

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

9:17 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Lund]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting to order. The first thing we need to do is have an approval of the agenda. Does anyone have anything else they need to add to it? If not, I have one other item under number 7 when the Ombudsman is here. It's the approval to attend the annual meeting of the United States Association of Ombudsmen in Juneau, Alaska, so we'll add that one to item 7. Are there any other additions?

MR. FOX: Just to point out, Mr. Chairman, that I have a scheduling conflict this afternoon; the Parliamentary Reform Committee is meeting from 2 to 4. I'll do my best to be here for as much of today's meeting as I can, but I have to be there for a while as well.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, I have a conflict all day. This will be my priority, but I may go back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that. We were having a lot of difficulty finding a date when members could be present. We'll try to keep the meeting moving so that you can attend to your other duties as well.

Could I have a motion to approve the agenda?

MRS. GAGNON: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour? Okay.

I'll move down to the approval of the minutes. We have the three sets.

MR. NELSON: Do you want to approve them one at a time or all three of them? I'll move approval of all three of them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All three? Does anyone have anything? Any errors or omissions?

MR. SIGURDSON: I'll just take a minute. I'm sorry. My booklet arrived at my office only this morning, so I'm still flipping through. If we could just have a minute to peruse.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm on the last of the minutes, February 23 in the afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we'll call a five-minute recess in order to give the members more opportunity.

[The committee adjourned from 9:20 a.m. to 9:25 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting back to order. Is there any discussion on the minutes? If not, all in favour of the motion to approve them? Carried.

Good morning, Mr. Ledgerwood. I must apologize for the letter we sent about the budget. I didn't realize I was stepping out of line and should have really had a meeting of the committee prior to sending that, but I guess being new in the Chair and not recognizing some of those problems and the proper, complete procedure -- my apologies.

With that, then, we will move to the budget. If you want to outline now what you have done.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have reacted to your letter that we were required to reduce our budget by 10 percent in the Administration element and the Election element. We have done that. Would you like to discuss that portion first, or would you like to just go through each of the elements with the new figures?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why don't you look at the adjustments that you've made.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. I think you each have a copy of the reductions by element, both the Election element and the Administration element. You can see in the Election element that we have reduced by \$41,370, which is 50-some percent of that particular element. The reason I was able to do that is that with the delays in the meetings of this committee when the meeting for March 26 was canceled and before this meeting was rescheduled, I organized training of returning officers and election clerks so that we were able to train in Calgary on Monday and Tuesday. We're training in Edmonton tomorrow and Friday. The fact that we were able to train on March 29 and 30 means that the expenses for those training sessions are covered in this fiscal year, and that is basically how I was able to reduce the bulk of that in the Election element. Also, we were able to get in many of our supplies on this year's budget. That is how I was able to reduce in the Election element.

I'd be pleased to address any specifics any of the members have on that in particular.

MR. SIGURDSON: With respect to Contract Services: that's because you were able to have your meeting in Calgary this past Monday and Tuesday?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. Remember that the returning officers are paid \$125 for each training session; the election clerks are paid \$90. That's in the Contract Services portion.

MR. SIGURDSON: What else is in Contract Services, or is that just clerks and ROs?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. Basically temporary labour is the main function in that, but also that's all our printed material. You may recall the bind we were in last year when we were on interim supply and we had a number of by-elections. We were in very dire straits because the committee wasn't meeting at that time and we had to use additional funds from other units within the budget. Currently we feel that we have enough in that particular contract group.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Well, I guess we will have an election sometime in this fiscal year. The mandate expires this fiscal year. I'm curious. You've got nothing else other than for Travel Expenses and Contract Services? There's nothing here for Freight and Postage. Where are those costs going to be looked after?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: You may remember that in a general election everything is covered by special warrant, so we will request a special warrant to cover the general election.

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, okay. Right. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Yes. My question is about your capability to get those expenses covered in this fiscal year. That doesn't put you over budget for this fiscal year? You had the surplus there to account for that?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No, we were within budget. You may remember -- from the previous chairman -- that when we had the by-elections, we were able to move moneys from the Enumeration element into the Election element. This is how we were able to cover off the by-elections.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, before we move on to the Administration element, I want to thank Mr. Ledgerwood for volunteering the 2 percent reduction in his salary.

So if you want to proceed with . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. On the Election element we were able to reduce in the Manpower section \$13,000: basically my 2 percent, plus I think you're aware that . . .

MR. FOX: You meant Administration element, just for the record. You said "Election element"; we're dealing with the Administration element.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Oh, I'm sorry. The Administration element. My 2 percent, plus I think you're aware that I have two new staff members, and they are being paid at a lower rate than the individuals they replaced.

I've reduced Wages from approximately half a man-year at \$13,000 down to only \$3,500. I think you're also aware that we have been working a great deal of overtime. I think you can appreciate that this could put us in a bit of a bind in that I now have no flexibility to pay those people; they must take time off in lieu. For example, we're working most evenings and also most Saturdays and Sundays, so I will eventually have to provide those people with time off. I've got \$3,500 in there simply for emergencies. I'll just give an example. When we were in Calgary training the returning officers on the enumeration procedures and mapping, I took a number of staff members down with me, reducing our staff at the office to minimum. A staff member's father had a heart attack in Vancouver. She was required to go out there, which left me with only one clerical person, so I was required to hire a clerical person for about 10 days. I simply need that minimum amount in Wages to cover emergencies such as that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson, on this point.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, yeah. I'm curious to know: when you offer time off in lieu, how is that accumulated? Is that accumulated at time and a half or . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The nonmanagement staff normally at time and a half. Management staff: they may not even get equal time; it depends on our activities. I treat my nonmanagement staff a little differently than the management staff. I expect a great deal more from my management staff, and if they're required to work a few extra days, that's the way it is.

Employer Contributions. We've trimmed that right down to minimum. The only way I can get a difficulty here is with some of the group plans that some of the members are not interested in now. If they change their minds, even to one person saying "Okay, I want

to get in Blue Cross, health care," I don't have money. That's to the exact dollar, so that would be the reduction in Manpower.

Travel and expenses: as you can see, reduced \$2,575. Now, we're getting into hundred dollar items here. We've fine-tuned this as closely as we can. There's absolutely no flexibility left in Supplies and Services. If you would like to look back through the previous years, you can see that we have been very close on that particular control group. What we've done is meet the intent of the memo from the chairman, but what we've done has reduced our flexibility to almost nil.

I'd be pleased to try and answer any questions you have on the Administration element.

9:35

MR. SIGURDSON: Is there a waiting period of one year before new employees become eligible for benefits?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The two new employees that have come on: one was from another department, so she was able to transfer benefits, and the other individual has now met the minimum time.

MR. SIGURDSON: Has that other individual asked that they be included in the benefits package?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We have made him aware.

MR. SIGURDSON: So this employee has been told that there's no room to include them for Blue Cross or other medical or health . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: They have made that decision through private insurance, for example, or other plans. Maybe their spouse is in a better plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Yes. My question follows on that of Mr. Sigurdson. If someone does come to you and says, "Well, I've made up my mind; I want to be part of your plan," and you have no money, by law or according to your own legislation can you tell them, "Sorry, you have to wait for the next budget year"? What is your flexibility there?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, the flexibility is very little, but I think I could come back to this committee and they would adjust my budget. We're talking in many cases only a few hundred dollars, but that's the problem of cutting it down to the bottom dollar: you lose that flexibility.

MRS. GAGNON: Right.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think if there's a problem with doing that, it's if that employee wanted to opt into a benefits package and was excluded from it, if this committee wasn't meeting at a certain period of time -- during an election, for whatever reason -- that individual could go to the Ombudsman and say, "I'm being treated differently by the government."

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If the committee would agree, I would appreciate having that bottom dollar just increased a bit, particularly since we're hearing rumours of increases in some of the charges for the group rates: CPP, that type of thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which figures specifically?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: This is code 711E: Employer Contributions account, the \$59,033.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What would you recommend?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If the committee would give me flexibility even for another \$500. Remember, the bottom line is that if we don't spend this money -- you know, we don't spend money needlessly. We can't contribute more than the contribution amounts required.

MRS. GAGNON: Would it be possible to approve it conditional to need and the decision to be made by the officer?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I don't think we'd put any condition on it. It's 500 bucks. We'd just put it in and leave it.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay.

MR. FOX: If they don't need it, they don't spend it. The whole budget's subject to need.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: So we would take that reduction and make it \$1,227, and we would revise the estimate to \$59,533. Thank you very much.

MR. SIGURDSON: You'd better correct the bottom line here as well then.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The bottom line then would be \$2,075. Then we would also have to take that \$500 off the total expenditure.

MR. SIGURDSON: No. The bottom line -- you're not changing anything in Supplies and Services, are you? So it comes under the total expenditure then.

MR. FOX: It would be \$479,100.

MR. SIGURDSON: The other one becomes \$15,694. Is that correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're making three changes. As 711E, Employer Contributions, will go to \$59,533, the control group total would go to \$443,890, and then total expenditures under the Administration element would go to \$479,100.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's right, but the reduction column has to be adjusted accordingly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The reduction column adjusted accordingly.

MR. FOX: That's just provided for information though.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. Would you like to now go to each of the elements -- have we exhausted the Administration and Election elements? -- or go directly to our major concern, which is the Enumeration element?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no change in the Enumeration element, though, from last week, is there?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. As you may recall, Mr. Chairman, we discussed that at the last meeting we had.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. So let's move, unless there are other questions to do with Election and Administration.

Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Again, if we're going to make some adjustments, we have to also adjust the page following so that it reflects the change in Administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes. We will do that when we call for the motion to approve the whole budget. If there are no other questions on the Administration and Election elements, then we will move to Enumeration.

Do you want to go ahead, Mr. Ledgerwood, on Enumeration, please?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: On the Enumeration element? Okay. That's block C that you have behind the yellow tab. Again, exactly the same format: broken into Manpower, Supplies and Services, and Fixed Assets control groups.

MR. SIGURDSON: I apologize; I don't know where . . . We're operating from a different book, I think, Pat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. HYLAND: I don't have an Enumeration element.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess it was because there was no change in it.

MR. HYLAND: So it's at the back of the minutes of the meeting of the 23rd then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll just call a five-minute adjournment until everyone gets . . .

[The committee adjourned from 9:42 a.m. to 9:43 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If everyone has it, I will call the meeting back to order.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. On the Manpower control group we're looking at an estimate of \$20,415. That's .6 of a man-year, and that's not continuous employment. What that is is a number of people associated with the enumeration process for very short periods of time when we will bring in individuals to process the claims. We'll be looking at somewhere just under 8,000 enumerators. We will be renting space for conducting training sessions for enumerators -- telephone calls, that type of thing -- so that we will be processing over 10,000 invoices in conjunction with that. Also, when we bring back the materials and supplies, we will hire individuals to work in the warehouse so that we recover as much of the unused material as we can. We put that on the shelves and would use that for by-elections, for example. So we need those individuals. The total is about .6 of a man-year.

Employer Contributions: those standard percentages that we're required to pay on temporary help.

Any questions on Manpower?

Supplies and Services. Travel Expenses, straightforward. These are expenses basically by individuals associated with the enumeration, including the travel by the returning officers, my staff. I have a breakdown of the urban and rural if anyone is interested. What it does is cover the travel expenses.

Advertising we've estimated at \$150,000, and we'll have to have a look at that depending on how much free publicity we get as a result of the committee's decision if they decide to change the dates from September 15 to 30. I think there will be a fair amount of media interest in that. We will still be required to publish in each of the daily and weekly newspapers a map of the electoral divisions, also the criteria to be an elector, as well of course as the dates for the special general enumeration and the revision period.

Freight and Postage, straightforward. These are the expenses associated with delivering supplies. As we get into the details of if the dates are changed, I'll tell you when we plan to deliver those supplies.

Rentals, straightforward. The rentals are for equipment associated with the enumeration. Also, rather than rent commercial space, most returning officers use their home as an office, and they're entitled to receive up to \$300 a month for up to two months for the enumeration.

Any questions on those elements? I don't want to go through too quickly.

Telephone and Communications, straightforward. These are calls that the returning officers have to make. Particularly in the rural areas they have to call out to the communities to arrange for returning officers. Also, we accept collect calls from anyone in the province, so that is built into that figure as well.

They're all very minor until we get down to Contract Services, which is \$3.9 million. Remember that enumerations are very, very labour intensive and depending on the electoral division will be in the low 80 percent to as high as 88 percent for labour and personnel costs. The average individual is going to earn about \$330. As you know, that money generally is turned around very quickly. If you'd like a breakdown on that, I can go through each line.

Broken down into the monthly honorariums, which are charged to the enumeration: the basic fee of a thousand dollars for each returning officer. The list of electors we're estimating at just under 1.7 million. We appreciate that there will be about 200,000 qualified electors who will not be on the list of electors; that is normal for each election. There is a revision period. The returning officers receive \$125 a day for each of those three days. They are paid for attending training sessions. They're also paid \$250 for conducting training sessions for enumerators. If they conduct five or 10, it's all the same; it's just a flat fee of \$250. They are paid \$400 for doing their polling subdivision maps.

The basic fee for the enumerators is \$100. They're paid a \$50 training fee, and they're also paid 50 cents a typed name. Now, in the single-municipality electoral divisions they will have two enumerators. In the multimunicipality electoral divisions they may have either one or two enumerators depending on the returning officer, depending on weather conditions. There are many variables. They have complete flexibility on whether they employ one or two.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fox, did you have a question?

MR. FOX: I'm just wondering, Pat, with respect to the returning officer fee and honorarium. Most of the returning officers have now done the polling subdivision maps, so does that come out of this year's budget? Well, there wouldn't have been money in this year's budget, would there?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No.

MR. FOX: No. Because there was no significant enumeration held.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Actually, some of them we hope to pay out of this year's budget. I should tell you that a great deal of the

mapping has been completed; however, some returning officers are not presently in Canada. I think they will be returning very shortly, and they will very quickly get on with their mapping. We currently have maps in from 72 of the returning officers. Forty-nine are over at mapping. We completed two last night, and they will go over first thing this morning. Ten arrived late yesterday, and they will be completed today and over to mapping. There were 11 where there were significant errors made by the returning officers, and we've had to return them for corrections.

MR. HYLAND: So what you're telling us: the mapping is coming along pretty well.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We are pleased with the mapping. I have concerns in a couple of areas. I can anticipate a couple of returning officers resigning. I think it's simply beyond their capability to do the mapping.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we'll be dealing with that a little more in detail when we get into the other section on enumeration.

MR. HYLAND: Have we any indication about the speed at which mapping's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's deal with that when we get into the enumeration.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We also have built in there a provision for support staff in that we like certain items typed and neither the returning officer nor a member of their immediate family types. Even a member of the immediate family should be reimbursed, so we've built in money for support staff.

We've built in money for the photocopying of the list of electors.

