

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

1:39 p.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Lund]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to call the meeting to order. Does anyone have a motion?

Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: I was going to move that we go in camera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder?

MR. NELSON: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

[The committee met in camera from 1:40 p.m. to 2:13 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to call the meeting to order and welcome Pat Ledgerwood, the Chief Electoral Officer, to our meeting. The committee could move to item 4 on our agenda.

Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we know, we've gone through the process of redrawing the map of constituency boundaries for the province, and the Chief Electoral Officer played a significant role not only as Chief Electoral Officer but as a member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Other commission members were remunerated for their work. The Chief Electoral Officer was there but was not remunerated other than for the fact that he received his normal income as Chief Electoral Officer. He spent an extraordinary amount of time working as a commission member in addition to his work as Chief Electoral Officer for our province. Therefore, I would move

that the Chief Electoral Officer be allowed to take 20 working days off following the next general election as a compensation package to recognize his contribution to the commission. This is the only remuneration he would receive for the additional work he did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Do we have a . . .

MR. HYLAND: I'll second that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did you want to speak to it, Mr. Hyland?

MR. HYLAND: No, I think Tom has covered it all.

MR. NELSON: To Pat: my understanding is that that's agreeable and you're satisfied with it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, that's very well handled. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you as well, Mr. Ledgerwood.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour of the motion? Carried unanimously.

Thanks again for all the work you did and the patience in getting this settled. Thank you.

Item 5, the '93-94 budget estimates, Chief Electoral Officer. Mr. Ledgerwood, I would ask you to give us an overview, and then we'll go into your budget line by line. So if you want to proceed.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay, Mr. Chairman. You all have copies of the budget, and this is the fourth budget you've seen in the last couple of days. They're all basic in the same principles in that you see the 1991-92 actual expenses by the office. The '92-93 estimate was the budget that was approved by this committee. The '92-93 forecast is what we forecast to spend of that budget, and the '93-94 estimate is the budget you're going to consider at this time. The budget is basically designed to meet my responsibilities under current legislation. The administrative section is to run the office; that is, staff salaries and benefits, also office supplies, election supplies, returning officer training. I think you're all aware that the next general election will be funded by special warrant. Enumerations is for the next enumeration, which must be conducted in this budget year.

If you'd like to turn over to page A1, which is the Administration Element broken into Manpower and Supplies and Services, you can see that our Manpower estimate is only up by the 2 percent as directed by the Treasury Board and includes a couple of long-service increments my staff will qualify for this year. So there is no real increase in the salaries. If you haven't had a chance to look through it, the details are on the back pages. The account code is there with detail on the wages. What we're looking at here is half a man-year. Employer Contributions, of course, are standard contributions for health care, Blue Cross, CPP, dental, group life, those types of things which are fixed costs. The Allowances and Benefits are basically tuition fees, conference fees, and staff training fees.

Any questions on the Manpower portion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You made the comment about 2 percent as directed by Treasury. Where does that . . .

MR. NELSON: When was that directive made?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: This was a memorandum, dated November 13, 1992, from the Deputy Provincial Treasurer directed to all deputy ministers or equivalents. What it says on the salaries, wages, and employee benefits is that it should include a 2 percent increase in salaries and wage budgets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Does the committee have any . . .

MR. NELSON: There was a question I wanted to ask. I'll come in and ask the same thing. How would you deal with your estimate for '93-94 if we were to ask you to come in with a zero increase in dollars over the past year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think maybe we should leave that question until . . .

MR. NELSON: Well, I'll talk about the administration thing, because the other items are separate and identifiable on the administration side. I don't want to talk about the election or the enumeration because that's a totally different issue.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, as you know, the long-service increments are required to be paid. As long as the individual employees are doing a good job, you give them their LSI. I only included the 2 percent by Treasury as a result of the instruction. So

if your direction to me is to decrease it by 2 percent, we can certainly do that.

MR. NELSON: Well, I'm not going to tell you where to do it, but I would like to suggest -- and it's up to the committee, of course -- to endeavour to try to keep that number down to the \$494,000 which was your original budget estimate for '92-93. That would be my consideration here. It may be that we'll have to find the 2 percent somewhere else. I don't know where. I'm not going to tell you where to do it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. Thank you.

MR. FOX: I'd be prepared to have those discussions with the Chief Electoral Officer. I think it's premature. We've got lots of items to go through here. There are three different elements to this budget. It's quite different from budgets presented to us by other officers in that there are dramatic fluctuations on an annual basis because of varying requirements caused by the realities of our jobs as legislators. It seems to me that when we talked about zero percent increases in the other budgets, it was a global budget, and we've got the administration element, the election element, and then the enumeration element. You know, it's premature. I don't think we can look at that.

MR. NELSON: I didn't want to deal with the election portion or the enumeration portion of this budget together with this particular item as a global budget, because I think we have to try and compare apples and oranges. We can do that with the administration element and then deal with the other two elements.

2:23

MR. CHAIRMAN: We haven't even completed the administration element yet, so let's reserve that discussion until the end.

Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While you said that we've not completely dealt with the administration element, I think in fact we have. If I go down through the '92-93 estimate and the '93-94 estimate under Supplies and Services, everything is exactly the same. There's no room to move there. I guess the only concerns we really have to deal with are 711A and then 711E, and I'm not sure we can unless this committee is prepared to instruct the Chief Electoral Officer to take the 2 percent increase. There's no other room in this budget to get back to zero base. I guess the question I've got with respect to 711E is: if 711A, permanent positions, has gone up 2 percent, why has 711E, the Employer Contributions, gone up well over 2 percent? By the look of it, it's more like about 5 or 6 percent.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Those are fixed costs in that I only read a partial list. I left off the workers' compensation, the unemployment insurance, which has gone up. Those are all fixed percentages, so there's no flexibility in that figure.

MR. SIGURDSON: So the decision for this committee, then, is to either take away the 2 percent or have the Treasury directive stand.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: As you know, the salaries of the staff are fixed. There's no flexibility. I can't give somebody a salary increase unless it's approved in their grid.

