. Hyland in the Chair]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. I want you guys to behave when I take over, because last time everything went to hell in a hand-basket.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's got to be the chairman's fault.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Can we deal with item 7, Audit of the Office of the Auditor General, March 31, 1993?

MR. FOX: I have nothing under tab 7, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Neither do I. I was hoping there was something to be handed out.

MRS. GAGNON: We have a small handout, Cost of Audit of the Office of the Auditor General.

MRS. SHUMYLA: I had talked to Mr. Bogle before the meeting, and I think the agenda item was to decide who we should have to do the audit, whether it would be Kingston Ross Pasnak or Bill Mahon. He had asked me to get quotes for them. That's something that I would do after the meeting.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You don't have quotes yet?

MRS. SHUMYLA: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So maybe we can't deal with it if we don't have quotes. Can we?

MR. SIGURDSON: Other than to instruct Diane to get those quotes.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Mahon was one of the principals that had done it, wasn't he?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Right.

MR. FOX: Are we to understand, then, that Kingston Ross Pasnak is willing to do the audit should the committee engage them this year but that we've had a request from someone who used to work with Kingston Ross Pasnak to be engaged as the auditor?

MRS. SHUMYLA: It was an information letter just stating that he had a practice of his own.

MR. FOX: Oh, I see.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It really didn't say that he was interested in that job, did it? I'm just going by memory. It was in our last . . .

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes, it was.

MR. FOX: Advising the committee that he's got his own independent practice and that he's had experience doing the audit of the Auditor General's office in the past.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Right. So I understood that the chairman's suggestion was that we tender quotes from both firms.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you going to make a motion?

MR. SIGURDSON: Sure. I would move
that we ask the firms of Kingston Ross Pasnak and William Mahon to submit an estimate to cover the audit of the office of the Auditor General ending March 31, 1993.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Does everybody understand the motion? All in favour? Carried.

Attendance at Australasian Conference. This is the one, I think, that John and Tom went to two years ago or last year?

MR. SIGURDSON: Two years ago.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And it's up again. It's up in March.

MRS. GAGNON: It's the day of the general election, right? You go. We're staying here.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I thought it was only your leader that was saying when the elections were. Now it's the whole party.
Don.

MR. TANNAS: I was going to move that we have a coffee break.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before we deal with this? Okay. All in favour? Take five.

[The committee adjourned from 3:40 p.m. to 3:46 p.m.]

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yolande.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, I would move
that the Legislative Offices Committee not participate in the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees' eighth biennial conference in March.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. All those in favour? Opposed?

You've got to vote, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I had my hand up.

MR. TANNAS: So unanimous?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yeah, it's unanimous.

Diane, will you see that that letter goes out directly under the Chairman's signature?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Okay.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Because it's not fair to leave them hanging.

What's next? What can we do?

MR. TANNAS: Are we going to do item 9?

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Sure. Can we do 9?
Derek.

MR. FOX: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd be pleased to give a brief oral report on my attendance at the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws in Toronto in September as a member of this committee. I note that the other member of our committee who attended the conference submitted a written report. My comments vary significantly from Mr. Nelson's, but that I think is a matter of our individual point of view and approach to these issues.

I thought the conference was very worth while. This conference, to put it in context, is attended by officials who work in the areas of election law, campaign finance contributions disclosure, governmental ethics, conflict of interest, freedom of information: issues of that nature. Different jurisdictions handle these issues in different ways, so it really draws from a broad range of expertise. The attendance is primarily from the United States and Canada, although there are some international delegates as well. It's the second time in seven years I've been to a conference like this and again I've found it most useful. The issues that we deal with are very important to me and I think very relevant to the work we do as legislators in the province of Alberta: again related to how to encourage people's involvement in the electoral process; how to make sure that process is aboveboard and accountable and effective in a democratic way; dealing with issues of concerns to the public like access to information, conflict of interest; trying to deal with the many difficult issues that confront us as elected members as we serve people.

This conference is attended on an annual basis by our Chief Electoral Officer and occasionally people who work with him. This year was a little different because our newly hired Ethics Commissioner attended the conference as well. This would be something that he would normally be a part of. The scope of this conference overlaps both of their jurisdictions, and it was good to have an opportunity to meet with them on an informal basis as a

member of this conference. Even Mr. Clark, newly appointed to his position, had a significant role to play in this conference. His role as Ethics Commissioner in the province of Alberta was something that delegates from elsewhere were interested in.