At a meeting that I had with party representatives on November 19, they requested that we provide them a digitized list of electors. You may recall that at the last four by-elections we did provide them digitized lists, and they used those computer diskettes, really appreciated it. We have been requested to provide those digitized lists, and we have made provisions with our returning officers to actually do those lists. We had been working with a company to scan the lists. They were going to take about a month to do the preparation of the diskettes. I'm not sure we're going to have the luxury of that time, so we've made arrangements for the returning officers in each electoral division to do it within the electoral division, and this will cut down on our time.

9:53

MR. CHAIRMAN: So who pays for that? Is that built into this budget?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: This is built into this system here in that if they are required to actually manually enter the names into the computer, it looks like about 6 cents a line. If they're able to scan, it's going to be approximately the same cost. It will vary by electoral division. I think 6 cents would be the minimum. Some are going to be higher. The advantage of the scanning is that it's much faster, and also it eliminates any clerical errors that the data entry person could make, so we are encouraging scanning. We have provided the returning officers with a form designed for scanning in that the lines are a nonpigment black ink. If, for example, an enumerator types on one of the lines, the scanner won't know what the letter or number is, and then they have to stop and do an edit. With this special form

that we've given them, the scanner will not see those vertical lines. So we have provided the returning officers with the flexibility of scanning. As I mentioned before, it's much faster and hopefully a little cheaper.

MR. HYLAND: Pat, with this scanning and all this computer stuff, I know it costs more money, but it's got to be quite a savings on paper. Whereas normally we would be doing a large number of lists, now we may be doing just a few and the rest are on diskette. So there has got to be a corresponding saving on paper.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Hopefully that will be the case, Mr. Hyland. However, I wrote to the parties a couple of weeks ago and requested that they let me know by the first week in April. The only party that has responded is the Liberal Party, and they still want their six printed copies of the list of electors and wanted two copies of each of the diskettes. I've indicated that because the Act requires me to provide them up to six copies, they'll get the six copies of the printed list of electors, but we will only give them one diskette, and they can make as many copies of the diskette as they want.

MRS. GAGNON: Could I ask as an aside: how many parties are there? Once when we visited your office there were 12. Are you still dealing with 12 parties?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We have nine political parties registered, and we have three groups currently completing their petitions in hopes of being registered. As you know, on an average we have about three or four groups interested in registering. As you're also aware, very few of them actually complete the registration procedure. So we have nine registered parties at this time.

We estimate that there will be about 30,000 pages on the list of electors. If each party takes their six, that's 180,000 sheets. Nine parties: as Tom would say, that's a lot of trees.

MR. HYLAND: And he isn't even wearing his green tie today.

MR. SIGURDSON: Not today.

This committee should have an amendment to go back to revise the Act to reduce the number of copies. If we're going to get into providing disks to constituencies or political parties, then I think we should go back with a recommendation that we revise the Act to reduce the number of copies. Put that on the onus of the political party. Maybe the provincial office of every political party needs one complete list for the province, and then the constituency association may need one. If you've got information on disk, there's no reason why you can't print that off.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, unfortunately we are required to comply with the legislation, which currently directs me to provide up to six copies of the legal descriptions of each polling subdivision, six copies of the polling subdivision map, and six copies of the list of electors.

MR. HYLAND: There may be no reason why you can't get it off, Tom, but there is a good reason why Stan and I still . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's move along with the budget.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay.

The other item, sir, getting down to the bottom of the page, is the forms. We have built in money for forms and, as we discussed earlier, mapping. The mapping is on a cost recovery from Maps Alberta. So on Contract Services our total is \$3,930,325.

The other item in there is Data Processing Services. I think you're aware that this is just the DFS/CFS printout, a standard charge through Public Works, Supply and Services. The other is Materials and Supplies. These are basically nonreusable items that will be purchased in conjunction with the enumeration.

So that control group is almost \$4.4 million.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions or comments on the Enumeration element?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. The other item on that is Fixed Assets. As we discussed the last time, we are now required to go on line with Treasury and also to personnel, and we really need two new computers in order to accomplish this in that the very early generation computers we have, first of all, are too slow, and they don't have sufficient capacity. We would like to get state-of-the-art equipment so that we can deal directly with Treasury and personnel.

MR. NELSON: I just have one question on the overall, Pat. How does this \$4.4 million compare to the previous enumeration that was done -- in what? -- in '88?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: It's a bit higher. As we mentioned, one of the reasons it's higher, of course, is that we're paying the returning officers \$400 rather than \$200 for each of the maps. Also, the clerk's fee has gone from 8 cents to 10 cents a name, and the returning officer fee has gone from 10 cents to 12 cents a name. Also, we estimate that we will have about 131,000 more electors than we had in '88. As I mentioned, we have flexibility in here in that we have provided for two enumerators in each of the electoral divisions. We also know that we will not have two in each of the electoral divisions.

You'll also find in your new polling subdivision maps, particularly in the city ridings, that you're not going to have too many of those polls with only a couple of hundred electors. We have been pressing the returning officers to consolidate polls. The Act permits about 450 electors per polling subdivision. So in many cases you're going to find significant reductions. For example, in some communities within a city riding you may have had eight polling subdivisions with a couple of hundred in each PSD; you're now going to have about only five polling subdivisions in that same little block.

MR. NELSON: What was that total number in 1988? Do you know offhand? You had to know I was going to ask that one.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, unfortunately I went to Calgary on Sunday afternoon and . . .

MR. NELSON: What do you mean, "unfortunately"? The finest city in Alberta.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah.

When I packed my material, I didn't bring my report on the 1988 general enumeration and the 1989 general election. Off the top of my head, I recall that I think we asked for about \$3.9 million and spent about \$3,320,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there any other questions or comments relating to the enumerations? Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: With the polling subdivisions described, does the returning officer have to have identified the polling station at that point, or do they still have time to devise that to live up to the parts

of the Act that require that the station have level access and things like that?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: What they've done at this time, Mr. Fox, is simply identify polling subdivisions. However, you may recall from earlier discussion that, particularly in the rural areas, they have designed those polling subdivisions around a polling place, with much more emphasis on level access than previously in that all the returning officers will have level access for their office and all advance polls will have level access. Where they are unable to provide level access for any polling subdivision, they will advise me and provide me with the rationale. So if we receive any complaints, we will be able to answer on the spot as to the rationale on why the returning officer selected that particular polling place.

10:03

MRS. GAGNON: You mentioned that on average 200,000 electors are missed during an enumeration. Is there, then, opportunity for them to be sworn in at the polls? Does the Act allow for that if the revision period does not produce these people for some reason or another?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. We have an excellent swear-in procedure. They simply take an oath, provide the deputy returning officer with two forms of identification, and they will be given a ballot.

MRS. GAGNON: If we did not have an enumeration before an election, that would be the case for every elector.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That would be the case for every elector, and the lineups would be such that people would be very upset. I think it's imperative that we have an enumeration because not only will they blame our office, but of course they will blame government in general.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's move into some decisions here. We need a couple of motions. First of all, I would like to have a motion that would accept the Chief Electoral Officer's offer to reduce his salary by 2 percent.

MRS. GAGNON: That's a piece of cake. I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour.

The second one: we'll need a motion to approve the budget, and I will read the elements: in Administration the number will be \$479,100, in Elections \$37,100, in Enumeration \$4,422,985 for a total of \$4,939,185.

MR. NELSON: I'll make a motion, but I don't want to use that total. I'd like to move the totals of the three separate elements.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I would accept that we would not use the total. I'm not sure why.

Any discussion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

Okay. Maybe we should have about a 10-minute break, and then we'll move into the enumeration, the next item on the agenda.

MR. SIGURDSON: We haven't passed the Election or the Enumeration budget. Stan divided them.

MR. NELSON: I just put them all in one motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wanted them in one motion but not the total.

MR. NELSON: I wanted three separate totals in one motion.

MRS. GAGNON: Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's what we voted on.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, before we move on or take a break, could I amend the first motion to add "effective April 1, 1993"? That's dealing with the 2 percent salary reduction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That would be acceptable. That was understood.

MRS. GAGNON: It needs to be stated.

[The committee adjourned from 10:07 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting back to order and move to item 5 on our agenda, Enumeration Update. We'll have to make a number of motions if in fact we change the normal dates under the Act for an enumeration.

So with that brief introduction, Mr. Ledgerwood, if you would care to outline what the Act currently says and maybe some of the constraints on moving it and what dates we might move it to.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee has authority under Bill 55 to change all the dates associated with a general enumeration except for the dates for the revision period. Now, the normal enumeration period would be September 15 to 30. The sequence of events, if we're looking at 1993 for example, would be that we would have completed the polling subdivision maps last fall. Mapping would be doing the mapping and would have the maps to us about now.

The returning officers would be writing a registered letter to the constituency associations the first week in June, asking those associations to nominate available and qualified electors who are interested in being enumerators. They would ask for a response to that letter sometime in early to mid-August. They would then use the rest of August to select those enumerators, train them during the early part of September, and we would conduct our enumeration from September 15 to 30. The Act directs that the enumerators return their list of electors five days after the end of the enumeration. The revision period is Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the second full week in October. The revisions would be made, and the returning officers would have until the last weekday in October to return the list of electors to us with the revised polling subdivision maps. We would then make the necessary changes at mapping and have the printer prepare required numbers of copies of lists of electors and maps. By statute we would have until February 1 the following year to provide that data to the parties. That's basically the sequence under normal conditions.

Now, because we are in a redistribution, under 16(5) of the Act we have superimposed the new electoral divisions on the results of the 1989 general election. At that time we determined that the Liberals would have won 51 seats and the NDP 32 seats. The way the Act currently reads, each government constituency association of the 83 electoral divisions has a chance to nominate enumerators, and the party who ran either first or second also has a chance. So we have completed that. The parties responded, the government party a little later than the others. On Friday we were able to send out to the

returning officers the names of the contacts for the constituency associations. Most of the returning officers will get that letter today if they haven't already received it, so they will be in a position to contact the constituency association executive member responsible for selecting individuals who want to be enumerators.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I might add that I have met with Mr. Ledgerwood and talked about constraints there might be on moving the enumeration to different dates. We currently are looking at having the enumeration started on April 26 and completed on May 1. Would you care to comment on that, Mr. Ledgerwood?

MR. NELSON: April 26 to May 1?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. I met with the chairman, apprised him of some of the concerns and outlined some of the time factors as we saw them. Would you like me to go through a scenario?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you could outline the complications of going a little earlier. We looked at two dates.

MRS. GAGNON: Also, is it possible to do this in four days?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Actually, it's six days.

MRS. GAGNON: Oh, there are 31 days in April? No.

MR. NELSON: Thirty, but April 26 to 30 is five plus . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Monday through Saturday.

MRS. GAGNON: Yeah. Okay.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Would you like to address that first, sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Please do.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. I can tell you that there are only three jurisdictions that conduct enumerations outside election periods: British Columbia, Alberta, and Newfoundland. All other jurisdictions complete their enumeration during the election cycle. The lowest number of days is Quebec with four; the highest is the Yukon with up to 13 depending on which day of the week the election is called. Federal, for example, is seven; Ontario is seven.

We have found that Sunday is not really a good day. In many areas they do not like to have people visiting on Sunday. So we've talked this over with the returning officers. Some of them are concerned it can't be done in six days, but when we pointed out that other jurisdictions do it on a regular basis, they agreed that certainly we could do it.

I should apprise you of the fact that at the 1989 general election, despite the fact it was from September 15 to 30, I was required to give extensions to 11 of the returning officers. But I feel confident that with proper training enumerators can complete the task within six days. The only thing that would really impact on that, I think, would be weather.

MR. FOX: Pat, you've talked a little bit about the number of constituencies that have completed their rough mapping of polling subdivisions, the work that's being done by the mapping branch to prepare detailed maps and descriptions of those polling subdivisions. Is it possible to be ready for an enumeration in all the constituencies by April 26?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I would think so. One of the problems is that some of our returning officers are out of the country. Most of them will be back next week. We have a training session scheduled for next Tuesday for some individuals that haven't been trained yet. I think we'll be left over with a couple, and we will train them as they arrive back in Canada.

If we're looking at, for example, as the chairman suggested, some time earlier, if the decision is made to go on April 26 or, say, the 19th or even earlier, our problem is that the registered letter would go out to the constituency associations either today or tomorrow in most cases. I don't think we could allow the parties any more time than April 8 to respond. Remember that April 9 is Good Friday and April 12 is Easter Monday, so we're in a very short week. The parties normally have a couple of months to do that, and I think we also discussed the fact that many constituency associations do not respond. Many respond with excellent lists; many respond with lists that really aren't very beneficial to the returning officer. So if we leave that any later, we put the returning officers in a real bind, because really they should wait until they get those lists and then select from those lists. In any case, we shouldn't allow the constituency associations longer than the 8th, even using the 26th. If, for example, we tried to go on the 19th, that would mean that the returning officers would have only the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th as normal weekdays to select all these individuals, contact them, and train them.

10:20

An area in the north, for example, that you're familiar with, Tom. Kay Sokoloski, the returning officer for Peace River, would be required to make all the phone calls to all the enumerators throughout her electoral division, be required to conduct training sessions in centres such as Peace River, Manning, High Level, La Crête, Fort Simpson. The time it would take her to make all these calls and then travel to those particular locations -- even if she worked all Easter weekend, I don't think she could be ready by the 19th. Particularly those returning officers who are not yet back in Canada certainly would not be ready by the 19th. So I think the 26th is the first possible date, and only through good co-operation of the returning officers and the people they're required to work with will we be ready by the 26th.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just concerned that Bill 55 may have assigned this committee the responsibility to rearrange enumeration dates, but that's being held up in court. We've got an order from the courts saying don't do anything until at least April 6. I'm wondering if we're stepping where we ought not to, and I'm concerned about that. You know, if the provision of Bill 55 that assigns authority to change the enumeration dates has been proclaimed, then I don't see any problem with that. However, I do have some concern about the courts ordering that nothing proceed and this committee changing enumeration dates. I think we need to find out from the Minister of Justice whether or not we have the authority to change enumeration dates today given that there's an order of the courts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Well, actually my question has been answered by Pat. It concerned the letter and the responses from the constituency associations. He was referring to suggested enumerators lists, and that wasn't clear to me.

Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: I thought the question in court was related to divisions, not that part of the Act. I don't know.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I don't know what part of the Act has . . .

MR. HYLAND: I know what you're saying, but what part of the Act is probably the question.

MR. SIGURDSON: The government was ordered not to proclaim Bill 55. Now, if the courts have no problem with us proceeding with an enumeration, then I've got no problem with changing the dates. If, however, the courts have ordered the government to not proclaim all of Bill 55, then, you know . . . Hell, you're not running again. You don't mind spending some time in jail. I've got 28 days when I've got to campaign, Al.