MR. NELSON: Well, there's certainly some suggestion of freezes along the board, and I wouldn't like to be one to send another

message out there that there may be something for someone or, in fact, there may be a continuation of that freeze. There's certainly been no finalization of a contract to my knowledge. The contract is done other than the financial aspect of it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, as you know and as I've told this committee many times, I don't spend money unless it's absolutely necessary.

MR. NELSON: I appreciate that as a part of the committee, and I know that to be the case. At the same time, I wouldn't like to be sending a separate message out to your staff than we may send out to another employee.

MS BETKOWSKI: It's good to have the source of the 2 percent. Yesterday we were left wondering where it had come from because another officer presented it. So at least we know that the 2 percent is built in there, and presumably 2 percent could be taken off just as easily as it was built in.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Just as easily.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other . . .
Okay. Let us move along then.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The second element is the election element. As I mentioned, the election element is basically to provide for the travel expenses and the expenses of the returning officers to attend training sessions. We normally conduct the training sessions in advance of the election.

MR. HYLAND: Last time we looked at a new listing of proposed rates for enumerators and DROs and that sort of thing. Did we accept that and is that built in, or did we just sit on it? I can't remember.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. The rate was only an increase of the fees paid to returning officers and election clerks. The committee approved that at the December meeting. The recommendation for OC was passed to my entrée to cabinet on January 13, and as far as I know, it will be dealt with at cabinet today.

MR. HYLAND: So do these numbers include that difference in -- oh, no; I'm sorry. This is enumeration . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No, we'll get into that in the next element. This is basically the travel expenses and fees for returning officers to be trained for the election, which must be held before the end of March.

MR. HYLAND: The returning officers' rate was up some too, wasn't it?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. The returning officers' fee for mapping was increased, the cents per name for the returning officers were increased from 10 cents to 12 cents a name for the enumeration and also for the general election, and the fee paid to the election clerk was increased from 8 cents a name to 10 cents a name.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's move along then.
Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you, Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Just to be clear, the \$33,125 is just the cost of travel to bring the officers here for their training?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes.

MR. FOX: And the \$45,000 is their fee for the training sessions?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah. They are paid a per diem for travel expenses. They get \$125 for attending, their fee, and then all of their expenses are paid.

MR. FOX: And that is fixed; that's just what it totals.
Thank you.

MS BETKOWSKI: Is it all in Edmonton? Do they all come here?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. What we do, Ms Betkowski, is train both in Edmonton and Calgary. What we do is divide the province at Red Deer. Basically, Red Deer-south is Calgary and Red Deer-north we train in Edmonton, except for orientation training. When they're first appointed, we like to bring them to Edmonton to meet the staff, to see the office and our warehouse facilities and just get a little better appreciation of what logistic support we can give them.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We can move along to the next element.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The Enumeration Element is the very large element. We anticipate that we'll have over 130,000 more electors at this year's election than we had at the 1989 general election.

Now, you have the breakdown of the individual items. Would you like me to go through those line by line, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's go by each code.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. The Wages code is 711C, and what we're looking at is six-tenths of a man-year. This is to hire people. We don't hire one person for six-tenths of a year. What we do is hire a number of people, and it totals six-tenths. We hire warehouse people to package the enumeration materials, arrange the pre-enumeration activities. Then after the enumeration we'll have over 10,000 claims, and we will process those claims. We're required to hire people to do that. So that's the wages there.

Then the contributions. Again that's a standard percentage of the salary. So that's the manpower control group.

Supplies and Services. Travel Expenses: those include the travel by the returning officers to attend training sessions and to do their own traveling within their own area of responsibility and also includes a couple of thousand dollars for my staff to train.

Advertising, \$150,000. We'll spend part of that out of our office, and the returning officers will spend part of it. We anticipate that there will be a lot of interest as a result of the redistribution. We will want to publish really good maps so that the electors know which electoral division they are in. We feel that we can do it with the \$150,000 if we get good co-operation from the printers. We're going to take a really active interest in that and get a liaison officer, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary, so that we can get better maps than we've had in the past.

Freight and Postage is straightforward. This is basically the transportation of supplies to the returning officers. What we do is palletize everything. We have trucks come in. We have seven trucking routes. We load seven semitrailers in one day. They then fan out over the province, and then we go around and pick up the

pallets and any material left over after the enumeration. So that's the Freight and Postage.

2:33

Rentals. Each of the returning officers is entitled to rent an office for two months at \$300 a month. They also are required to rent various types of equipment. Some of them don't have typewriters, so they rent a typewriter. Others are into computers, so they'll rent a computer. They also have to rent space to train the enumerators. Remember, now, that in some of the larger ridings, you're going to be looking at better than 90 polling subdivisions, so you'd be looking at better than 180 enumerators that will have to be trained. We also rent a van from Public Works, Supply and Services to ferry material back and forth, basically to the bus depot. Any questions on Rentals?

MR. SIGURDSON: I have a couple of questions actually, but I'll deal with Rentals first I suppose. Three hundred dollars a month for an office in every constituency?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, for a maximum of two months. Remember that as well as the enumeration period, the returning officers normally use an office for the revision period. That is the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the second week following the enumeration. So they have an office and people . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just curious. I mean, in my constituency -- and I'm in a low rent zone -- where are you going to find an office for \$300 a month?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Generally what they do is set up an office in their home.

MR. NELSON: And if they can't?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If they can't -- sometimes individuals live in condominiums or in apartments and they can't -- and if they cry a lot, we will normally approve a rental if they can prove to us that they've really looked around and this is the cheapest place they can find rental accommodation close to their home.

MR. SIGURDSON: If they cry a lot, would you ask them to see Stan?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay.

MR. NELSON: Can I just stop on that point and ask what the logistics would be of two returning officers using the same space if it blends with the two constituencies. Could they do that?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I suppose it would be the same as two MLAs using the same constituency office.