The conference dealt with a number of different themes, and Mr. Nelson and I tried to divide our responsibilities so that we would be covering more than one concurrent session at a time. I attended ones dealing with things like campaign finance legislation and litigation. Stan at that time had a session dealing with freedom of information legislation and litigation in the U.S. and Canada. We had a very interesting session on elections, conflict of interest, and lobbying. Lobbying is not a significant activity in the province of Alberta, but it is significant in Ottawa and certainly a very significant part of the political process in the United States, especially in Washington.

There was a very interesting free-for-all discussion with Patrick Boyer, a Conservative Member of Parliament from Ontario very interested in issues related to accountability and openness and citizen participation and decision-making, who has written a book about electoral reform.

[Mr. Bogle in the Chair]

We had a chance to take a tour of the Ontario Legislature, and on my own time I arranged to meet with the Minister of Agriculture and Food, because that related directly to my particular responsibilities here. I found that to be very interesting and useful.

It was a very busy conference. Every breakfast even had, you know, sort of an agenda attached to it relating to discussions pertinent to the objectives of the conference, and every lunch had a focus like that as well.

One day they had some concurrent sessions, one of which was unrelated to the actual work of this conference but certainly dealt with an issue that was of concern to everyone in Canada, particularly at that time. So I attended it, because as legislators we seek to be relevant. It was a native peoples session, and it dealt with the Charlottetown accord, the constitutional accord. One panelist was a fellow from the Navajo Nation: Robert French, director of the ethics and rules office in the Navajo Nation. That is an aboriginal jurisdiction in the United States that has self-government. They do a lot of their own things, and it was interesting to hear his perspectives. The other two participants were especially interesting to me: Mary Ellen Turpel, law professor and a Metis from Manitoba, who was legal adviser to Ovide Mercredi and in the room through every discussion related to the development of the Charlottetown accord; and Ron George, president of the Native Council of Canada, from the province of British Columbia, representing one of the aboriginal leaders who was a signatory to the Charlottetown accord, who dealt specifically with I think nonstatus Indian groups or aboriginal groups in the country. I found their presentation very compelling and learned a lot from it.

The international delegates that were there from Great Britain and particularly Australia were very interesting as well. We had the Chief Electoral Officer from Australia there and circulating and actually the deputy commissioner to the Australian Electoral Commission. As committee members might know, voting is required in Australia. You have to vote. You can't avoid it. It's a responsibility of citizens. It seems to work well. They do an awful lot there to encourage people to understand their role in the process. They distribute some really fascinating information to kids in school to help them understand in a basic way what the democratic system is, how it works, why it works, and what they need to do to make it work. I really found that interesting and think we can learn a lot from that in terms of encouraging participation in the process.

There were some discussions related to ethics: you know, finding the balance between citizens' right to have information and the degree to which that may compromise the ability of people in public positions to perform their responsibilities.

Another very interesting session dealt with the amount of money that Canadians and Americans spend on elections: you know, how to calculate the actual amount of money that's spent during a federal election in Canada. I have papers that I can share with people, if they're interested. It goes beyond the amounts that individual candidates and their parties spend to get elected. There's lots of money spent by lobbying groups; there's lots of money spent in the period of time leading up to an election in terms of trying to get your foot in the door. When all is said and done, there's an amazing amount of money spent on the Canadian electoral process to get people elected. We tend to think of the American process as being a lot more expensive. A given Senator can spend up to \$8 million on average to win that Senate election, which is an obscene amount of money as far as I'm concerned. But on a per capita basis, when you compare the amount that we spend in Canada on elections, they're closer than you might think.

3:56

One of the things I'd just like to comment specifically on. There was a session called Constituent Service: The Double-Edged Sword. The speaker from the United States was talking about, in his view, the conflict of interest that occurs when an elected member does things directly for the people he or she represents. If you were to, let's say, go to a community hall and present a flag to that group so they can hang it on their building, in his view that's a self-serving form of constituent service that may enhance your electability; therefore, it's not something you should do as an elected member. I wondered out loud if he was really suggesting that as elected members we shouldn't go out and try and solve problems on behalf of our constituents, like help a community group access funds from a government through a program they're entitled to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Who gave that advice? I just lost you.