MRS. GAGNON: Could we get a clarification, Mr. Chairman, in order to proceed?

MR. FOX: Well, it's a very important point that Tom raises, and we should get some clarification on it. My understanding is that this is not like the Conflicts of Interest Act, where the government proclaimed certain sections of that Act so we could have the authority to initiate a search and hire someone and set up an office without having proclaimed the part that requires members to file, and that happened on March 1. My understanding is that none of Bill 55 has been proclaimed and the judge's order was that there'd be an injunction on that proclamation pending April 6, the court date. Now, it may be that the committee, because we deal with the Chief Electoral Officer's budget and the work of the office, has the authority to establish enumeration dates independent of that Act and instruct him to do that, but I doubt that we do. The Act requires that it be done at a certain time, and if it's going to be done some other time, then I would think it's the authority granted us by Bill 55 that does that.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, it's interesting to listen to this discussion, but certainly there are ways around everything: (a) the Chief Electoral Officer undoubtedly will be continuing along with normal, everyday work to expedite the work in the field that's necessary notwithstanding the April 6 date by the courts. We can certainly deal with the issue here with a motion. If April 26 to May 1 is the enumeration time, we can deal with that subject too. That will certainly give a clear message to Mr. Ledgerwood to proceed as per the outlined plan based on an earlier enumeration in September. So I don't see that that's a real problem. An enumeration in effect would be long after April 6 in any event. So if you're concerned about that, I think it's a matter of passing a motion here subject to whatever happens at the Court of Queen's Bench on April 6. Is it the Queen's Bench or Court of Appeal?

MR. SIGURDSON: Queen's Bench.

MR. NELSON: I don't see a problem. Now, if there is a problem due to a decision that may come out of the Court of Queen's Bench, then of course we can always get back here real quick and deal with that. But this certainly allows the Chief Electoral Officer to proceed in an expeditious way so we're not holding him up in any way.

MR. HYLAND: Partly on what Stan says, partly on what Tom said: if there's a problem, I wonder if we could agree on the date while the Chief Electoral Officer is here and get his thoughts for the time period and the revision period. And being as we're meeting this afternoon, possibly the chairman could check with the Attorney General through our break time, report back to us, and we could pass the appropriate motion at that stage. I think it would be useful to have a full discussion so Pat can tell us where we're wrong on the

time frames in between and that sort of stuff, and then we could check with the Minister of Justice or Parliamentary Counsel in the meantime and see where we are.

Maybe Pat's got something to say on this, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ledgerwood, do you have anything?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I certainly would support Mr. Hyland's suggestion that we contact the Minister of Justice and/or Parliamentary Counsel. But my understanding was that they had already proclaimed section 5 of Bill 55, which is the section that deals with the authorities of this committee. It would only take a very quick phone call to see whether or not that was in fact the case.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, why don't we take a quick break, make the phone call, and find out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I will make that phone call immediately. We'll break for 10 minutes or whatever it takes.

[The committee adjourned from 10:29 a.m. to 10:43 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we'll call the meeting to order even though Stan isn't here. I spoke with the Minister of Justice. He informed me that the preparation for an enumeration -- and the thing's sure spelled out in Bill 55 -- must proceed even though the Act is not proclaimed. The Act won't be proclaimed until the writ comes down, so we're within our jurisdiction to go ahead and prepare. With that, if you want . . . Do you have other comments?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. I was just explaining to one of the committee members that actually four things happen simultaneously and there will be four orders in council passed: one will be to declare the schedule to the Electoral Divisions Act as amended, the next one will be to appoint returning officers to conduct a general election on those new boundaries, the third one will be to dissolve the 22nd Legislature, and the fourth one will be directing me to issue writs of elections to the 83 returning officers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you just walk us through once again? The enumeration would be proposed to be conducted on April 26 to May 1. When would a revision be?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. On that particular scenario, the revision would be May 13, 14, and 15.

MR. SIGURDSON: Any other dates that have to be changed?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we have a number of them.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are we going to deal with them in one motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I think we'd better go with a motion on each one.

MR. SIGURDSON: Could we hear all the dates then and then divide?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have to change the date by which the returning officer must have the subdivision of the electoral divisions. We have to change the date on which the returning officer notifies the parties. That was the date Mr. Ledgerwood was talking about;

we could move it to April 8. The list of electors from the enumerators to the returning officer we will propose to be May 5.

MR. SIGURDSON: Sorry. Which one is that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Where the enumerators must have their lists to the returning officer. Let's see, that's . . .

MRS. GAGNON: So you are starting from an April 8 date, not April 26?

MR. CHAIRMAN: April 26 to May 1, the enumeration.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. I'm sorry. I thought you said April 8 or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, April 8 would be the date the returning officer would notify or contact the party representatives for the enumeration.

MRS. GAGNON: Okay. I understand. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Under section 29 the date for the ads for revision of the voters list must appear. Under section 33 we must change the date the lists of electors have to be in to the Chief Electoral Officer. Finally, section 34 asks that we have to change the information and lists to the registered parties.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I'd be prepared to make a motion related to the enumeration. See what happens to that. That would set in motion the dates of the other, and we could split up the motions that have to be made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. So we have on the floor, then, a motion to set the enumeration April 26 to May 1.

Any discussion? Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Well, I worry about some sort of unseemly haste in this whole process. I understand why Pat is making these requests to us, because there have been certain demands made of him by a government anxious to call an election. There seems to be this feeling -- and I raised it as a concern during debate of Bill 55 in the last session of the Legislature, the last sitting -- that we're in a big hurry. Even though it took four years to come up with some sort of approved boundary process, all of a sudden we've just got to rush through everything, put closure on the Bill, get these enumeration dates out there, tell everybody to do their work in five days, and get it all done in case the Premier wants to call an election sometime well in advance of the end of his mandate.

There's a court challenge that is yet to be heard that was referred to earlier. We've got the problem with the Act not yet having been referred to the Court of Appeal, which is part of the legislative requirement according to Bill 55. I'm just concerned that all this is happening too quickly and that what we're going to end up with is a situation where, you know, mistakes might be made, certainly not on the part of the Chief Electoral Officer or his staff but by government trying to push things through too quickly. We have 200 people in part of Alberta that are disenfranchised. They're going to have to be put back on the electoral map of the province of Alberta through an amendment Act that will have to be debated and passed in the Legislature, yet we're making plans to enumerate everybody in Alberta before we know that that's even occurred. It just seems like unseemly haste when the Premier has made -- although he seems to change his mind with regularity -- many commitments about things

that are going to happen in this yet to be announced session of the Legislature, including presenting and passing a budget, making amendments to pension legislation, laying out this plan for the next five years, or whatever.

So it seems to me that if we can take him at his word, when the session starts we're going to be here for a little while. I'm not comfortable at all with us trying to force some unrealistic deadlines on the Chief Electoral Officer and his staff.

MRS. GAGNON: Mr. Chairman, I support the motion completely.

MR. SIGURDSON: Tell me, Pat, if you can, what will happen to those people that are currently disenfranchised, the Muir Lake matter?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, I should tell you that the media report of 200 is not correct. My information is that based on the 1991 census on June 4, there are approximately 1,725 people in that area, which would be between 1,100 and 1,200 electors. I have made arrangements to have those people included in three distinct polling subdivisions so that they can be moved as a group if the government so wishes.

MR. SIGURDSON: So they would be enumerated but not assigned to a constituency, and then the government by way of amendment would include them in any one of a number of constituencies.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, that is correct.

MR. NELSON: I support the motion also. I think we've just got to get on with this, notwithstanding the comments of Derek. In the Muir Lake thing my understanding is that there's been some agreement with that group of people as to where they would be placed and that there was a mistake made and they understand that. So I'm not concerned about that at all. That could be done very quickly without too much discussion in the Legislature -- unless somebody wants stalling tactics with them -- putting these people where they want to be.

So I think we should give the Chief Electoral Officer something specific so he can carry on with his job and go out and get on with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: But if I talk, I'll close debate. Is there anybody else before me?

MR. SIGURDSON: We're not so terribly structured, are we?

MR. HYLAND: I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. SIGURDSON: We've got a flexible Chair.

I've got another question, if I may.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Mr. Sigurdson.

10:53

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. If revision is May 13, 14, 15, based on an enumeration April 26 to May 1, what would be the anticipated date of getting lists to political organizations?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If we have the enumeration from April 26 to May 1, as soon as the returning officers have the lists, they will then take them to a computer company and have them digitized, which hopefully will be completed long before the revision period commences. As soon as the revision period ends, then the returning officers will go back to that computer company and give the changes to each of the polling subdivisions within their area, which would normally take only another day or so. So the digitized lists would be available shortly after the revision period.

MR. SIGURDSON: Hard copy would be available to political organizations prior, then, to the court of revision?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. They would normally wait until the revision period. As you know, the revisions really don't add significantly, in that in most electoral divisions you're lucky if you get an average change of two per PSD. If this committee decided that they want us to have the list distributed before the revision period, we could certainly do that. I have made arrangements with the returning officers that they will run off the lists that they require for their own purposes prior to sending the master copies to our office for printing. As we discussed earlier, we're looking at tens of thousands of sheets of paper. Normally, it would take one company about a month to run off those lists of electors. We will contract with four companies to run the lists off, and they should be able to do that within five days of our receipt of the lists from the returning officers. We would normally use priority post from the office of the returning officer to our office, which is normally one day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thanks. Have you the authority to instruct your returning officers to provide a hard copy of a voters list to declared candidates prior to the lists going in to be digitized?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. The only people that would receive copies prior to distribution to the parties would be those candidates that filed nomination papers with the returning officers as independent candidates, in which case they are entitled to two copies of the list of electors.

MR. HYLAND: You meant to say nominated candidates, not declared candidates, didn't you?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I would say declared candidates, because I think the nomination date falls sometime after May 15.

MR. HYLAND: When I'm talking nominated candidates, I'm talking about nominated by parties. You're not saying that if there are five people running for a party, they could all have . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, even declared. I mean, if you come out or if Jack comes out and says, "I'm running as an independent," he's declared. He may not take the official nomination according to the Election Act, but Jack should still be entitled to get a copy of the list if it's requested.

I guess the concern I've got here is that normally we operate with a scheduled enumeration period, September 15 to September 30. This time we may be having an enumeration period right on the heels of the call of an election. It's a possibility, and I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned about having revision in the middle of an election period. I think that candidates and political parties are entitled to see the list of electors, to access that list of electors as

soon as possible if there is an election called prior to the lists being completed through the court of revision. So that's the request I'm making to the Chief Electoral Officer. Has he the authority to instruct returning officers to provide declared candidates in every constituency with a list of voters prior to . . .

MR. NELSON: His authority is under the Acts.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: My authority under the Act is only to provide lists of electors to registered political parties. The only individuals who receive lists of electors from the returning officers are independent candidates.

There is a lot of confusion. We talked about nominated candidates, and we're having nomination meetings. Those people that are selected at those nomination meetings are individuals who have been selected to represent their party at the next general election; they are not nominated candidates until they file their nomination papers with the returning officer. Similarly, they are not registered under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act until they file their candidate's registration papers with our office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have any other questions?

MR. NELSON: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Hyland will close debate.

MR. HYLAND: A couple of things. One, it's interesting, the Member for Vegreville's comments about rushing things. It seems to me that he made the same kinds of comments two or three times, only in the reverse, when we delayed the enumeration: that we need to do one, we need to have one, we need to have an update. Now he's on the other side of the fence. We're ready to do an enumeration; he's saying it's moving too fast.

I think maybe one advantage of having the enumeration and the updating close is that there won't be as many mistakes. There won't be as many changes as there might be under a normal enumeration, where it would be done in September and the election may be then or it may be a year or two away. I think we'll see a lot fewer changes. It may be close or it may not be, but there is a possibility we could see fewer changes in this enumeration than we normally would. I think the Chief Electoral Officer has told us before that often, with some exceptions, when they have a longer time period, nothing is done till the last few days of that time period anyway, and then it's bunched in at the end. This way they'll know they've got a shorter time period to do it. People will get out and do it, and they may well be done before the 15th.

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

The next change we have to make. Under the Act in section 15, each returning officer is to subdivide his electoral division into subdivisions prior to September 1. Now, since we've changed the date of enumeration, it would be the Chair's suggestion

that we change the date that is required under section 15 to April 24, 1993.

MR. HYLAND: That's the one for the drawing of the maps, did you say?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's for the requirement of the returning officers to subdivide the electoral divisions.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a mover?

MR. NELSON: Yeah. I'll move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson. Any discussion? All in favour.

The next change is the requirement of the returning officer to contact the party reps, and the Chair would suggest that we set that date as April 8.

Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Well, unless I heard Mr. Ledgerwood wrong, I thought that was the date by which he wanted the party reps and constituencies to have responded to the request from the returning officer for lists of people willing to serve as enumerators.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That was my suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that we amend that section. Instead of meeting the first week in June, it reads the first week in April 1993, without a specific date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Do we have someone that would move?

MRS. GAGNON: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Gagnon. Thanks. All in favour? Opposed? Okay.

MRS. GAGNON: Could we go back? I'm sorry. The date for the subdividing of the electoral subdivisions is April 4?

MR. CHAIRMAN: April 24.

MRS. GAGNON: The 24th. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then the next one is the list of electors from the enumerators to the returning officer, and it's under section 26. I would recommend that we change that date to May 5. This is the date by which the enumerators have to have their lists to the returning officer.

MR. NELSON: I'll move that.

11:03

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed?

The next one is the dates for the ads on the revision of the voters list, when those ads are to appear. We would suggest that they be in the week of May 3. Any discussion?

MR. NELSON: Does that work for you?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: That works well for the weeklies, and we could put that in the dailies as well. My concern was that if we could delay that and the election was called early, then we wouldn't have the confusion of the revision periods. As you are aware, there is a revision period in conjunction with the election, but the week of May 3 will be fine. We can certainly have those ads ready.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, if we could give the Chief Electoral Officer the flexibility of saying "the week of" rather than the date, because a lot of the weeklies go out on Tuesday. They have to be in Monday night.

MR. NELSON: I think that's what was suggested, "the week of."

MR. SIGURDSON: So that motion will include "the week of."

MR. NELSON: Yeah. That was suggested.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I suppose I just have a slight concern. Perhaps it's been corrected by allowing the latitude for the Chief Electoral Officer to advertise during the week of May 3. If the enumerators are going to have lists back to the returning officers by May 5, those lists have to be posted somewhere in order for the electors to go and see if indeed they're on the list. For advertising on May 3, the lists may not have been posted, therefore you could have a good amount of confusion with electors not knowing where to find those lists to see if they're included. Does that make any sense?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It makes sense, but the ads, depending on when the weekly is published, would run that date. It gives the people an opportunity, then, to find that list and meet the deadline for the revision. If you wait till the next week, with some of those weeklies it may be the Friday before the people even get it, and now we're already halfway through the revision period. That's why I'm saying the week of the 3rd; that catches that first set. Then probably the Chief Electoral Officer in the dailies would be late in the week.