MR. NELSON: Well, there's nothing wrong with that. It's been done before.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Certainly, as long as people realize that when they go to that office outside of their electoral division that it is outside their electoral division.

MR. NELSON: I'm thinking that there are lots of opportunities in east Calgary to do that. If you want to save some money, that's a possibility.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: But as I say, most of the returning officers use their own homes.

MR. HYLAND: Is there anything that says, Pat, that the office has to be within the boundaries of the constituency?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We've never laid that down for the enumeration, but we certainly demand it for the election.

MR. FOX: But the returning officer must live in the constituency? You can't have a returning officer living outside the constituency?

MR. SIGURDSON: This is for the enumeration, not the election.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. We've had no problem with this. Many of the returning officers don't even charge us the \$300.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can we go back to Advertising? I'm sorry; I thought we'd get through all this first. Have you looked into doing a bulk buy? I wonder about separating the two budgets. I mean, what you're going to have essentially, I think, is 84 different individuals purchasing media time. Wouldn't you be better off if you had a media firm purchase the space for the print media rather than have 84 individuals trying to negotiate 84 separate deals?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: What we do is use a firm called Smith & Smith, who are basically out of business but will still handle our account. They are media consultants. They actually do the mock-ups for us and place the ads in the papers.

MR. SIGURDSON: Then why that \$100,000 for returning officers to purchase space? Wouldn't Smith & Smith or whatever company . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: What they do is make the original arrangements, and then the returning officer goes to that particular printer and provides them with the data.

MR. HYLAND: In the rural areas it's quicker for the returning officers to take it to the paper in a set size. If you've got a firm doing it, then they'd either take it to the weekly paper or fax it to them, and then you pay them a commission as well for doing it. This way, once you take it in, then you know it's there, and it's mat ready most of the time.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We provide them with mat-ready material.

MR. HYLAND: I think they just find it quicker.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah. We've never felt that we've paid too much for the advertising. We normally get the lowest rate.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay; fine. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions on that page?
Moving over to . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay, over to telephones. This is both for the returning officers' telephones and our telephones. We accept collect calls from anyone. During an election we set up a voter information centre, but we don't do that for an enumeration. This is a fairly good estimate of what we think it's going to cost.

Contract Services of course is the main item. You may recall from previous budgets that the monthly honorarium that the

returning officers receive is charged to the Enumeration Element in that that's the next item that comes along. So we've got \$75 a month and we've charged it to 93 returning officers, when in actual fact I think we may have a few more. As you are aware, we'll be paying returning officers for the new electoral divisions. We'll also be paying returning officers for the old electoral divisions. We will not pay a returning officer twice if they're in the same electoral division. So those people that are still responsible for an electoral division will be paid until the writ of the next election.

MR. NELSON: How much does a returning officer make?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Seventy-five dollars a month honorarium.

MR. NELSON: And that's during the enumeration period?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That's 12 months a year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why would we continue to pay after the new ones have been appointed? After there are 83 new deputy returning officers appointed, why would we continue to pay some that no longer have a constituency to be responsible for?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think a prime example would be the Edmonton-Whitemud by-election in 1985, where we had new boundaries for Edmonton-Whitemud but the by-election was conducted on the old boundaries. The original returning officer for Edmonton-Whitemud, who was not appointed for the new Edmonton-Whitemud, conducted the by-election.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, but it's my understanding that after March 20 there won't be any by-elections, under the Election Act.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No, March 20 is not the date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or March 30, whatever the day is.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: March 20 was the election day. The term of the writ is 10 days after, so anytime after March 30 of this year. The government is in the fifth year of their mandate. According to the Legislative Assembly Act, they are not required to conduct a by-election, but that doesn't mean that they would not.

MS BETKOWSKI: They're not prevented from it?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No.

MS BETKOWSKI: I didn't know that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not a big item, but I just find it a little strange that we're paying people that no longer have a constituency to be responsible for.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, the current constituencies are still in vogue until the writ of election is issued for the next general election.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know that.

MR. NELSON: Can I . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. NELSON: I'm a little ignorant on this. If I may. How much additional money does a returning officer who hires a bunch of enumerators and has to put all this together get for doing that? Just 75 bucks?

2:43

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Oh, no, no. They're paid a flat fee of \$1,000.

MR. NELSON: Okay. That's fine; don't get your books out.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Basically, a flat fee of \$1,000. They're paid \$250 to conduct training sessions. They're paid 12 cents a name for all the names on the list of electors. They're also paid for their mapping, and then they're reimbursed for travel expenses.

MR. NELSON: Okay. That's fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. The basic fee of \$1,000, for \$83,000. We estimate that there will be just under 1.7 million electors, for another \$201,000. The revision to the list of electors is three days for the revision period, at \$125 a day times the 83. They'll be attending training sessions, for another \$20,000, and there will be some that will require more training than others. We estimated 25; I think I missed that by about 15. I think we're going to have almost half of our returning officers as new returning officers for the next general enumeration. I don't know; the government is still working on that. They have selected 69 of the 83. I expect that the others will be selected very shortly; at least I hope so. Training the enumerators will cost \$20,000; revisions to the maps, \$33,000. So that's your basic \$480,000 there.

Remember that enumerations are very, very labour intensive. When you look at the enumerators, they receive a basic fee of \$100, a training fee of \$50, and then 50 cents a typed name. So we're estimating that it will cost us just over \$3 million for the enumeration. Now, we know that this is high because we have budgeted here for two enumerators in each of the almost 5,000 polling subdivisions. By statute, in the single-municipality city ridings they're required to have two enumerators. The multimunicipality or the rural ridings may or may not have two; it's up to the returning officer. We have no choice over it. Many of them as a rule only use one; others have always used two. It's there for flexibility. We have no idea what the situation is in that particular area; they have power of attorney. We budget so that if they all want to use two, they do. Again, if they don't hire two, then we don't use the money for something else. It's frozen in this block.