MR. HYLAND: Was he a professor?

MR. FOX: Yes; well, special counsel, a lawyer to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics from Washington. They're very leery of issues like this.

I wondered if he would then consider it inappropriate for an elected member to try and solve the problem for a constituent. Let's say you've got a Workers' Compensation Board case thrown on your lap. If you're able to resolve it to the satisfaction of your constituent, then I suppose that person may be inclined to want you to keep that job; therefore, it enhances your electability. Listening to him speak, it really made me aware of how important it is that there be elected representatives at conferences like this to provide some sort of balance, because we have to be very careful how we separate our roles. We're elected to serve the people we represent. That means that we do our best to help them in whatever way we can, and for him to think that our role should be to sit under the dome and draft legislation without having direct contact with the people we represent was something quite bizarre to me. I guess the reason he came to this was because U.S. representatives, members of the U.S. Congress, are finding that their time is increasingly devoted to constituency service. They didn't do it before. They're doing it more and more, so they're trying to come to grips with it.

Maybe I'll just leave my comments there, and if there are any questions . . .

MR. HYLAND: A comment, Derek. Don and I and Jack found somewhat the same thing at the Ombudsmen's conference. Often those that tend to get away from -- those that are higher up in the echelon of Ombudsmen almost had a panacea that if they had enough Ombudsmen, they could watch government and government could do right. It's almost as if government in all forms is the enemy to some of them. Yet some of them, and it seemed like those more recently appointed, then would get into the discussion and bring it down to a level that would say: "Whoa, that's not right. We're a watchdog. Let us never get bigger than the dog we're watching. If we get bigger than the dog we're watching, then we're in trouble." The same follow-through, eh?

MR. TANNAS: Yeah, I'd have to agree with what Alan is saying, the point being that you could almost have Ombudsmen for legislation. I mean, we have Ombudsmen to deal with how the executive is carrying out the laws. Now, I don't know how widely supported that notion was, but it certainly was brought out there, and that's the kind of thing that you're talking about here.

MR. FOX: Anyway, I just think it's very valuable for us to attend sessions like this because there are a lot of issues that are directly relevant to the work we do as elected members and how effective we are as public servants. So it's useful for us, but I became aware of just how useful it is for the other people who are there to have some elected representatives there to help them understand the sort of things that we cope with and the way we approach our jobs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anything else on a very comprehensive report? Thanks, Derek.

I wonder if we might go back up, then, to item 5, our 1993-94 budget. This is our committee portion of the budget alone. Then when Mr. Ledgerwood joins us, we'll receive a motion to go back in camera.

MRS. GAGNON: I have a few questions on the budget. We spent about \$13,800 less than we had estimated, right? I think it was in the extra handout, was it? At least that's what I'm looking at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you looking at the 1992-93 budget estimates, expenditure to date?

MRS. GAGNON: No. I'm looking at the proposed new budget, I gather. It was a separate sheet.

MR. TANNAS: No, no. It's here.

MRS. GAGNON: Oh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Not to confuse: what we've handed out is our fiscal year to date, actually to January 8. That's the single page.

MRS. GAGNON: No wonder it's so low. I understand. Okay; got you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you like, though, why don't we take a moment and look at it.

MRS. GAGNON: If it's just budget to date, I understand the discrepancies, and that's fine. My questions are unnecessary, then, at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any questions on the budget to date?

Okay. Then if we could turn our attention to the summary of the proposed budget estimates for our committee work under tab 5. You'll note that as proposed there would be an 8.2 percent reduction in the budget over last year's estimates, or the current fiscal year, with reductions in all three of our categories: Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits; Supplies and Services; and Other Expenditures. Any comments or questions on the overview, or would you like to go and look at a more detailed one? Yes, Derek.

MR. FOX: I think it's a very straightforward budget, and I think it's positive that we're able to come up with a budget that is reduced in every area. I believe we did that last year as well.

I just want to offer a bit of caution to whomever may be on the committee in the future. We managed a 25 percent reduction in our travel budget last year, and we're doing it again this year. But this year the reason we're able to accomplish it I think is primarily because of the four conferences that we generally send representatives to: three of them are being held in Canada, and one of them is being held in St. Paul, Minnesota, which is adjacent to Canada. Depending on where these conferences are next year, it may mean that that portion of the budget would need to be increased slightly. I can't speculate, but I think we need to be aware that the reason we're able to come in with another 25 percent cut is because these conferences are very close to home.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Exactly. That's a point well taken.
Anyone else? Yes, Alan.