MR. SIGURDSON: Fine.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Mr. Chairman, what we do in the case of the dailies is place our ads in the day of their highest circulation, and it varies by paper.

MRS. GAGNON: It's usually Friday because of the TV guide.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion by Mr. Nelson that we set the week of May 3 for this. All in favour?

The next one is the list of electors to the Chief Electoral Officer, and we would suggest that that date be set as May 17. Any discussion?

MR. NELSON: I'll move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson moves. Any discussion?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Just a technical point, Mr. Chairman. It's going to be very difficult. Revisions close at 4 p.m. on May 15. In many cases, particularly rural returning officers, it's going to be very difficult for them to get those lists of electors to us by the 17th in that they may not be able to get to their local post office in time to put it in priority post on the Saturday. We'll certainly have it in there, but I'm not sure that in all cases the returning officers will be able to meet the Act.

MR. NELSON: Could they get them there by the 19th? The 19th is the Monday, I believe. No, it's the Wednesday.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, the 17th is the Monday; the 19th is a Wednesday.

MRS. GAGNON: If I might, do they not have access to a fax, or are you unable to use those because they're not secure enough?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We wouldn't want to reproduce the numbers of copies from a fax.

MR. NELSON: Do these towns not have a courier service? There are all kinds of them.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Some of them do; some of them don't. We'll do our best.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Then the last one we need to change is the lists to the registered parties. We would suggest that that date be May 24. That is the date by which it has to . . . Did you have any comment on that, Mr. Ledgerwood?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: May 24 is a holiday, is it not?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, it is.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Could we have May 25?

MR. CHAIRMAN: May 25. Do we have a motion for this one? Mr. Drobot. Any discussion?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, just to express concerns, having worked as a political organizer on a number of rural campaigns, I think it has greater consequence for rural constituency associations than it does for urban constituency associations.

MR. NELSON: They're not going to vote NDP anyway, so don't worry about it.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, Stan, believe it or not, there are Conservative constituency associations in rural Alberta as well. You might want to be concerned about them, so don't just take an urban attitude.

I just have some real concern about those lists getting out to their political organizations. You know, if indeed we're at this point at anything under two weeks, it's going to be very difficult for political organizers to utilize these lists. I know the pressure that's put on returning officers in both an urban and a rural environment. I'm just expressing a concern for the political parties to access those lists as soon as possible, so that if those lists are available prior to the 25th, those lists go out. I appreciate that you're governed by the Act, but if there's any latitude possible so that declared candidates can access lists directly from the returning officer even prior to the court of revision, then I think those lists should be made available.

Normally, if we have the enumeration in September, the lists are made available and we don't have a court of revision until during an election period. Isn't that correct?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No, we have the normal revision period. Normally, enumeration is September 15 to 30; revision, that Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the second full week in October. Returning officers have until the last weekday in October to give lists to us. We have until February. You may remember, Tom, that we always had the lists in the hands of the parties before Christmas. So these are time lines, and if we can beat them, we certainly will.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just hoping there may be some latitude there so political parties and candidates can access lists directly from the returning officers to facilitate electioneering.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: You'll be pleased to know that many potential candidates have already approached the returning officers and don't realize that they don't have the lists yet.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, I know; I'm sure.

MR. FOX: I'm just wondering, Pat. You talked about how in several other jurisdictions they have the enumeration during the election period. Is the election period longer than our election period in those jurisdictions? I know it is federally. It's 56 days or whatever, and ours is 28. How about those other provincial jurisdictions?

11:13

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. Normally longer than our minimum period of 28 days.

MR. FOX: We've described a fairly ambitious work plan here for you and your staff and the people they hire. I'm wondering what would happen if an election were called in the middle of all this going on. I mean, is it possible to conduct an enumeration in the province of Alberta given this agenda that's been laid out, to have an election called the same day the enumeration has begun or a week later?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay. I can share with you the fact that all the returning officers that were available have been trained on enumeration procedures. They have all been trained on their mapping procedures. Those that were available in Calgary on Monday and Tuesday of this week were trained, with their election clerks, on the election procedures. We will train those that are available in the northern part of the province tomorrow and Friday, both returning officers and election clerks. Those that weren't available but will be available on April 6 we will train on enumeration, mapping, and election procedures. Those that are arriving after that, we'll train on a one-to-one basis.

We have provided the returning officers with their pre-enumeration supplies, so they have everything in place now to start the enumeration. Now that we have the dates set for the enumeration, we will deliver to the returning officers their enumeration supplies; that is, the pallet that each one of them will receive, with up to 30 boxes in a pallet. They will receive those April 7 and 8. With that shipment there will also be their pre-election package. This will provide them with the materials they need. As you appreciate, the new special ballot procedure comes into effect the day the writ is dropped. Also, candidates may file nomination papers as soon as the proclamation is posted. So the returning officer needs a great deal of material as soon as the writ is dropped. They will have that material on April 8.

We have palletized all the materials required to conduct the next general election. We normally send that material out the second or third day following the writ, in that we need time for the returning officers to get their office locations. The materials are such that we don't want them sent to their residences and then have to move them again to their offices. Those materials are ready. The trucking company is well aware of the routes that we require. We can load seven semitrailers in less than a day, and we have a fan-out procedure that's very effective in getting materials in the hands of the returning officers.

MR. HYLAND: Most of the DROs that are not here are experienced and have done it before; are they not? Or are there some new ones in the group that are still out of country?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think you're talking about returning officers rather than deputy returning officers.

MR. HYLAND: Returning officers. Sorry. Yes.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We have a mix. Some are experienced, and some have been just recently appointed.

MR. FOX: Well, I'm still wondering: realistically in your opinion how much of the enumeration process could take place during an election period?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If an election were called during the enumeration period, we would complete the enumeration on the dates selected. I appreciate that your concern as politicians is to get those lists of electors for campaign purposes. My goal is to get the list of electors so that the electors can exercise their franchise with minimum inconvenience at the polls. Any time you have a large number of swear-ins, you're going to have a blockage at the poll. We want to have those lists of electors completed as accurately as possible with the names of every qualified elector who intends to exercise their franchise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Is this related to the motion?

MR. HYLAND: Oh, I thought we dealt with the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, we haven't voted on it.

MR. HYLAND: No. I'll ask my question after.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of Mr. Drobot's motion? Okay.
Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: Pat, you outlined the length of some of the elections. The question I had was: from the best of your memory, what's usually the period from the end of the final day you can get on the voters list to the election day on most of those? It's relatively shorter than most.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah. Most of them are similar to ours. The revision period ends at 4 p.m. on the Saturday before the advance poll. Now, I think you're also aware that some of the jurisdictions don't have the flexibility our government has on calling the election on any day of the week. Many of them have fixed days of the week, so everything is fixed in conjunction with the election, whereas ours depends a great deal on the day of the week the election is called.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've one other question. We seem to have a little trouble getting enumerations on some Indian reserves. Is there an effort to use members of the reserve to do the enumeration and perhaps even have the DROs from the reserve?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Generally it's on a direct contact basis where the returning officer will contact the chief or one of the elders responsible for that type of activity on the reserve. Normally we will employ members of that particular Indian nation to conduct the enumeration and also to act as election officials.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions or comments? Mrs. Gagnon.

MRS. GAGNON: Yeah, I have two questions, I guess. How long before an election is an advance poll required to take place?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Okay, the advance polls are three full days: the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before polling day, regular

polling hours. The returning officer has the flexibility of having from one to four advance polls. Normally in a city riding you'll only have one advance poll. In a rural area you will set up the number of polls required so that you can provide the electors with the opportunity to vote at the advance poll.

MRS. GAGNON: My second question, Mr. Chairman, is: what is the precedent in Alberta for having an election without the enumeration lists available to candidates? Has this occurred?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, you may recall that in the 1982 general election the enumeration had just finished. The revision period had not yet started when the election was called, and special provisions were made to provide a list of electors to the political parties and in turn to the candidates.

MRS. GAGNON: So although we have a fixed date for provision of those lists, it's possible to change that.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. We understand the requirement, and we will work to meet the time lines. If we can complete activities prior to that, we certainly will.

MRS. GAGNON: Thank you.

MR. FOX: Pat, we've established dates for revision: May 13, 14, 15. Is the process for revision of these lists any different from the process for revision during the election period? As I read the Act, the returning officer has to publish in the paper at least five days before nomination day, which is E minus 14 I think, two weeks before the election date, notice of revision and stuff. Is it possible that the revision envisioned under the enumeration process could coincide with the revision under the election process?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: If in the scenario you're talking about an election is called prior to the revision period in conjunction with the enumeration, what will happen is that the election call will usurp the revision period in conjunction with the enumeration. The revision period for the election starts at the fifth day after the writ and continues until the Saturday before the advance poll. So those revisions in many cases could, depending on your scenario.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? If not, we will recess until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The committee adjourned from 11:23 a.m. to 1:40 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we'll call the meeting to order.
I want to welcome Bob Clark and Karen South to this budget meeting. First of all, I want to thank the Ethics Commissioner for volunteering 2 percent of his salary to help us in our difficult budgetary times.

I also want to apologize for the letter I sent to the Ethics Commissioner. Certainly I was somewhat out of order doing that and hope that you will accept my apologies.

MR. CLARK: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that, we'll turn to your budget and ask you to make any comments that you wish on the proposed budget you've come to us with.

MR. CLARK: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I don't think I can say a great deal more, Mr. Chairman and members, than I have in the memo I

sent to you. I really do earnestly believe that we've cut as far as we possibly can. I draw members' attention to the second last sentence. I just feel that if we go any further, we really run the risk of some serious problems and the possibility of a special warrant. I remind you that we have the additional responsibilities as far as deputy ministers and senior officials. When that came to us, we attempted to take on that responsibility without adding to the budget.

The area that's going to hit us the most is the area dealing with this question of a part-time person to help in the office. You'll recall that the last time I met with the committee, that matter was raised. Ideally, we wanted to have someone who could be there for a two-week period to get a handle on the office and then to be there for six weeks when the MLAs and their spouses are involved in the meetings we'll be holding. Tomorrow is the first day of the 60 days for the deputy ministers and the senior officials, so their 60-day clock will end June 1. Then for the next nine or 10 weeks we'll be involved in potentially up to 90 meetings with various people if they all want to have those meetings. Add to that the fact that Karen is entitled to six weeks holiday.

I would really just point out to you that we've gone further than we feel comfortable with in the reduction from the part-time person. This part-time person, as it says in the letter, would be available for two weeks to familiarize, then for the period of time for each group, and then for Karen's holidays. We have put money in for a person fairly well qualified, but remember, gentlemen, that this is an office where confidentiality is important. In this initial year there are already a number of people who have called the office, and we want someone there who can give them advice which is well-founded and forthright, rather than simply saying, "I'll take your number, and we'll call you back when the commissioner's in." Remember that the commissioner's in generally two or two and a half days a week. Now, I'm available at home and will be available to do a portion of that, but not every day that I'm not in Edmonton.

I think that if we go any further at all, it will really not make it possible for us to operate in a manner that's fitting to this office in its first year of operation.

MR. SIGURDSON: I, too, have some concern about such a substantial drop to cover off Karen's holiday time and to make sure that we've got a person in place that's qualified enough to handle the inquiries that may come in during Karen's absence. I quickly looked at this memo. Would you be moving that person to a part-time basis? Would that person be working half days then?

MR. CLARK: She'd be working basically when Karen is not available. She'd be working full-time for the six weeks Karen is away, then part days, and then on an as-needed basis. If we have a number of meetings with members or officials one day, that person would come in and man the phones and do the daily, routine stuff so that Karen is able to be involved in the meetings. As a follow-up to the meetings, then it's a matter of sitting down and saying: "Well, we need a follow-up on this item and this item and this item. Karen, will you see that we do that and follow along with that?" Not all responsibilities are going to be able to be shared with this part-time person, again because of the confidentiality question.

So there may be some weeks when the person might be there two or three or four days, the next week maybe two days, and then it may be five days for two or three weeks in a row. We're attempting to make ourselves available to be in Calgary also for some of the officials and for some of the MLAs and their spouses. We do now, as you know, have the answering machine on in the office when neither one of us is there, but I don't think we want to do that very often at all frankly.

So in fairness I just don't think we can go any further. I really have gone further than I would have had we not got the information from Mr. Lund. Mr. Lund did get back to us later and indicated how it would be handled perhaps.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman. When I made the motion at our last meeting that the Ethics Commissioner come forward with a budget that was 5 percent less than the original proposal, it was for the purposes of just examining what the impact of that would be on the office and their mandate, to give the committee a sense of what that would be like. That was overtaken in time by this Treasury request that 10 percent reductions be considered.

I worry here about what we're asking our Ethics Commissioner to do with respect to his office. We're not dealing with an established bureaucracy or any sort of, you know, empire building or hanging on to something that's there. This is an office that will in its first full year of operation be doing a very new job, and we've got to make sure they have the ability to do that job, that people can get what they need from the office and get it quickly, and that people are well served.

I take heed of what Bob is telling us with respect to the Wages component. It seems that the big reduction proposed here is in the Wages component, from \$20,000 to \$13,000, and as well in Professional, Technical and Labour Services, from \$29,500 to \$23,500.

MR. CLARK: Those are the two areas.

MR. FOX: Before dealing with the wages thing, can you give us a sense of how you accommodate that reduction in Professional, Technical and Labour Services and what that means for your office?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before you answer that question, members are maybe wondering about the group that just came in. The group is from the Christian school in Rocky Mountain House. For those who came in, this is a meeting of a standing committee. We're dealing currently with the budget of the Ethics Commissioner. There's one member of the committee from the Liberal Party, who's not here presently; two members from the New Democratic Party, Tom Sigurdson and Derek Fox; and members from the PC Party, John Drobot from St. Paul, Alan Hyland from Cypress-Redcliff, and Stan Nelson from Calgary-McCall. Of course, you know who I am.

With that, we will continue our meeting, and whenever your guide wants to take you out, just continue.

If you'd care to go ahead, Mr. Clark.

1:50

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, in response to Derek's question, we've cut back on the cost of brochures. It was our original plan to redo our brochure, adding in that portion that deals with senior officials and deputy ministers. We think we can cut it back by the amount that we have. After the discussion last meeting Karen talked to the people in the Assistant Deputy Registrar General's office in Ottawa, and we scaled that back somewhat. Just as a little side note, the federal government has introduced legislation somewhat comparable to what we have here in Alberta, although broader in some regards also, but with the basic principle of members doing what members do in this province and ministers the same. We've scaled that back somewhat.

The other area primarily is in professional services. It's become apparent to me quite quickly now that we've had members properly involve not only lawyers but also accountants in putting together

their statements that are coming to us, and over the course of the year it's quite conceivable that we'll have to go out and acquire a bit of outside financial advice to complement what we have as far as legal advice. That would all come out of the \$20,000 we have included in this vote for Professional, Technical and Labour Services.