MR. HYLAND: So in a riding where you've got some city and some rural, they could have one in the rural and go back to two in the city? It wouldn't have to remain constant.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. It's their choice. What it depends on is what type of neighbourhood it is, how many big dogs are in the neighbourhood . . .

MS BETKOWSKI: How safe they feel.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: . . . how safe they feel, what time of year it is, what the road conditions are like for driving. There are many variables, and the returning officers are generally pretty frugal on this point. They don't hire two if they don't need two. As a matter of fact, many of them have a hard time getting enough enumerators.

The list of electors: the photocopying will be about \$40,000, and in the last four by-elections we have provided to the parties the list of electors on diskettes. We had an all-party ad hoc committee meeting in my office on November 19, and they really want the list of electors on diskettes so they can use them in their computer. We have been working with a company that can scan the lists. It will take them almost a month to do this. It would be \$130,000 and some. I'm currently looking at a system and will meet with the returning officers to see if we can't do this in the electoral division. There are a number of small computer companies, data processing firms out there, and we'll see if we can't do it within the electoral division. We'll save a bunch of time and hopefully some money, but the time factor is something that concerns me. I'll know a little bit more about this in the coming weeks.

MR. SIGURDSON: We pay enumerators to type up lists, and they have to be typed. What do they get per name for typing that list?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: They get 50 cents per typed name. That means that they have to go out and get the name before they can enter it. What we're going to do is to try and encourage them to put the names on diskettes, those that have home computers, and we will provide them with the diskettes, also a very specific format so that it can be read by the scanner if necessary.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. But if you have, for example, two enumerators that are going out, two enumerators are not typing in the same information. If you and I were partnered, Pat -- and if you're doing the typing, you're getting 50 cents a name -- and I'm just going along for the walk, how much would I get?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: You'd also get 50 cents a name.

MR. SIGURDSON: So there's no difference for whoever gets stuck with doing that?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No difference; 50 cents a typed name.

MR. NELSON: They usually share the workload, because they've got about 350 names.

MR. SIGURDSON: If we could access a computer, some kind of computer firm or people that type up term papers, and that information could be fed into a computer rather than having the enumerator put it on an old-fashioned typewriter, it certainly would look after part of your concern. If we could set a percentage or, you know, a few cents of that 50 cents aside for . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's in the fee schedule; it has been there ever since I've been in the business. I think you'd be appalled at how much people charge to type those little term papers.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's been awhile.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I know that when I did my thesis, I paid 50 cents a page. My secretary said: well, go over to the university now and many of them charge \$20 a page. But that will include as many revisions as you want.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's move along with it.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The other big item in there of course is the preparation of the electoral division maps for \$110,000, and this is the estimate from Maps Alberta.

So there's the basic budget for Contract Services. Any questions on those particular items?

Data processing: straightforward. This is the cost of the DFS/CFS printouts that PWSS charges us.

Materials and Supplies: these are those items that the returning officers buy that we don't provide them in many cases. They need some string or they need some tape or they need whatever. So that's Materials and Supplies.

The other item there is Fixed Assets for \$7,000. Those committee members that have been here for some time will know that our computers are very early generation computers, and I think you'll also be aware that we're now required to go on-line to Treasury Board and also to personnel. Our computers are not compatible with their equipment, so we have to upgrade our PCs. We would buy two new PCs to be compatible with Treasury Board and personnel.

MR. FOX: We're trying to upgrade PCs and turn them into NDs too.

MS BETKOWSKI: Are you doing that on a yearly basis, or is it just the two that you need to run?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: These are the two that we'll need, Ms Betkowski, and that will last us for some time. Eventually we'll go into a local area network but not until after this election.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there any worthwhile comments?

MR. SIGURDSON: I want to see Stan ask Pat to come back with zero on this one. Go ahead, Stan, be consistent.

MR. NELSON: I'm consistent. As I said at the outset, I wanted to separate these two other functions, because I've really got nothing to compare analysis with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Nelson, do you want to go back, then, and make any comments?

MR. NELSON: I've already made my comments, and I'll stick with them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

I want to thank you for this overview, Mr. Ledgerwood. We haven't been given any specific directives, so today we're not approving a budget. I'm not sure if the committee has any directive they wish to give to you, but I see Mr. Sigurdson wants to make a comment.

2:53

MR. SIGURDSON: No. I'm the guy with hair. It's Mr. Fox.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. It was a case of people pointing fingers.

Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: I had a number of questions, Mr. Chairman, about the enumeration process and about what kinds of time lines we can be expecting because, after all, it's up to us to communicate to our respective caucuses the decisions that are taken in this committee. Because the returning officers in each constituency are nominated by the government, that's one thing that determines some of the things that happen, and then the enumeration, as the Chief Electoral Officer indicated, will be conducted in part by people appointed by the governing party and in part by whichever party finished first or

second in each constituency. So I just wanted to go through some of these things.

Pat, you indicated that there are 69 of 83 returning officers approved so far. I guess they're not appointed until an order in council goes through. Let's just pretend for illustration's sake that all 83 names are submitted and an order in council passes at the next cabinet meeting. Could you give us some idea of what the next step is? You train these people then? There are some that you train. How long that would take. When they deal with mapping. When we as MLAs working with our constituency associations could expect to be asked to provide lists of enumerators to the respective returning officers for an enumeration. In fact, because of Bill 55 our committee will be dealing with the dates for those sorts of things, and I think it would be useful for us to hear what your views on that are.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thanks, Mr. Fox.

I wonder, Mr. Chairman, did committee members get a copy of my letter of February 18 to the Speaker with copies to yourself? I also sent copies to the office of the Premier, the office of the Official Opposition, and the office of the Liberal opposition.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ledgerwood, I don't believe the committee has got that letter, but we do have copies for distribution today.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. If you'd like to go through that, Mr. Chairman, what this is, Derek, is a three-page letter that I sent to Dr. Carter. In it I also attached a copy of a letter that I'd sent on August 19 to the former chairman, also a letter of November 20 to the former chairman, and a letter of October 19 that I sent to the hon. Ken Rostad, who was my entrée to cabinet at that time.