MR. HYLAND: A question on pay to MLAs' pensions: 7.5 percent of salary. It should be 10 percent, shouldn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What page are you on, Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Nine. Aren't we up to 10 percent of our salary now on pensions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, it's 9 percent plus 1 percent. Do you know where we got that from, Diane, the pension?

MR. HYLAND: It's not going to affect the whole budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, but we now are paying in essence 10 percent rather than 7 and a half percent, and the employer matches our contribution. So would you double-check that figure?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Okay. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Alan. That's a good point.

MR. HYLAND: Can I move we accept this pending the adjustment related to the pension?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You're comfortable with it?

MR. SIGURDSON: What about chairman's vehicle. If we're going to have some changes there, Mr. Chairman, I'd . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's my understanding that the chairman designate will decline a vehicle.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. HYLAND: We can always change it if we have to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other observation I have is that we are anticipating the Auditor General's office the same as last year's costs, so pending the bids you receive, you may have to look at that. Of course, the committee can come back and adjust this budget. What we're doing is giving approval in principle to the budget as set out.

MR. TANNAS: Preliminary approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Preliminary approval. Okay. That's what you've moved, Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Yup.

4:06

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the motion? All in favour? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Pat Ledgerwood I'm assuming will come in once he arrives.

Let's see. We'll go down to 10, Other Business. Anything under Other Business?

The 11th item is Date of Next Meeting. I assume that will depend on the discussions with Mr. Ledgerwood, but the committee will need to set scheduled meetings very soon -- I'm assuming once our January, February sitting is finished -- to go through the budgets of our four officers. Is it premature to suggest that Diane try to line up dates now, meaning in the next few days, relative to the last part of February and the first part of March, so that you folks can set some time aside for the meetings with the officers?

MR. FOX: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chairman, if that would be difficult. I mean, the opposition membership won't change. Do you know how many current members from government caucus are staying on this committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. There are two leaving. Jack is leaving, and I am leaving, so there'll be two replacements. But Diane could begin . . .

MR. FOX: Could survey them as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Those names will be public within a day or so.

MR. FOX: Their ratification would be routine, so she could.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can you disclose who the designate is?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure I can. For the record the replacement for Jack will be Nancy Betkowski, and the replacement for chairman will be Ty Lund.

MR. FOX: And he would function as the Chair?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. FOX: So Diane could survey them in terms of scheduling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. GAGNON: The other fact, which maybe you're aware of but we're not, is the length of the session which is coming up.

MR. HYLAND: That's up to you.

MRS. GAGNON: Well, no. It depends also what you put on the agenda, what you allow to be dealt with. I mean, you're just suggesting we don't start till the end of February with these meetings in any case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure how long our sitting will be. I'm assuming it will be two, maybe three weeks. So if it goes three weeks, that takes you to the middle of February. What's worked well in the past is where we've scheduled two-day meetings back-to-back, and you need a couple of sets of meetings. You'll need to go over the budgets in a preliminary way, think about it, and then come back, say, a week or two weeks later and go over them in more detail.

MR. FOX: So could Diane, then, circulate a memo to each member of the new committee asking us to tell her which days we would be available for meetings in late February, early March?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Diane can certainly do that for the existing members of the committee. What I'd suggest -- Diane, if you work with me, I'll work unofficially with the two members designate for the committee so that we don't compromise Diane's position.

MR. FOX: The other thing, Mr. Chairman, just in terms of my schedule. I'm not sure if the Committee on Parliamentary Reform will be fulfilling its mandate or not. We haven't met since November. I would assume that there'll be some people appointed to that committee as well, and our meeting schedule may overlap this as well. But again I'm just dealing in speculation. What do I know about the government's agenda?

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, why don't we leave it with the understanding that efforts will be made to arrange meeting times? We need to get on with our next item of business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Do I have a motion to move in camera? Don.

MR. TANNAS: Yes, I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All in favour? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

[The committee met in camera from 4:10 p.m. to 4:31 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The suggestion was that the next meeting will be at the call of the Chair and preferably next week while the House is sitting. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. A motion to adjourn by John. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.
Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 4:32 p.m.]