MR. FOX: So the amount you refer to, the Assistant Deputy Registrar General, was with respect to the money they were requesting to help publish a national brochure.

MR. CLARK: Yes. We scaled that back considerably, mainly because they may not be involved with nearly the kind of program we talked of earlier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So are the other provinces participating in that?

MR. CLARK: Some of the provinces are. Karen, which provinces?

MISS SOUTH: Primarily it would be those provinces which have stand-alone conflict provisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: On a different part of the budget. I want to move down to Purchase of Fixed Assets. You're going to drop the Purchase of Data Processing Equipment. What additional equipment will you be cutting out in this fiscal year?

MR. CLARK: I'll just make a quick comment, and then Karen can fill in the details. Basically I have facilities in my office now, and I don't use them very well at all. My promise was that I would learn to use them in light of the requests from the last meeting.

MR. FOX: We're talking about a computer here, are we?

MR. CLARK: We are, yes. It'll be moved out of my office so the part-time person will be able to use it.

MR. FOX: Where I live we don't have facilities indoors, so I wasn't sure what you were talking about.

MR. CLARK: Things aren't that bad in Vegreville. I've been there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we could get back to the budget.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's just a computer?

MISS SOUTH: Word processing equipment, and we do have a laptop that the commissioner would be able to use.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments or questions? Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: The workload, then, with lumping deputy ministers in is probably -- what? -- a quarter more. We're getting a quarter more services for less money.

MR. CLARK: Alan, there's a possibility of probably 90 people involved in that area.

MR. HYLAND: Oh, yeah. It's all OC appointments too, isn't it?

MR. CLARK: On the other hand, there's not the public disclosure responsibility there, so that cuts that back somewhat.

MR. HYLAND: So that's at least twice as many filings; it virtually doubles the filings.

MR. CLARK: It does.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Mr. Fox.

MR. FOX: Well, I'm still concerned about the reduction in the money allocated to Wages. What you're telling us is that you're budgeting \$13,000 for not only a replacement staff person but someone to be there to help do the work as the workload increases over the next couple of months. I'm anxious for this office to work well, as I'm sure you are and everyone is. It's important that you do everything you need to do in the first year to establish that kind of credibility in the community. People are looking to this office to provide some protection and assurance to Albertans. I'd like to see that amount maintained at \$20,000 to make sure you have the flexibility to hire the staff you need to do the job you're doing. I'll make the motion, Mr. Chairman,

that 711C0, Wages, be retained at \$20,000 instead of \$13,000.

I guess my understanding is that as managers of this office if you don't need it, you won't use it. You're not going to hire someone to play cards during the afternoon. You're very prudent with the budget. There's a lot of work to be done there, so you hire people to work. If you need the help, if Karen needs the assistance, you hire the assistance and you get the work done. I just hate to see us tie the hands of the commissioner, recognizing that it's not really an appropriate comparison to say, "Well, based on last year we think the budget should be reduced," because this is not an office that's been up and running; it's an office that's just being established with some unanticipated responsibilities being added.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, could I just comment there . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, go ahead.

MR. CLARK: . . . and say that this was the last absolute area that we wanted to cut in, but when it came down to the numbers that we had to try and pick up, there just were really two areas where we had any possibility of doing it. I can give the members my ironclad assurance that we will not have a part-time person in the office unless it's certainly needed. If you can do something in this area, I can assure you it will enable us to do a much more complete job and, I think, serve the public better in this first year of operation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on the motion? Those in favour of that motion that we increase 711COO, Wages, to \$20,000? Carried.

MR. CLARK: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, Bob, really the Premier and Executive Council have added on the responsibility of the senior officials. One thing we've done as Leg. Offices Committee is suggest, especially to the Auditor General, that they bill back charges when we have to do an audit as related to something outside, an example being AGT. We recovered at least that cost back into general revenue although it went out of the committee. Is there any thought here of billing some of this cost of the operation of this

Ethics Commissioner's office, for the additional responsibilities, back to Executive Council?

MR. CLARK: It's a great idea. To be very honest, Alan, I hadn't contemplated the matter till you raised it at this moment. Dr. Mellon raised the prospect of this happening last fall, as I shared with the committee members. At that time there was an indication from him that from a budget point of view there be some recognition of that, but there was never any further discussion of that. Perhaps I was a very poor negotiator.

MR. FOX: Just in terms of that comment. I mean, really Executive Council, Members of the Legislative Assembly, et cetera, et cetera: we're all part of the same branch of government. I see it as a little different than asking the Auditor General to charge back to the Crown agency or another department of government with respect to the work they're doing.

MR. HYLAND: It's just a simple question of: should it be charged back against where the use occurs or charged back against us?

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, if a request came from Executive Council -- and they can under the legislation -- for us to look at a specific situation, we would have to go to Executive Council and say, "This is our best guess as to what the additional costs may be." I think at that time, Alan, you might have some of those kinds of discussions as far as that specific project is concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: There's a downside to this, and the downside is that as soon as you start charging back departments, individuals, what have you to a facilitator such as the Ethics Commissioner, then it's deemed that maybe I have a vested interest in what the results should be if I'm paying for it. I don't think that's what the Ethics Commissioner is there for. I think it should be left that if there's something that is requested or otherwise, it should come out of this budget, and if the budget is not sufficient to deal with those issues, then we need to get an OC or whatever to correct it. I wouldn't want to compromise the Ethics Commissioner because he's doing service for pay from a department.

2:00

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Getting back to the proposed budget that is before us, are there any other questions or comments relative to the entire budget? If not, we would entertain a motion that would approve a budget of: Salary, Wages, and Employee Benefits, \$139,405; Supplies and Services, \$55,450.

MR. NELSON: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, on that point. If you're going to put \$7,000 back into this budget, does Employer Contributions have to be changed also?

MISS SOUTH: It's factored into the Wages component. They get paid pretty much for most of it. It is, I think, their wage plus 11-something percent. It's all factored into that one category.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And then Purchase of Fixed Assets, \$2,100.

Do we have a mover? Mr. Sigurdson. Any further discussion? All in favour? Carried.

I want to thank you for coming. I guess we're off and running for another year. Thank you.

MR. CLARK: Good. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll take a three- or four-minute recess.

[The committee adjourned from 2:02 p.m. to 2:17 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting to order. I want to welcome Dixie Watson and Harley Johnson to our meeting.

First of all, I want to thank the Ombudsman for volunteering to take a 2 percent reduction in salary. Perhaps we should deal with that right now. Does anyone have a motion?

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, in an attempt to compensate the Ombudsman for that voluntary salary reduction, I would like to move

that the voluntary salary reduction of 2 percent taken by the Ombudsman be transferred to one week's administrative leave in lieu: one week off.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion on the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Moving to the budget, I want to apologize to the Ombudsman. I was in error when I wrote the letter asking for 10 percent. I now realize that we as a committee should have been meeting and making a decision, not Treasury, so I apologize for that.

We could perhaps then move into what has been submitted. If you want to lead us through it, Mr. Johnson, and highlight where there have been some changes. I see you have it by groups, so we will take it that way.

MR. NELSON: Before Harley starts, can I ask if you can tell us: in each of these areas where you've lopped off some of the money fairly substantially, maybe you'd just identify what concern that may give you or if there is a concern.

MR. JOHNSON: Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nelson, and the committee members, budget A that's in front of you on the yellow sheets represents the actual motion by this committee to come back to you with a zero increase over last year's. We've submitted it in this particular budget format so that you knew exactly where we were starting from.

Budget B on the pink sheets in front of you is where we have gone back based upon the philosophy espoused by the chairman through discussions with Treasury Board. I'm very pleased to hear the comments made earlier, because I was going to comment on the fact that from our perspective it's very difficult to get direction from a department that we in fact have investigative capabilities over, both the perception and the reality of it. I'm very, very pleased to hear your comments, Mr. Chairman, on that.

In terms of the pink sheet itself, it's very easy to look at where we've decreased the numbers. If I can go through control group 1, Manpower, what has been eliminated from Salaries and Payments to Contract Employees is the COLA, the cost of living allowances for '92-93 and '93-94, both in the opted-out and excluded salaried and contract and administrative staff, also the management, both salaried and contract. It was suggested to us during our last presentation that there would not be a lot of increases negotiated with unions and with other areas, and in fact I have now taken that totally out of the budget. The other thing that I've eliminated under Manpower is all the merit increases for management both salaried and contract. Those are eliminated, and that's how the salaries were reduced.

In addition, I have reduced the salaried portion under contract employees, which is 711D. The 2 percent salary reduction in my own salary. A promotional increase for my Calgary manager: normally within the public service if you promote somebody, they are entitled to an increase of some form. I cut that increase in half to this person that is being moved up. This is something that is happening throughout government where you're looking at ways to save as much as you can. I've also reduced the training allowances under Allowances and Benefits 57 percent. Now, I have a concern going any further, and I'd like to save a remark on the training for later in the budget if I can.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sigurdson has a question before we move on to the next group.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just concerned with how the staff are going to respond to this. If people are due a merit increase, do you think we would lose their experience? Would anybody be so angered by not receiving an increase that they may want to fold up shop?

MR. JOHNSON: Merit increases are still in for excluded and opted-out and unionized employees. Those are still in the budget. The step process through the pay scale is still within this budget, and they can be paid those increases. The only areas that I have not increased are management, and the one person promoted within the office -- the increase that I would normally give to somebody being promoted was cut in half. I am very confident that I am not going to lose staff on that basis. Management have accepted the freeze quite nicely. They realize that there are tough times ahead.

MR. SIGURDSON: What was the COLA percentage that you reduced?

MR. JOHNSON: It's approximately 3 percent over the entire excluded, opted-out, contracted, and management.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions before we move on to group 2?

MR. JOHNSON: Control group 2. One of the things that came up in my last presentation and comments to you was that I was attempting to get into the school system with a video. Of course, the comments made by this committee and our own reduction of the budget indicate that that's impossible. I went back with Dixie, and we worked the figures to come up with an idea of putting an annual report in each high school in the province along with a letter asking that it be placed in their library and suggesting that it be brought before their social studies teachers that they then have this availability of the information on the Ombudsman without asking. Given the latest negotiations within our own office and our machinations to reduce the budget, I've pulled that out of the budget completely. The cost would be about \$3,000. That is just too expensive given the economic climate right now, so I've pulled that out of the budget.

I've also eliminated in group 2 a program which allows for a computerized legal resource primarily used by the lawyer within the office. It costs about \$130 on-line time, and we are able to get that information by having our lawyer visit the law library at no cost to us. So while it takes us a little more time -- we don't have it at our fingertips -- I have canceled that contract.

I have canceled all in-house training sessions for investigators during the next budget year. I've canceled all computer training.

I've canceled such things as plant maintenance in the Edmonton and Calgary offices. We're getting down minutely in the budget here. I've canceled coffee for all guests. If any member of this committee now visits me, it'll cost you a quarter for a coffee.

I've looked at reducing our budget to the extent that if we have a ministerial request for assistance or an own motion investigation of some form, I'm going to have to come back to this committee and ask for a special warrant. We are bare bones on our investigative capabilities at this particular point. That does cause me some concerns in that there is a potential right now of three ministerial requests for my office to be investigating. I don't have the capability of doing it without coming back to this committee, but I'm prepared to run with it as long as this committee understands just how bare bones we are in this particular process. I'll just give you an example before moving on.

MR. NELSON: What additional costs are involved if you were to do an investigation at the request of a minister?

MR. JOHNSON: Basically, it's covering off for the investigators I have to assign, paper costs, that type of thing. This report that's in front of you will in fact be going to a minister. It is still confidential in terms of sharing the content with you. This report took approximately 13 months to do. That involved two investigators, not full-time, but it also required an outside legal review to ensure that the Individual's Rights Protection Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms were in fact covered off, that any of the recommendations were right on the money, and that we did not in our recommendations violate any social legislation in this province. So when you ask for the specific costs, it's printing costs, typing costs, manpower costs, replacement for the investigators. I will not have that capability in this budget that I'm now presenting.

2:27

MR. HYLAND: What's the cost of one like that for 13 months?

MR. JOHNSON: This probably came to about \$40,000 over and above our normal by the time we finished it all. So it does cost money to do investigations. I show this only to impress upon the committee the position that we're going to be in: that with every ministerial request I am going to have to come back for some form of financial assistance. I don't have any flexibility left.

MR. NELSON: Don't do it up so fancy, that's all.

MR. JOHNSON: If I may comment back to Mr. Nelson, these are leftover covers from the Principal investigation, and the Cerlox binding that was done fancy, as you've suggested, was done by a legal firm here in town at no cost to us. It cost me a coffee.

MR. SIGURDSON: That's two bits, right?

Just with respect to investigations, can you tell me -- I know that you can't average out, but in your experience do you have a number of ministerial requests come in?

MR. JOHNSON: We have three on the table right now that potentially could come to me.

MR. SIGURDSON: Three. How many did you do last year?

MR. JOHNSON: Three last year.

MR. SIGURDSON: The year before: do you recall?

MR. JOHNSON: One the year before, but there was an own motion investigation the year before. It dealt with the repatriation of native children from foster homes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm not suggesting we're going to have these requests, but if it's within my jurisdiction, I'm almost compelled to do a ministerial request. In fact, I think that's one of the roles this office faces.

MR. SIGURDSON: This one was \$40,000. Last year's three investigations: the average cost?

MR. JOHNSON: This was the most expensive. The others were done basically within the staff itself and were covered off in the budget without having to move moneys around to cover it off.

MR. NELSON: I'm somewhat reluctant to say what I'm going to say, considering my comments to the Ethics Commissioner, but if a minister requests you to do an investigation for whatever the reason might be -- I don't know what it might be particularly -- would it not be useful to charge the cost of that investigation back to the ministry?

MR. SIGURDSON: I think there's bigger conflict there. The Ombudsman has to be free and clear.

MR. NELSON: Right. That's the concern, as I said, considering my comments to the Ethics Commissioner.

MR. HYLAND: I don't believe what I've just seen: Stan and Tom change seats.

MR. NELSON: No, no. It's just a matter really of -- if I may just wander on here a bit. There is certainly some difference to the whole thing, but if a minister requests you to do an investigation, under what terms is that investigation done? Does he give you some parameters to work within, or does he say, "Well, I need an investigation on so and so; go do it"?

MR. JOHNSON: In law, he gives me parameters to work within. In reality, they're negotiated before they're basically stated.

MR. NELSON: So in essence you are doing an investigation on behalf of the minister under some terms of agreement between the ministry and your office.

MR. JOHNSON: That is correct.

MR. NELSON: So in that light, why shouldn't they pay for it? If there are no terms for that investigation, then I say there is maybe a conflict, but considering that there are terms agreed to between the Ombudsman and the ministry, the ministry should pay for that investigation.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, then, let's look at those terms.