In the letter of November 20 to Mr. Bogle, which is near the back -- has everyone got that letter? Bob wanted me to list the items that I felt were important before the next general enumeration, which really must be conducted if we're going to have a viable list of electors for the next general election. Down at the bottom of that last paragraph is "preparing a Recommendation for Order-in-Council to appoint 83 returning officers for the new electoral divisions." I'm currently drafting a recommendation for order in council. It will go out tomorrow. I'm hoping that cabinet will consider that at their meeting next Tuesday. It will only have 69 of the 83 names. I've no idea when I'm going to get the other 14 names.

Training the new returning officers. I will be conducting training for returning officers in Calgary on March 9, 10, and 11 and also in Edmonton on March 16, 17, and 18. This will be orientation and familiarization training for newly appointed returning officers and then also mapping and enumeration training for both our single-municipality and multimunicipality electoral division returning officers. There are a number of returning officers, of the names that I've received, who I know will not be available for either one of those training sessions in that some of them are snowbirds. They're down south. In order to come back, it would cost them about a thousand dollars. So we will run another series of training sessions as soon as we get the additional returning officers appointed and when some of the returning officers who are unable to attend these two training sessions are back.

MR. HYLAND: Most of those are ones who've done it before though, aren't they?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Quite a few. I'm surprised at the number of new returning officers.

MR. HYLAND: I mean the snowbird ones.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Oh, the snowbird ones are generally very good. So there's not much of a problem there.

So that answers that question.

The next is having the mapping branch prepare and print new electoral division maps. I've been working with mapping, and hopefully by March 5 I will have the electoral division maps for Red Deer and south, and then on March 12 I will have the electoral division maps for Red Deer and north. Those maps are essential in order for the returning officers to start their polling subdivision work.

Ordering supplies and materials. As soon as the legislation was passed approving the amendments to the Election Act and approving the forms regulation, we already had all our order forms prepared. We just inundated the suppliers with orders, and we now have most of our supplies and materials in place. There are only a couple that aren't in, and we're getting those piecemeal. As we are getting the supplies in, we are palletizing them. We'll be ready for an enumeration whenever this committee directs me to conduct one.

Preparing the supplies and materials for shipment. As I mentioned, we're doing that right now. I currently have four individuals, temporary help, in the warehouse preparing the supplies and materials for shipping.

Providing returning officers with the necessary maps. I just mentioned the dates that we hope to get those from mapping.

The "forms, guides, brochures, training aids and enumeration supplies" are coming along very well. I don't have all of the materials in, but I'll certainly have them in long before the training sessions.

Validating the polling subdivision maps and legal descriptions prepared by the returning officers. We estimate that it will take the returning officers about 10 days from the time we complete their training until they have the maps back to us. We appreciate that some of them will have them back very quickly. As a matter of fact, there are one or two that have just about completed it already. Some of the others may have difficulty, but mapping can't do them all at once anyway, so there will be a flow. We will give a one-day turnaround in our office on the maps that we receive. As a result of the experience gained when my staff worked for the boundaries commission, we will be able to validate very quickly those maps to make sure that the lines drawn on the maps are the same as those provided in the legal description.

MR. FOX: So that would be March 30 at the latest, roughly?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, for the first group, Derek. The second group would be a little later. The Edmonton group would be a little later. Remember, that is only for those returning officers that are appointed.

MR. FOX: Yeah, appointed and trained.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That doesn't include the others.

Having new polling subdivision maps prepared and printed. That is a long involved process. Mapping has indicated 50 working days. I've indicated to them that I thought that was a bit excessive. It may be necessary, Mr. Chairman, if we can't get a shorter time, that I would come to you and you would then go to the minister, who would go down the line.

3:03

Preregistering constituency associations. On February 18 I hand delivered to the parties who can nominate enumerators a form letter that contained all the information they needed to preregister their constituency associations and also to provide us an individual to

contact for requesting enumerators. When we find out when the enumeration is going to be -- this committee directs me -- then I'll put pressure on the parties to make sure we get those lists so that we have individuals to contact to give us enumerators. We've discussed this before. Some of the parties are very good; some of the constituency associations are very good. They will give us qualified electors who are available and interested in being enumerators. Others will give us just party lists, which aren't very good, and some will not give us just names at all. We want to get that preregistration system in place as quickly as we can so that we at least have contacts for the returning officers.

Determining the number of votes that a political party would have received in each electoral division if the 1989 general election had been held on the new electoral divisions. That has been done. The Liberals can nominate in 51 seats and the NDP in 32 seats.

Providing returning officers with the applicable names and addresses of constituency association executives. That's already been dealt with.

Preparing required advertising. We'll handle that and of course have adequate funding approved, which is what we've just been talking about.

Derek, does that give you a bit of an idea?

MR. FOX: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: So where are we at? Like in April, May, June?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Where we are now: the only thing that we have is 69 names. We're preparing a recommendation for order in council. On the strength of the names that I received late this morning, my staff are now trying to contact those individuals and set up the training on the dates that I gave you.

MR. HYLAND: What I mean, Pat, is that you talked to us before of somewhere between five and a half and six months to put everything into place, if you got the names quickly. Now, the only difference in that time period is that I see this time you've got at least 69 of the names quicker than normal.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think, to put it in perspective, we feel that if we get good co-operation, we can be ready to commence the enumeration seven weeks after we have all the returning officers appointed and the mapping completed. This committee has great power of attorney in not only setting the dates for the enumeration but setting the length of the enumeration, normally anywhere from 14 to 16 days, depending on when September 15 and 30 fall. You may not want to have it that long. You don't have any flexibility on the revision period. That is set by statute as the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the second full week following the enumeration. You also have flexibility on when the returning officers have to have the material back to me. You also have flexibility to determine when I will provide that data to the parties.

MR. FOX: So we could be looking at the possibility of preparing for an enumeration to begin in late April? April, May?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If the committee so directed. It would be up to the government members, because they would have a much better feel as to how and what the status is of the returning officer appointments.