MR. NELSON: Is there a conflict?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. For example, is there conflict or would there be perceived conflict if the ministry were to pay for the cost of your delivering this report?

MR. JOHNSON: In actual fact, I don't believe there is a conflict, but on your other comment on the perception, there very definitely could be a perceived conflict if somebody is paying for an independent review, remembering that all my reviews are independent of government. They have to be. If the minister is paying for it, it's potential perceived that they have control over what comes out the other side. Secondly, in terms of an investigation, if the ministry controls the cost, it also controls the depth that I'm capable of going into in that investigation.

MR. NELSON: Another suggestion here is that maybe the committee should retrieve those moneys.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, we could look at it another time, but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We went through some of this discussion with the Ethics Commissioner, and it would appear to me that this is another one of the topics we should add to our list of things that we should be discussing in the future. So if we could do that.

MR. NELSON: Well, what I'm thinking here is, basically, if the Ombudsman has had a history of dealing with ministries for investigations -- requested by the ministry at least -- he's got a bare-bones budget here and is basically suggesting to us that, "Hey, if I've got to do one of these things, I've got no money to do it." I don't see the point of asking the Ombudsman to come back here for money every time he's got to do a specific request for an investigation. Although I appreciate the fact that we're looking at reducing budgets and everything of that nature, you know, for an office that's got to operate and for a guy who's sitting here saying cut, cut, cut, cut all the time -- I don't want the Ombudsman coming back here every three or four months saying, "Well, I need \$30,000 because the minister's asked me to do an investigation." I just think that's nuts.

So maybe we've got to figure out a manner in which to put some money on here so that the Ombudsman can specifically use it for that thing, and if it doesn't happen, he turns the money back at the end of the year. I mean, I don't have a problem with that, but I don't think we should just leave it in the air and say, "Well, look, if that happens, come back and see us." He's going to be sitting here asking for more money instead of being over there doing the job that we've asked him to do. It takes him a day or two days to prepare and come over here and set it up. It just doesn't make any sense.

MR. DROBOT: Well, following up on Stan's point, there's always the possibility that an investigation could be curtailed, kiboshed, limited by this committee not funding it, and that's not our role either.

MR. HYLAND: Well, I suppose it follows along the same aspect. If it's not built into the budget so that we go and ask for a special warrant, we can curtail it in the same instance, too, unless he's coming back after. If he has to come back before you get started into it, that leaves you in a hell of a spot in that how do you say what it is without breaking confidentiality. How do you know to what depth it's going to be at that stage as well. And yet if you've gone through the whole thing and have to come back for a special warrant, then we're in a bind that has no control either.

MR. JOHNSON: You see, one of the problems I face with this office is that I am not totally in control of the investigations. They're based on complaints, complaint loads, minister requests, own motion, and a committee of the Legislature can request it. I am in control of own motion.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm wondering if we can build in a new element, 711G or whatever, that would be a nontransferable element. We shouldn't transfer any money -- that would be built into this new one -- into 711A or 712, Supplies and Services or Fixed Assets, as we do with others. We would just have one that would be there in reserve for own motion, ministerial, and legislative investigations. That way it couldn't be touched unless a minister went to you or if you initiated your own motion or if you had instruction from the committee. Correct me if I'm wrong, but would that allow you flexibility?

2:37

MR. JOHNSON: That would allow me some flexibility. Right now there is no flexibility left if I get one of these investigations.

MR. SIGURDSON: So that could then become a nontransferable amount of dollars, and it wouldn't be expended unless there was one of the necessary requirements: legislative committee, ministerial, or your own motion. You said that one was a \$40,000 investigation. Can you tell me other ones you were able to cover off? What kind of dollar figure would you recommend to this committee to place in, if the committee agrees to establishing it, a separate element? What kind of dollar figure would you like to see in there? I mean a realistic dollar figure.

MR. JOHNSON: I appreciate your question. It's like reaching up in the air and grabbing onto a cloud.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know, but based on previous costs.

MR. NELSON: I think I've got a little solution here, to get you off the hook too. First of all, do you have any idea as to an average cost of a ministerial request?

MR. JOHNSON: I've done five that probably are under \$5,000 each. I've got the one here that's close to \$40,000. I've got an own motion investigation that was started by my predecessor and I completed, and I can't even give you a cost on that at this particular point, sir.

MR. NELSON: Okay. If we were to put \$40,000 into your budget, would that cover off?

MR. JOHNSON: That would more than cover off an average.

MR. NELSON: Okay. I'm quite happy to do that, but I don't want to put in an extra 711G and all that crap. I've got some trust in the guy that he'll use the money . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: There's a reason for it, Stan: to make that one nontransferable.

MR. NELSON: Well, that's fine, but I'm going to suggest, if you're happy with that, putting \$40,000 under 711G for the purposes of ministerial requests or own motions. Does that make sense?

MR. JOHNSON: There's another alternative, 712K, Contract Services, because most of them are contract services to provide for relief while these people are off doing these investigations.

MR. NELSON: Yeah. I looked at that one also. That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you're making that a motion?

MR. NELSON: Yeah. Make it 712K: \$40,000 for the purpose of ministerial requests and own motions. Does that satisfy you, that intent? What are you smiling about?

MR. SIGURDSON: Stan, I think you're having a weak moment.

MR. NELSON: I'm not having a weak moment at all. Actually, I'm making some sense here.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm not arguing with you. I think it makes sense. I'm just surprised it's coming from you.

MR. NELSON: I'm trying to save the Ombudsman and this committee some time.

MR. HYLAND: What does that do with the percentage on the whole thing, just out of curiosity?

MR. JOHNSON: If you take 1 percent, it's \$13,000.

MR. NELSON: So that's 3 percent.

MR. HYLAND: So that puts us 7 percent under.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any further discussion on that motion? If not, all agreed? Carried.

MR. HYLAND: So that puts you just a little bit below the yellow sheet numbers?

MR. NELSON: Well, it puts a hundred and . . .

MR. JOHNSON: If you're adding \$40,000, it's 220,000. It's still quite a bit below.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Was there anything else in group 2?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir, there is. In terms of control group 2, over and above the elimination that I've already mentioned, we've reduced Travel Expenses by 33.9 percent. I've reduced the number of people attending the Toronto Ombudsmen's conference and I've further reduced the investigative travel, for a total of 33.9 percent. I have already instructed my investigators that unless it's necessary to meet in a specific locale, it's done by telephone, and that's already started. I've reduced advertising for both tours and employment by 63.6 percent. I'm not expecting anybody to leave the office this year, and if in fact somebody does leave the office, I would in all probability hire from within, somebody else who has been reduced from another department. That does give me a restriction in that I can't use that person back to the department they came from -- a potential conflict of interest -- but I'll work around that administratively and through the management process. I've reduced Freight and Postage by 16.7 percent. I have reduced short-term investigators and temporary support staff by 20 percent. Materials, supplies, and subscriptions: all subscriptions to my office now that are not an absolute necessity have been struck. Printing costs: 30.5 percent. Part of that 30.5, I must say, has been as a result of our capability now with the computers to do more and more desktop publishing.

The budget that I presented was a total reduction of \$108,700, for 8.4 percent, over the '92-93 budget year. I am reluctant, but there are two further cuts that could be made. I am going to request direction from this committee before making those cuts.

During the meeting with the other Leg. officers I made the comment to the chairman that the annual report as it now stands is

fairly expensive. I am very, very reluctant to go to some of the styles that have been used around the world. For instance, the Alaska Ombudsman puts out a newspaper as opposed to what I consider a professional annual report. It serves his purpose, and that's his style. It's not the style that I would like to move towards. I still think this office in this province has shown a very professional approach in terms of reporting its activities back to the Legislative Assembly and to the public.

There is a portion in the report -- and I've already cut \$3,000 out of the pages. We're down to now cutting pages out of the annual report, trying to cut back in terms of budget. We've cut it \$3,000 already. The elimination of investigative summaries at the back of the reports -- these give an awful lot of information to the press, to the public, to the Legislative Assembly, to members as to the types of investigations that my office is involved in. They're very generic investigative summaries, but they're there. To reduce and to take that out of the annual report, we could save another \$4,000; I'm reluctant at all to do it. If I thought it was appropriate to be done, I would have already done it. I'm afraid that the annual report could get to the point where it becomes a useless document, just a show document as opposed to something that's legitimate. Because of the position we're in with the budget this year, it is a possibility, but I'm asking for direction from this committee.

There is a second portion that I don't want to take out of the budget because I think it's a necessity, but it is a possibility. That is to eliminate all training that is not authorized to date. That would save another \$2,900, and I could, through the investigative summaries, cut \$4,000. I really don't want to do it, but given the budget constraints, I am.

I'd like to make one statement before we get into the training side. It's based on a Chinese proverb that I thought Mr. Drobot, specifically, would like, and that is: if you want one year of prosperity, grow grain; if you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees; if you want a hundred years of prosperity, grow people. On that basis, I'm very reluctant to cut any more out of the training budget. I've already reduced it, but to cut any more I think would be dysfunctional to the office in the long run.

MR. NELSON: What kind of training are you talking about?

MR. JOHNSON: They are courses that PAO, the personnel administration office, put on that look at supervisory training. They look at some of the clerical training, the needs to upgrade. They look at some of the investigative training. Last year one of the training components I sent some of my investigators on put on by the personnel administration office was road survival and some of the techniques of surviving, because many of my investigators, as I pointed out in our last presentation, end up by themselves on some fairly desolate roads. I don't believe that we should be cutting it, but I place it before the committee for direction.

2:47

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do members have comments?

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you want to deal with them separately?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's deal with the annual report first. Since the Ombudsman has asked us for direction, I think we should deal with it with motions.

Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: How many copies do you do up of the Ombudsman's report now?

MR. JOHNSON: Approximately 2,000.

MR. NELSON: Do you actually use them?

MR. JOHNSON: They are circulated throughout the world and throughout any of the Ombudsmen's offices and of course the Legislative Assembly.

MR. NELSON: You know, 83 of them come down to the Legislature, and probably 75 of them go straight in a wastepaper basket. I'm being very honest. I mean, I know you hate like hell to hear it, but we get so many of those darn things. They're all hitting the basket, and it's such a waste. Maybe we need to talk and maybe change some form of our legislation to have, instead of four copies, 10 copies put into the Legislature Library. Anybody who wants to go and look at it can do so rather than it being sent around to all the desks in the Legislature for example. That's a legislative thing that we have to do, that we should look at, discuss at another meeting, and make a recommendation to the government.

I'm reluctant to cut a few bucks. I mean, we're talking not very many dollars totally. I'm reluctant to make those cuts in those two areas. First of all, I think you need the training for your investigators. Secondly, I've got enough faith in yourself to make the decision on how you're going to print your annual report. I'm not going to do that for you. If you can save a thousand bucks, good for you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that a motion, that we don't cut those two fields?

MR. NELSON: No. He doesn't need a motion because he's making a suggestion and offering something. I don't think we need a motion. He's got it in his budget now, and all a motion would say is to leave it there. I don't think we need a motion to just leave it as it is.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, I'm having this wonderful day; Stan and I are agreeing on many things.

Just with respect to this, the cost of an annual report is really the setup charges, not so much the printing charges. It's, you know, the number of pages that have to be set up, not the volume that you end up producing. The question really becomes not whether we produce 1,000 but whether we produce 16 pages or eight; at least that's how I understand the printing business. So I would certainly encourage that the information continue to be distributed in the fashion that it's being distributed.

With respect to training, your old Chinese proverb I think is apropos. I think we've got to ensure that we provide ongoing training for all people that are employed in your office and in other offices, so I would certainly support your position that you not cut any further in those budgets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, AADAC, under the chairmanship of the Member for Calgary-McCall, quit putting a thick annual report together and put it in a foldout form. It cut the cost by half because of the setup charge. You know, there weren't as many set up. I think it was about \$3 and a quarter, something like that, compared to close to \$7 last year for a similar report.

I'm wondering about the outfits that use this report. Tom keeps on telling us about computers and stuff like that. What about the kinds of things that are in this being on disks? If people want it, they get a disk, which is a lot cheaper and a lot easier than a half inch of

paper would be. Most of the places that would use it would be on computers. Now, maybe not some of the places, but a lot of them. We heard talk about computerizing Ombudsmen's offices worldwide. Can any money be cut in that? You know, just putting it on disk and running it out that way, because you wouldn't have the same setup charges or stuff like that.

MR. JOHNSON: The other side is compatibility, if I may respond. There are so many computer systems around the world. Our specific disk that we use has to fit every other disk. The other is that the majority of Ombudsmen's offices, as you heard in that particular session, don't have computers. In fact, the majority of them in Africa don't have typewriters. So I don't see that as being a legitimate way, although it is an alternative that I think in some areas could work, certainly the Canadian ones. Really, we're only saving eight annual reports, in the Canadian offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. From the discussion it sounds like we're agreed to leave those items in this budget, so I would agree that we don't need a motion specifically to do that. Moving, then, on to group 3. Did you have any comments?

MR. JOHNSON: There are no comments on group 3, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. We're bare bones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then I would entertain a motion that in group 1 the budget be \$997,700; in group 2, Supplies and Services, \$223,700; and Fixed Assets, \$8,000. Do we have a mover? Mr. Sigurdson. Any discussion? All in favour? Motion carried unanimously.

We have one other small item. Mr. Johnson had sent a letter to me concerning the U.S. Association of Ombudsmen annual meeting in Juneau, Alaska. Mr. Johnson, would you care to make any further comments on that and describe to the members what this is about?

MR. JOHNSON: Realizing that the budget is going to be exceptionally constrained -- I put this in prior to knowing that we were looking at a reduction in the budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I realize that.

MR. JOHNSON: I have checked out the cost and the cost is going to be very insignificant to attend this, but because it's out of country, it requires this committee's approval.

What I'd like to do is drive to Alaska to attend this particular conference, and I would in fact stay in bed-and-breakfast type facilities to ensure that the costs are maintained at an exceptionally low rate. The reason I'd like this particular seminar is that they are also running an investigators' course in conjunction with it. May I ask: has everybody had a copy of the letter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; I'm sorry.

MR. JOHNSON: One of the things that I'm finding from an investigative standpoint is that I have a promotion system, but there are no real standards to be promoted from an investigator 1 to an investigator level 2. I want to increase the training components and the standards so that before somebody is promoted within the office, they have to meet certain criteria. One of them is to attend a course of investigation of at least 40 hours in length. They are presenting this in Alaska. I'd like to go and monitor the program, to have a look at it. They're talking about processes of investigation, how to do investigations, and different concepts that different offices are in fact using, specifically the United States in their investigative areas at the

federal and at their state levels. I think it's good exposure for my investigators to in fact go, but I want to ensure that the content is exactly right for this office before I start sending my investigators on it, so I'd like to go and do it myself. The cost is going to be very, very minimal, but I do require this committee's approval.

There is a second component that came up, and there is going to be no cost to this committee. That is that with the permission of this committee I become more involved in the International Ombudsman Institute activities. The board of directors meeting this year is in New Zealand. That I will be attending, again at no cost to this committee whatsoever, but it will require my time, and because of the out-of-country travel policy that this committee has established, in order to be protected medically and by other insurances that I'm provided with in this office, I require your permission to attend.

MR. HYLAND: I'll so move for the two conferences.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion?

MR. NELSON: It's the government that made that, not this committee. It's the government.

2:57

MR. JOHNSON: But this committee, as I understand it, came back to me with a letter indicating that we had to come back to this committee.

MR. NELSON: That's right, but it's the government's policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion on the motion?

MR. SIGURDSON: When is the conference in Juneau?

MR. JOHNSON: The one in Juneau is in June of this year, and the one in New Zealand, the board of directors meeting, will be in October.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are you renting a vehicle to go to Juneau?

MR. JOHNSON: No, we're not.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are you going to take your own vehicle on that road?

MR. JOHNSON: I will take my own assigned vehicle, Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion? All in favour? Unanimous then.

Well, with that I want to thank the Ombudsman for his diligence and effort in reducing the budget and for presenting it to us today. Thank you.

I would ask if we could have about a 15-minute recess.

[The committee adjourned from 2:58 p.m. to 3:13 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting to order and welcome Mr. Don Salmon, the Auditor General. I want to thank the Auditor General for voluntarily reducing his salary by 2 percent. I also want to apologize. I was in error when I wrote the letter and realized afterward that in fact Treasury did not have the right to direct through me to the offices. We should have been having a committee meeting to discuss it. So I hope you will accept that apology. It was my error in doing it.

With that we will move into the proposed budget that you've brought forward to us today. Maybe we could have you lead us through where the changes have been made and comment on those and maybe the effects as you see them.

MR. SALMON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I could, I would just make a few opening remarks that will tie us in. I do appreciate your comments. I accept your apology. I've approached it on the basis that this committee knows that we have to not only be independent but also appear to be independent and that the committee considered that we should be looking hard at the budget. I've approached it on that basis for the discussion today.

In my annual report this year I had made a comment that any actions the government made with respect to trying to reduce the deficit would mean that they had to look hard at the existing programs and their costs, and if programs were going to be cut, surely the public would expect that you'd look at the least effective ones first and sort of do it on that basis rather than across the board, although sometimes it seems like in the public's view an across-the-board is the only answer. I think this really is the case. You have to sit down and agonize and really think hard as to what you can do. So in looking over it, in my case I tried to achieve a reduction while at the same time tried to minimize any impacts that it might have on the office and our effectiveness because of what we're trying to achieve.

I've kept two developments in mind. Just so you remember them as we talk about this. First of all, the report on the Financial Review Commission should have been released today at 2. It didn't happen. I received a copy of that report yesterday as a courtesy because of my role as the Auditor General, attending the commission meetings and providing them with information. It's been delayed until Monday, but knowing the contents of that report and knowing that there is some effect on my office, I've kept that in mind. Also the other thing, number 2, is that in the annual report I made some pretty extensive recommendations. One of them that says that we're to try to get the public accounts out by September 30 has been accepted. I feel that's important, and I made that recommendation on the basis that this information needed to be out as quickly as possible. Their acceptance of that means that Treasury and myself, our office, have accelerated our timetables to try to get that work done earlier so that we can release. So those two particular things as well as other recommendations that have been accepted by the government have a bearing on the kinds of things that I will be required to do this next year.

I'm sorry; in the letter I indicated there were three categories. The first category, which we'll talk about now, does not, I feel, impair the service that the office provides and brings the figure up to 6.3 percent from the previous estimates, knowing of course that there's NovAtel in there as well. So the additional 2.1 percent that we haven't talked about here amounts to about \$253,000 and is shown on the schedule after the letter. On the second page, before the actual budget, is the breakdown of the cost reduction that I feel will not impair the office services.

The first item which we could talk about and which I think is worthy to just mention is the reduction in agent fees of about \$95,000. I've just said that we could achieve this, if it was really felt that we should go this way, by some very intensive negotiations in identifying with the agents where we think they can save. I mean this seriously, too, although in a sense it's kind of a dig: the profession comes to the government and says cut. If they're our agents, maybe we ought to tell them to cut. I think I can probably do that. I really don't have any problem with that. I think they're still interested in the work, but it would mean that we would have to be careful in the kinds of rates they would charge and where we can

help them find that reduction. After adjusting for other things, about \$95,000 could come, approximately 5 percent, and that wouldn't be across the board because you wouldn't approach it that way. You'd approach it on an individual basis because in some cases you could probably make a considerable saving in various ways and in other ways you couldn't because it's just too tight in the present situation. So in view of that and in the face of fiscal facts I've got \$95,000 in there.

Number 2. We talked last time we were here of reducing by four people. When it came right down to the program, we actually reduced six. We took two others. So in effect there are more dollars coming off with respect to downsizing, again in areas where we felt that it wouldn't harm us in relationship to the work that we need to do to get our mandate done. It's a couple of positions where we think we can re-examine and readjust the staff to still cover the area but not in any way harm us. That's about \$82,000. With the date of September 30 for public accounts we need about \$25,000 that we sort of put back in where we can obtain some assistance from the outside to get us through some of the crunchy things. We've done a full schedule. We know where our staff is going to be, and we've just got a couple of bad situations where we need to go to the outside. We know that there are staff available. CA firms come to us and say, "Would you please look after our staff if you've got any work?" you know. So we know it's there, and we can pick the people we think that will benefit. We need about \$25,000 to get through that crunch with the present budget situation. So that was number 2 of that \$253,000.

Number 3 is about \$52,000 coming out of the salary contingency and employer contributions and vacation pay that we can probably squeeze out as well.

Number 4 would be approximately \$29,000 for a deferral of purchases in equipment that in talking to the computer people we could probably delay. It's basically a delay. We could actually knock off about \$29,500 and not buy it in '93-94 and then look hard for '94-95 as to what we really have to have to be able to match up with what's needed.

The fifth item that's in that \$253,000 is about \$18,000 that sort of goes in professional fees and services.

Mr. Chairman, that brings us down to a budget estimate of about 6.3 percent from the 1992-93 estimates. Included within that figure, of course, is that \$95,000 which we would have to work at and the \$29,500 which would delay some equipment purchases.

Now, I can stop there and you can ask any questions you want before I go on because I've got some other things that I can explain.

MR. SIGURDSON: Can we just walk through again the problem with public accounts, getting out the information earlier, what that would do or what you were hoping to do?

3:23

MR. SALMON: Well, with public accounts coming out in September, that's approximately six months earlier. Therefore, what you have to do is grind out a schedule for all your time. It works out to about the end of July or somewhere in August in some cases where we can pretty well be finished so that Treasury can get the thing printed and be available for release. That particular recommendation happened many years ago, and of course until the government chooses to accept that kind of recommendation, you don't really have to adjust your work plan. With that acceptance this year it means that we have to regrind ourselves to get that done. So that particular thing was of concern. We certainly feel it's a good thing. I think it's expected. I don't think that in today's world you can really delay it too long. Everybody's pushing in all provinces to get things out earlier.

Treasury has even indicated the potential down the road, because it can't be done right away, of having public accounts pretty well available sometime shortly after June. In other words, you're talking about a corporate-type process where you really do crunch your numbers early. In fact, you'd start before March to come up with some of the things, and then you do it as quickly as you can after the year-end. Again I think that's possible. In all these scenarios it just means that the Auditor General has to revamp how you get your work done, because you have not only the financial statement audits but you also have your other work that you have to do to get your annual report out. That means you have to replan and change the timing and approach to those things.

Does that answer the one part? What was the other one?

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah, it answers one part. I appreciate that. I would surmise public accounts earlier. The contract staff is still built in. You've taken it out, but then you've put it back through a reduction in salaries. Is that how?

MR. SALMON: Well, no. We've had a downsizing of six people in the whole year, and we're saying that in order to meet the crunch for this year, we'll need about \$25,000 in wages so we can handle that, and then we won't need them. That'll be only for the early part. It's just several audits that we need a CA to come in and help us. We've already got built into the budget from before some summer students from the university that come in every year. During the training of CAs and so forth, they go off in the summer. It's a crazy system. We are partly affected because the firms, as you know, have the slack time in the summer. We have the busy time in the summer, yet our students all run off to school. It's one of those problems we face every year.

MR. HYLAND: So with the \$25,000 in wage help it saves you having two or three people on staff.

MR. SALMON: Yes. We've been able to drop the staff, and we won't have to replace those staff. We've had one manager quit. We've said, well, we can let that one go and not fill that position as long as we can have these dollars for this crunch time.

MR. SIGURDSON: With respect to the deferral of purchases to future years, can you tell me what assets you would not be purchasing?

MR. SALMON: Yeah; I had all that detail worked out. We've given you the backup sheets. If you took that versus the one that was there before, that'll identify it. I haven't got Andrew here to explain all the numbers on it. It's systems development. It was some of the hardware and software to do with networking. We're switching over from a mini to a networking system with micros. They feel that there's one part of it that's just not ready yet, so they can wait another year on it. That's really the switchover. That's most of it.

MR. HYLAND: From where? Or was it the library? I know we passed the library at Members' Services.

Were you looking at doing some of this changeover in this year's budget as of -- what's today? -- the last day of the budget?

MR. SALMON: Oh, no. Anything that we'd already committed last year is all spent in that sense. We're not carrying anything over to next year.

MR. HYLAND: It must have been the library where we did that. We did that with something.

MR. SALMON: We're saying that we'd probably delay till '94-95 what we put in when we came before for some of this hardware with respect to the networking.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments or questions? Okay. Could we move along then.

MR. SALMON: Now, I said a moment ago that if you consider the reduction, you have to weigh the work as a result of the recommendations. We've had an unbelievable year in the sense that you make a report and you've put up 45 recommendations and within a week the government is saying that they'll accept them. The Auditor just doesn't get that. I mean, over the year you get it, but you don't get it so suddenly. So that in itself is something that we have to consider, because some of those are fairly major involving budgets. We've asked for budgets on financial statements individually as well as a consolidated budget for the government as a whole, which has never been done.

The other thing. I'm aware of the Financial Review Commission, but I really can't talk about the details of that report. I also know, though, the impact it has on the office, and that is a concern in relationship to further downsizing in view of what is really trying to be achieved in '93-94, which I think is a great opportunity in my position anyway to help and make sure that these things happen, again only in light of my responsibility and my role. I mean, Treasury and a lot of other areas have a lot more responsibility to make it happen, but I'll end up with the responsibility to monitor or oversee to ensure that those things have happened. I'll have to publicly talk about it because it was in my recommendations.

I can say that the commission's report has not in any way gone contrary to my annual report. In fact, they've probably gone further in some cases, which also could have some effect on the work that we do if the government is going to accept their report as a whole as well. They really can't reject the report, because they've already accepted mine and a lot of their stuff is the same as mine, if you know what I'm talking about. It's an interesting scenario as a whole, but they have actually gone further, because they were talking in areas that I'm not into, such as forecasting and so forth. That certainly is not part of my responsibility at this stage.

With the acceleration and everything I had to look hard at that, and I also think it makes me reluctant in a sense to sort of come forward and say that I can cut other things. I know what the government's trying to do as a whole, but if I had my way, I would be in a lot better position a year from now, because here I went through and put all this stuff out, you know, and now I'm faced with the responsibilities that this is what happened. I'm stuck. I can't really say, well, forget it, you know. Anyway, that's what I'm up against, and I'm just sort of here to say that I'm not sure which way to turn.

I have a couple of things, though, that I'd like to throw out to you. It may not be now, but it may be another time that we would want to think about it. Certainly if we had to do it now, we could. Both of them affect the service that the office provides, okay? That's what you have to do: you have to start looking at these kinds of angles. I've just tried to open my mind right up and say, "What could we do?" Here are a couple of things that came up. I'm very interested in seeing what Alan has to say about this one and maybe even you, Mr. Chairman. It is interesting. If you want to know history, I know this history probably better than anybody, and I can tell you some history going back to 1954 in relationship to this. A lot of people can't do that in this government. I'm just saying that here's an area that if you really wanted to see a reduction in the office of the Auditor General now or in a future year, it's one you can think about. That is that I spend about \$198,000 out of my agency budget and my

own budget for agents on irrigation districts and in doing the audits of irrigation districts.

Now, the irrigation districts have an interesting history. In fact, we went back and reviewed it, and it starts back in 1894, before the province. Can you believe that? Of course, I was in the office in 1954 and know what all that entails. In a sense, all I'm saying -- it comes from this perspective -- is that the Auditor General probably doesn't need to be the auditor. It's the one area that I do that I'm statutory auditor, but the irrigation districts are not provincial agencies. They don't come into public accounts. They don't require tabling, but because I'm named the auditor in the Irrigation Act, I do the audit. It's been that way for umpteen years. At one time it was split. They didn't have everything under the office of the Auditor General, but in 1978 when they came in under the Auditor General Act, we became the auditor of all the districts.

3:33

It is an interesting area. We only collect from the districts about \$93,000, which means we subsidize the irrigation districts about \$105,000. I'm just saying that it doesn't affect my main mandate. So there is service that I wouldn't be providing if I wasn't the auditor, but it isn't something that I could sort of say, "I must do that because that's part of this overall consolidation or public accounts or whatever else you're talking about." So it is one that's come up as we've tried to discuss it in the office. Over the years we've provided that service. We're providing a service where the financial statements are very consistent. That's the other thing we do. I do not know how much agriculture monitors what our financial statements say. All I know is we do it because it's our responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Auditor General would remember. I think it was me that made the motion a few years ago. At one time they were getting their audit free.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. We changed that.

MR. HYLAND: Then we changed that to 50 percent at the time.

MR. SALMON: What we do is we don't charge them for the cost-sharing part; we charge them for the rest of the audit.

MR. HYLAND: I think we could go through the whole list and not just pick out irrigation districts but maybe pick out a lot of others.

MR. SALMON: Well, the irrigation districts are the ones that don't fit the definition of provincial agencies; that's all I'm saying.

MR. HYLAND: Some of them that do fit the definition of provincial agencies I wonder about.

MR. SALMON: Oh, sure.

Actually, without revealing anything, when the commission's report comes out, you're going to see some things about potential for consolidation and a few things of that nature.

MR. HYLAND: See, I have always wondered how the heck irrigation districts fit under it. They're a different form, but they're really a form of municipality.

MR. SALMON: Yes. They have their own separate, elected board.

MR. HYLAND: Yup. They have an elected board. To the best of my knowledge we don't pay for anything else that's run by an elected board, owned and operated by the users.