MR. FOX: Yeah. It certainly is a subject for a future meeting, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, it's all subject to a future meeting. The letter dated February 18 kind of outlines what the committee may be bound to do, and we'll certainly be discussing that at a later meeting.

If there are no further comments on this letter that we've referred to, I wonder if there are any other comments as it relates to the proposed '93-94 budget of the Chief Electoral Officer. Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: I'm going to move a motion on the Administration element of the budget:

That it be brought forward with a zero increase over the 1992-93 estimate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder? Mr. Drobot.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'd like to speak to the motion. I think in this instance we have to provide more than just a motion; we have to provide some direction. As I looked at that budget, it is going to be impossible for the budget to come back zero based given that the employer contributions have gone up through increased unemployment insurance premiums and increased workers' compensation deductions. So I think we as a committee have a responsibility to provide some further direction. We want to have zero based. As I looked through Supplies and Services, that's all zero based. It's completely zero based. The only area is in the Manpower component. If the instructions are to go back and delete the 2 percent increase in 711A, that's one instruction, but I don't know how we can get around 711E, which is a natural increase. I don't think it's fair for this committee to instruct the officer to go back and to give him a task that's impossible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Yeah. I speak against the motion as well. I'd just remind members of the committee that I've spoken in favour of that motion in a couple of other instances, in fact made the motion with one of the offices. I think we're dealing with a different budget here. I think it is a bare bones, minimum kind of budget that's been presented to us. The Treasury Board directive is included in there, and the status of that is still up in the air, I gather. But it seems to me we've been presented with a reasonable and cautious budget, and I support it as presented.

MR. NELSON: Can I just . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: One of the things that I guess has to be considered -- first of all, I'm not going to tell the Chief Electoral Officer. I'm interested in the bottom line. I assume that what has been said here is reasonably correct, that the 2 percent is causing the most concern relative to wages and what have you. I'm sure that by the next time we meet to confirm these budgets and what have you, there may be some other directive from the Treasury Board -- not from Treasury itself; the bureaucrats are sending out information based on I don't know what. We can always deal with that issue as it comes from the Treasury Board rather than from Treasury. Rather than a mixed message, I would rather keep the message as one message to all people in the government service that there's zero. We'll await some determination from the Treasury Board. I don't want to send two messages. We could send three messages saying zero, and now we send another message saying maybe they're going to get 2 percent or a long-service increment or what have you. I don't want to do that. I don't think it's fair to any of the staff at this point in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? All in favour of the motion? Opposed? The motion is defeated.

Are there any other . . . Ms Betkowski.

MS BETKOWSKI: I'd like to move
that we delete the 2 percent built in on the salary component.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder? Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: I'll second it, because that's what I had in mind too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion? Mr. Fox.

3:13

MR. FOX: Can someone just explain the process? That was alluded to in one other budget, included in another budget, without the background you provided, Pat. What's the process here? Stan referred to Treasury Board as opposed to Treasury. What's the government's decision-making process that we have to be aware of as members of the committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm not sure if I can explain that totally. I did see a copy of that letter referred to by the Chief Electoral Officer, and it was sent out to the departments. I also was led to believe that that was not being applied to Leg. Offices. I could be wrong, but I was told that as far as Leg. Offices was concerned, there was no directive at this point. As far as the difference between Treasury and Treasury Board, Treasury is the bureaucrats and the Treasury Board is the cabinet people.

MR. FOX: The Treasury Board is the cabinet committee. I understand that, but I'm just thinking of the process here.

MR. HYLAND: Often the Treasury Department has trouble distinguishing between what is government and what is Legislative Assembly. We've run into that lots of times on this committee.

MR. SIGURDSON: So then you come back and say "5 percent cut."

MR. CHAIRMAN: In all the correspondence I have reviewed, I haven't seen a directive that applied directly to the offices of the Leg. Assembly.

MR. FOX: So is that 2 percent an increase they're anticipating for management class employees or for wage employees, contract employees? Who is that levy directed to? Perhaps it was included in the letter and I didn't pick it out. I'm sorry, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The particular section says:
Solely to facilitate 1993-94 budget planning, departments should include a 2% increase in their salaries and wages budget as a Proxy for potential 1993-94 contract settlements.

MR. FOX: Right. So it would be across the board just in case their contract settlements that have increases or . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Sorry, Derek. This proxy amount should be individually identified on form C. Well, we don't use form C. I, in turn, have identified it specifically here for you now.

MS BETKOWSKI: Can I amend my motion then? I think what we asked of the Ombudsman was that he return showing us his numbers without the built-in salary escalator. I think that would get around your concern, as I understand it, which is basically that we're

overruling a deputy minister, which we may or may not want to do. But if it were to just return with . . .

MR. FOX: . . . with the information, then when we next meet we'll have up-to-date information about Treasury Board's intention in that regard.

MR. SIGURDSON: Hopefully, yes.

MR. FOX: Well, you know, under new management, you guys can make decisions.

MS BETKOWSKI: We'll just tell the Treasury Board what to do, don't you think? I think this committee would be great at it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So were you amending your motion?

MS BETKOWSKI: I'm amending my motion to say that we request the Chief Electoral Officer to show us the administration component without the 2 percent salary escalator that has been built in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the seconder agree with that?

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Are we ready for the question? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried. Anything else?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I was wondering, Mr. Chairman, if you could give me an indication of when you think we may meet next.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Once again, that is a problem for us. It appears that it will be at least two weeks. We have not have a directive when these budgets have to be in. We'll try to give you reasonable advance notice.

MR. HYLAND: When would be the latest we'd be able to meet to catch your schedule re enumeration and stuff like that, to give you a date?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I'm at your mercy. When you want to call enumeration, that's when I'll have to do it. I would like as much advance warning as possible. Of course, it's always better when you're training if you can give specific information.

MR. HYLAND: But you would tell us not to set a date earlier than seven weeks?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Please.