MR. SALMON: No. The Auditor General is just the auditor.

MR. HYLAND: Sure it's a lot of money; \$16,000 is a fair chunk of money. But when you look at the total operation of St. Mary River irrigation district, how much is it? If you want, I don't have a problem with making a motion that we start to extract ourselves from this.

MR. SALMON: See, I'm sort of saying that maybe it's time that they faced up to the true cost. Certainly in the majority of cases we've got the agents, so they know what we want. I mean, it isn't a case that these firms don't know how to audit these things.

MR. HYLAND: These firms are in the area, so they can continue to use the same firm.

MR. SALMON: Oh, yeah. We use the local people.

MR. HYLAND: They don't have any training or anything.

MR. SIGURDSON: They just have to pay for it.

MR. SALMON: Yeah, they'd have to pay directly to them.

MR. HYLAND: Maybe through negotiations they might get a better rate. Who knows; they might get a better rate than we do.

MR. SALMON: They wouldn't have the extra cost to process and oversee that we do.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah. If you want to start setting a precedent, Mr. Chairman, I'm ready to make a motion to instruct him to look at starting to remove them.

MR. SALMON: I couldn't remove them unless you change the legislation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have to change the legislation.

MR. HYLAND: That's right. But as a committee we can recommend to the minister that he change the legislation.

MR. SIGURDSON: If you're prepared to make that motion, that the committee recommend to the minister that the Irrigation Act be amended, we could accept that motion.

MR. SALMON: We've just finished the current year's audits. I've just signed everything off. All the stuff's off. We still haven't billed them the fees. Other than that, we're finished the whole year. The first year-end is not till October, so we have a little bit of time to consider it, but we could leave it out of the budget if we're going to do that.

MR. SIGURDSON: Al, there's a process that this has to go through.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we need to get this motion. We would accept that motion, Al. You're making that motion?

MR. HYLAND: Yup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any further discussion on the motion? Have you got the motion down?

MR. HYLAND: It should be sections 43(1) and 43(2) of the Act.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. I got it, at the bottom.

MR. SIGURDSON:

The committee recommends to the minister of agriculture that sections 43(1) and 43(2) of the Irrigation Act be amended to remove the words "Auditor General."

MR. HYLAND: We either remove them or we add municipalities and everything, in my mind.

MR. SALMON: I really don't know why they left it in in '78, but they did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion? All in favour?

MR. SALMON: It's interesting to note an editorial in the *Lethbridge Herald*. I'll only tell you this; you don't have to worry about it. Never worry about editorials. They're complaining about the accountability of the irrigation districts. They're trying to say that the irrigation districts should be brought in, tabled in the Legislature and debated and all the rest of it. It doesn't make sense, because they're private boards, you know. Really you're just building capital works.

MR. HYLAND: Their annual reports are sent to every water user, and they hold annual meetings.

MR. SALMON: Years ago they used to have a provision in the Act that allowed them to set their own auditors and had access to the Provincial Auditor if it was deemed necessary. That was the way they were doing it in those days, but in 1978 they went the other route, and we ended up being the auditor of all the organizations. Even the little ones could be done by a local auditor.

MR. HYLAND: I think it was probably something to do with the upgrading and stuff like that, but we're long past that stage.

MR. SALMON: Right. Oh, yes; we are. We've been using agents for a long time now too.

MR. SIGURDSON: Do you have another recommendation?

MR. SALMON: I've got one more. Can you take one more?

MR. HYLAND: He's got a stack of paper there.

MR. SALMON: I'm only trying you out for size here.

Actually, the next one is not as easy. Certainly if you go on the basis of your recommendation, this next one I can explain a little bit better because the \$168,000 is about 1.5 percent. So in effect, you know, that boosts that \$63,000 to \$78,000, so we're up a little bit higher.

The third category, where I'm sort of saying, "Well, let's talk about it," is not as easy because this affects the service that we provide directly, but I am prepared to share it with you.

MR. NELSON: If you want to go in camera for any of this, let us know.

MR. SALMON: Well, I don't know; I'm just trying this on for size. I'm haven't been worrying about the record. I think it's okay.

This would directly affect the extent of the systems auditing work we do in the office. It's a what-if scenario on this one. If we take back, say, these two particular ones -- and the reason I put these on the list is that they happen to have year-ends other than March -- it would reduce the amount of work we have done by agents. Also, we would then have to use our staff to do those year-ends, and that would reduce the amount of systems work we could do, which is section 19 of the Auditor General Act. So these are a little bit different.

The other thing is that I do know that with the voluntary separation option program which reduced your staff, the loss of those six doesn't necessary mean that all that time lost is strictly on that attest. It could also be on systems work.

Now, looking at this and the irrigation districts together, if the irrigation districts go, if you look at the list there, we've got about a thousand hours that we spend on irrigation districts which we could use to offset the 2,150 hours that we would have to spend doing this. So we're picking up about half of it back again if the irrigation districts go.

We've been trying to maintain under section 19 where we have to do the accounting and management control systems, and I think we've made a contribution to government in improving financial administration in making a lot of the recommendations that we make. Certainly they're being accepted well. We don't want to reduce that anymore than we have to, because if we reduced our systems audit totally, we wouldn't have an annual report, and then that doesn't seem right. So I mean, we're stuck with a catch-22 there. You know, you've got to do a certain amount. We're only up to about 18 percent of our hours that are systems audit now. You could actually do more, but probably if we could maintain that approximate 16, 17, 18 percent, why I think we can do a reasonable job. If we did this, it would pull two agents back. We'd just take them back. We would do the work, and then we would substitute the irrigation hours that we've done for systems audit. We would lose about a thousand or so hours that we wouldn't have available to us for systems work. I throw that out for your debate or discussion or questions.

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MR. SIGURDSON: What would you do with that other 1,000 hours, just attest audit?

MR. SALMON: See, we would lose 2,100 hours. No, the attest audit hours we'd have to do, so we would lose systems work that we've been presently doing.

MR. SIGURDSON: Right.

MR. SALMON: Okay. So then we would pick up a thousand hours from the irrigation districts. We would have half of it back. So we would lose some systems work -- not a lot, though, with some efficiencies.

MR. SIGURDSON: What would that do to your overall percentage? Did you say that would take it down to about 16 percent?

MR. SALMON: Yeah, we'd lose about 1 and a half percent or something over what we are now.

MR. SIGURDSON: I sort of rather you'd go up.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. I would too. I'd prefer to go up. The other thing is to only go one of these instead of two. I've thought of that too. Say you took the liquor board back. That's straightforward, and there is some systems work we could do in the liquor board if we had that agency back. We know about that. Then leave the improvement districts out, and that would about be equal to what the irrigation districts are. So we wouldn't change it that way. That's just another scenario.

MR. SIGURDSON: How is it that this was put out to an agent? Was it just that you didn't have the . . .

MR. SALMON: Well, we've tried to maintain a certain percentage, and we've only got so many hours that we can handle attest work at March 31, you know. So certainly these odd jobs are out there in our rotation to keep so many out and get so much work done by agents.

MR. SIGURDSON: So if the Irrigation Act were to be amended, would you have the authority to bring this back in-house?

MR. SALMON: Oh, I can bring these back any time I choose.

MR. SIGURDSON: Any time you want.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. But as I do it, see, it eats into my other work.

MR. SIGURDSON: Sure.

MR. SALMON: So that's why.

Anyway, if I got the picture to you, that's what I'm trying to do.

MR. NELSON: If we're going to take all these irrigation districts off here, why would you want to do the improvement district trust account?

MR. SALMON: Sorry; I don't follow.

MR. NELSON: Maybe I'm missing the boat here. Oh, I get it. Okay. I'm missing the boat here.

So this first list equates to the improvement district trust account?

MR. SALMON: Or the liquor board, for that matter.

MR. HYLAND: It's just about the same amount of time.

MR. SALMON: It's the same time.

MR. NELSON: Okay. The Alberta Liquor Control Board is a profit centre, so the question I have: why don't we charge them for their audit?

MR. SALMON: We do.

MR. NELSON: You recover that, do you?

MR. SALMON: Yeah.

MR. HYLAND: You wouldn't recover this side of it. You recover the audit side of it but not the attest side.

MR. SALMON: Yeah, we recover the financial statement side, the opinion side, fully. That's under the new rule that the committee passed about two years ago.

MR. HYLAND: I guess my only question was then: if you rotate those in, you could rotate something else out too.

MR. SALMON: Oh, sure, but that takes dollars.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah. This way you'd be saving audit fees.

MR. SALMON: We would be reducing agency fees, because we still have our people on staff, but we would then lose our systems side.

MR. NELSON: So what's your recommendation?

MR. HYLAND: I thought by taking the irrigation districts out, we were giving you some internal flexibility to do things.

MR. SALMON: No. Because of the big change that we're faced with in 1993-94 with the commission and with all my recommendations, I would prefer if we could pretty well stay careful on it and maybe just go for, say, one of these and the irrigation districts. We would end up with, I think, a little more than an 8 percent reduction. That would be my feeling.

MR. HYLAND: I'd sooner see us stick with government stuff like the improvement district trust account versus bringing the Liquor Control Board back in.

MR. SALMON: Well, we could do either one. I don't care which one, just one of them rather than two, you know, so I've not got it too tight. One offsets the other on the systems side.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would someone care to make a motion on this?

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't see how we can. This is a recommendation. If the government comes up and agrees with the amendment, then the Auditor General has the authority to move one of these in.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. Then I could pick one of these and go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You don't need to have a . . .

MR. SALMON: No; I can do this myself. All we have to do is get your feel on what I should do.

MR. HYLAND: This is a recovery. We can get this money back.

MR. SALMON: Yeah. They'd have to make the decision to recover the irrigation part. The Irrigation Act would have to be changed to move that money in.

MR. HYLAND: But this you can bill. Well, not improvement districts.

MR. SALMON: I'd just go to the firm and say: "I'm sorry; I can't renew this. I haven't got the dollars."

MR. HYLAND: No, but I mean even if you'd do it in-house, you'd bill the liquor board.

MR. SALMON: Oh, yes. I still recover the fee. Yes, yes. Right.

MR. HYLAND: The improvement district trust account you wouldn't.

MR. SALMON: No, because their funding is within the government.

So the liquor board, see: I would get the money back from them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That looks like a good move.

Okay; do you want to move along then?

MR. SALMON: Well, I'm just saying: what am I hearing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're hearing that it's a good idea.

MR. SALMON: I could go for, say, the liquor board?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we get the amendment through so that the irrigation districts do their own, then go for the ALCB because you can recover your costs there. You can't in the other one.

MR. SALMON: Right. Okay; I got it.

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman, if we were to move the improvement districts back in-house . . .

MR. SALMON: Well, that doesn't recover any revenue, though.

MR. SIGURDSON: I know it doesn't recover any revenue, but is it cheaper to do it in-house than to have an agent?

MR. SALMON: It depends. See, on the improvement districts we've got travel. On the liquor board we can do it right here.

MR. SIGURDSON: Right here. Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you took the improvement districts, it's not going to assist us on your budget.

MR. SALMON: Well, yeah. Either one of them reduces my agency budget.

MR. HYLAND: It increases your other.

MR. SALMON: No. I just end up using my staff differently; that's all. I'd like it if I could sort of pick the one and that would reduce whatever, based on the other.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, let's see if we can get this one first. I mean, we can't put the cart before the horse.

MR. SALMON: I do appreciate that. I really have agonized over this, trying to come up with what I felt I could do. I'm concerned about, like I say, the many recommendations we've made and what that will entail for us, plus the commission's report, which will be out Monday. That's really where I'm standing on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we go back to the three components of your budget, we're looking at a Manpower number of \$8,150,992. Are there any questions or comments on that?

Then go to Supplies and Services, agency fees. We come up with \$2,830,780. Are there any questions or comments on that number?

MR. SALMON: Now, that would change with these two things, because they're not in here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The two things we just talked about. I don't know how we can change the budget until we know whether the amendment is going to go.

MR. SALMON: These figures will give us the \$6.3 million and then the other two potential possibilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. That, I think, is understood by the committee.

MR. SIGURDSON: These guys may be anxious to pull the plug. You may not get an amendment this year.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Then going down to Capital Assets, we have \$116,379. Any questions or comments on that? Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: I want to go back just a little bit to Travel Expenses. You've got a reduction of plus \$30,000 over the previous year's estimate. Now, is that for in-province travel of your office staff?

MR. SALMON: Audits.

MR. SIGURDSON: Audits.

MR. SALMON: Most of the travel is audit travel.

MR. SIGURDSON: Right.

MR. SALMON: Audit travel is \$130,000.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are you going to have fewer auditors on the road?

MR. SALMON: No, no. What we're saying is that with what we're doing now, based on our projection of what we're using in the current year, we can manage with \$177,000.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay.

MR. SALMON: That's what we're saying. Our estimate was high.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions or comments on those numbers? If not, would someone care to make a motion that we adopt those numbers? Mr. Hyland. Any discussion? All in favour? Unanimous. Thank you.

We need another motion that we would accept the Auditor General's offer to reduce his salary by 2 percent. Mr. Sigurdson.

MR. SIGURDSON: With thanks.

MR. SALMON: Well, I've only got one year. No, I'm just saying that. I'm quite prepared to do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion? All in favour?

MR. SALMON: I feel okay about it; I really do. I have no problem at all. In fact, I just have to share this with you. The first day it was announced, you know, that these reductions were coming through, I went home and I said, "What do you think if that comes to me?"

My wife said, "Oh, I expect it." She didn't even give me any sympathy.

MR. HYLAND: We missed doing it for the Ethics Commissioner? We still have to do that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions or comments for the Auditor General? If not, thank you very much for your efforts in achieving such a reduction and for your presentation today.

MR. SALMON: Thank you.

MR. NELSON: All we've got to do now is get some legislative changes so we can do some of these things.

MR. SIGURDSON: Now that you're just about ready to leave, are you going to send a letter or a follow-up? The committee will send a memo or whatever the process is to the minister of agriculture. Will you send something to follow up?

MR. SALMON: Whichever you'd like me to do. I'll do anything you like.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think that some follow-up showing the history of the irrigation districts, outlining the cost recovery, the costs, and what we can do with it.

MR. SALMON: You can use that sheet, if you'd like.

MR. HYLAND: Or he could send the letter to Ty as chairman, and then he could forward it on to the minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we should send it through.

MR. SALMON: I think it should come from the chairman.

MR. SIGURDSON: We've already passed a motion.

MR. SALMON: You can use my sheet if you want. That's from my office. If you'd like me to fix that up in any way . . .

MR. NELSON: It should come from the committee.

MR. SALMON: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you again.

We do need a motion to accept the voluntary reduction in the Ethics Commissioner's salary. Mr. Sigurdson. All in favour? Thank you.

We need a motion for adjournment. Mr. Sigurdson.

[The committee adjourned at 3:57 p.m.]