MR. HYLAND: No. I mean don't set a date earlier than the seven-week period from now. Otherwise, you've got a date, but you've got no maps, you've got no anything.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah. I'd be hard pressed if you set it seven weeks from now and I was short 14 returning officers seven weeks from now.

MR. SIGURDSON: Seven weeks from the appointment of . . .

MR. HYLAND: . . . from the appointment of returning officers is the minimum -- of the last returning officer really.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Remember that the parties play a role in this as well. Under our legislation, which I think is good legislation, the parties get involved in nominating enumerators. This is so we can have a good representation of enumerators. Remember that these enumerators, the good enumerators, are generally selected to be election officials at the election.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there any other questions or comments? If not, I want to thank you very much, Pat, for the work you've done in putting together your budget and your presentation today. We will call you back at the appropriate time to go over and finalize the schedule. Probably at the same time we will deal with these other issues as it relates to the things we have to do to get the enumeration started and that process. We will have full discussion on that with you so there won't be any surprises.

With that, will someone adjourn? Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are we not going to deal with the matter of the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can we take a two-minute break?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, let us have a five-minute break.

[The committee adjourned from 3:20 p.m. to 3:28 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll call the meeting back to order. We're now down to item 6, Audit of the Office of the Auditor General. In our package we have two submissions, one from Kingston Ross Pasnak and the other from William E. Mahon Professional Corporation.

MR. NELSON: I would like to make a motion that we accept the proposal of Kingston Ross Pasnak to audit the Auditor General's office for the fee of \$13,125.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder?

MR. SIGURDSON: Sure, I'll second it because I want to speak. If I may, I want to get some reason from the mover. I know that we have from Kingston Ross Pasnak a quote of \$13,125. We have a quote from William E. Mahon Professional Corporation of \$11,500 plus disbursements. I'm curious to know why the mover, who is always concerned about the bottom line, would move a motion that awards a contract to a company that has a higher bid than the other.

MR. NELSON: Well, I'd just love to.

First of all, I base it on discussion with the Auditor General this morning to some degree, and secondly, the disbursements of the other quote is really unknown. However, in my past experience of accounting firms doing paperwork for me as a corporation personally or as a manager of a corporation, unless you can control those costs, that's where they make their profits. The other reason is that Kingston Ross Pasnak have been doing these things now for three, four years, and I quite frankly believe they've done a good job. The Auditor General has indicated that they have done a good job. Quite frankly, I'm not prepared even though the other quote played a role in working with the Auditor General when he was with the firm of Kingston Ross Pasnak -- when I add all that up in my own mind, (a) the best qualified firm is the one I moved to have put in this position. Secondly, I don't think that when the bottom line

comes about, the other quote will be cheaper. I think it will either be equivalent to or more.

MR. FOX: I'm wondering if there was anything said this morning in our meeting with the Auditor General that you'd like to advise Tom and me of, because it might be germane to the discussion. We weren't able to be here this morning.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder: did we have the mikes on when we talked about that this morning? They were off.

MR. NELSON: Yeah, we had a private discussion.

MR. SIGURDSON: On this?

MR. HYLAND: Yeah.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, can we move in camera, then, to discuss that if you've got other questions?

MR. HYLAND: I don't know if we even need to move in camera if we just shut the mikes off.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you moving that we go in camera?

MR. HYLAND: I can do. That's not what I was going to do, but I'll do that.

[The committee met in camera from 3:32 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion? Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: I note that that's the same amount as last year, isn't it?

MR. NELSON: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: It's the same amount as last year. I'm surprised, as I said this morning, in that Kingston Ross Pasnak is a big accounting firm, very good supporters of the accounting profession. I don't know; maybe it's one their people that is presently accounting the CAs of Alberta. If they figure government has paid 5 percent too much for everything, I'm surprised they didn't judge that they're getting paid 5 percent too much for their services and reduce their bid by a 5 percent amount.

MR. FOX: So you're speaking against Mr. Nelson's motion?

MR. HYLAND: I'm speaking against Mr. Nelson's motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have any other comments?

MR. SIGURDSON: Do we know what normal disbursements might tally up to? I don't know what the normal disbursements would be. When Kingston Ross, as I think it was called, was first hired to do the audit of the Auditor General, if memory serves me correctly, didn't they come back with a larger bill than the original quote because of learning time, their learning curve? They charged that in.

MR. HYLAND: And we argued it and everything with them to get it down.

MR. SIGURDSON: And they agreed that in the following year it would be significantly lower, and it has been.

MR. HYLAND: The biggest problem was that we didn't pay them right away.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments?

MR. SIGURDSON: There it is. Back in 1988-89 they charged us \$16,800, which was a 49 percent increase over the previous year's audit done by Reid Cameron. Their rationale for that charge was that they had a very steep learning curve, that they had to put a lot of people into that learning curve and thus the additional cost. Their costs have come down over the course of time, so this year's estimate is the same as last year's bill.

I'm ready for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A call for the question. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

MR. FOX: Do you wish that vote recorded?

MR. HYLAND: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moving along to conferences, item 7 on our agenda. Since 1989 there's a history of the various conferences and who attended.

MR. NELSON: May I ask a question on this thing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: Well, I wrote a note on here that hopefully we don't send any attendees this year, but I'll leave that to the committee. In the last four years I've been to one. I was coerced into that a little bit.

MS BETKOWSKI: Coerced?

MR. NELSON: Yeah. I phoned Bogle and told him I wasn't going, and he talked me into it for different reasons. From Alberta there were Derek, myself, Bob Clark, Karen South, and Pat Ledgerwood at the COGEL. There were five people at that time. I think that's nuts. In fact, in my view if zero people went, I think you'd get as much out of it. But that's beside the point. I think we have to examine these things a little differently in that it's nice to go on some of these little jaunts and sometimes you can learn something from them -- there's no question about that -- but at the same time I think we have to be more cognizant of how many people in fact are going to things for what value comes back.

Now, the Ethics Commissioner has indicated that one will attend from his office, correctly or incorrectly, and he'll come back and tell us about that when we deal with his budget. The Chief Electoral Officer didn't indicate today or we didn't ask whether there was some proposal that he would travel there again. Then, of course, there's a committee that has been sending two people.

If we're going to send anybody, I think, first of all, we should cut it down to one, and secondly, we're going to have to be more frugal with how many of our departments we allow to go to each of these conferences. Maybe we have to start sharing information a little differently to better deal with the taxpayers of this province, because they're paying the bills. Everybody's been asked to cut their travel budgets and what have you, and I think we have to be just as responsible here. I for one will not travel to any of these this year, period, not because I wouldn't like to go on a little jaunt; I just don't think they're that useful for me as an individual. That's my choice. It's up to the committee. If other members feel differently, that's

fine. I'm not going to sit here and raise the roof about it; I've had my say.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I note the dates on these conferences and I think two things. One, we haven't, that I know of, like we have in normal years, submitted which ones we would like to go to in a preferential way. There's lots of time between now and leaving for purchase of tickets, et cetera, and I would like to move that we table this to a future meeting. In the meantime, we can look at the comments Stan made and also decide if we want to attend any, which ones we'd like to attend and submit a list to the chairman, and then look at it later down the road.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I won't accept your tabling motion until we've heard from Mr. Fox and Mr. Sigurdson, as they had requested to speak prior to.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. FOX: We're sort of discussing two things here that Stan's put on the table at the same time. One is the role of officers at conferences, and one is the role of committee members at conferences. I'll deal with the role of officers at conferences.

I think it's very important that our officers be involved on a regular basis with people who do their job in other jurisdictions. I guess I don't view them as little jaunts; I view them as an important part of the work that we do on behalf of the people of the province of Alberta. The Ombudsman has a conference once a year and I believe makes good use of his time there; the Ethics Commissioner, newly appointed in the province of Alberta, will I hope on an annual basis attend the COGEL conference, as does the Chief Electoral Officer; the Auditor General attends public accounts and comprehensive auditing: these are all educational things that are very germane to their work on behalf of the people of the province of Alberta. I think we cut off our nose to spite our face by suggesting that they should not be involved with the outside world, that they should just sit here and do their jobs without learning through their contact with other people. In many cases these officers are there because they're very involved in the organizations that they're part of as a result of their position and make presentations to these various conferences in an effort to share the knowledge and experience that's gained in Alberta.

So if anyone suggests that officers should not be going to conferences, I will speak against it. I think they need to use discretion and good judgment in terms of whether or not staff people go with them, but the officers need to go, and I'll support their continued involvement.

In terms of members of the committee going to conferences, in a general sense I've always supported that as well because I think it's important for us as members of the Legislature responsible for providing liaison with and budget and salary approval for the legislative officers to know what the heck they're doing, that we be in a position to make recommendations to them and to the Legislature about the way things are done in other jurisdictions. I think it's important that we make good use of that time.

That being said, if a motion comes forward that we send only one member of the committee to a conference, I'd be more than prepared to look at that. The tradition has been to send a member from opposition and government sides, but that's not something that's crucial in a committee that's functioning well. I have spoken against and will continue to speak against spousal travel as part of the committee budget. I don't think that's an appropriate use of taxpayers' money. That's my opinion, and that's something that we can certainly cut. I want to get those comments on the record.

3:45

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In 1989, as it shows, I attended the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation conference in Toronto. I recall the conference very well. I recall being in a room filled with auditors in the afternoon and having a very difficult time staying awake. I came back to this committee, and I spoke against ever sending another member of the committee to that conference. Now, a year later I had the opportunity to serve on the Public Accounts Committee of our province. It was interesting because I finally found an application for all the information that I had learned at the Comprehensive Auditing Foundation. I now eat my words I suppose is what I'm doing. I regret having spoken the way that I spoke in 1989 with respect to my report on the Comprehensive Auditing Foundation. I think there is extraordinary value in me attending that conference.

MR. NELSON: Even though you slept?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, no. I had difficulties staying awake, Stan, but obviously something must have sunk in, and I was just able to apply the information a period of time later. So I think that while you may not have been able to gather anything at the COGEL conference . . .

MR. NELSON: I didn't fall asleep.

MR. SIGURDSON: Perhaps you should have.

While you may not have been able to gather anything at the COGEL conference this last year, maybe there will be a time later on in your public service that you'll be able to find the appropriate application for that information.

So I think there is value in attending conferences. We may not realize that value straightaway, but I think that if you've got the opportunity to attend a conference and learn and gather up information to take back and apply at another time, there is benefit in that. My experience tells me that we ought to attend those conferences on behalf of the committee. Again, perhaps you're right: maybe we ought not to be sending two delegates to every conference. I can also tell you that when my wife has traveled with me to conferences, we've paid her way. I think we ought to be looking at that as well. I don't think it's the responsibility of the taxpayer to be sending a spouse along on the trip.

I think I can support Al's motion to table, because we can deal with this at a later date. I also want Stan to realize that there is value in attending conferences even though the application may not be immediate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Al, do you care to proceed?

MR. HYLAND: No other comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you making a motion?

MR. HYLAND: Yes, to table it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

MR. NELSON: I'll second that.

MR. HYLAND: I assume that along with that, people will look at it and submit a list to you. If nobody submits a list to you, then obviously the decision is made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, you just made a motion to table it.

MS BETKOWSKI: It has to come back to the committee.

MR. HYLAND: Well, what I meant was that in the meantime we should look at that thing.

MR. FOX: Either we have an election before then or there's a session convened in April and the committee is reappointed, perhaps with the current makeup.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah, that's true.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, if session is called for the middle of April, we may be sitting in July. So we'd have to break away from session to send somebody to the legislative auditors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That completes the business on our agenda. I cannot advise as far as when the next meeting will be. It will just have to be called at the pleasure of the Chair.

I'm looking for a motion to adjourn. Ms Betkowski.

MS BETKOWSKI: I so move.

[The committee adjourned at 3:51 p.m.]