

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

9:01 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Hierath]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we'll get started here.

I have a note that there are no seconders required for motions. If that's okay, we'll forget the seconders.

I need a motion to approve the agenda, I think, that Diane has forwarded to all of you.

MR. DICKSON: Before we go further with that, Mr. Chairman, somebody's kindly attached a list of follow-up items. Is there an opportunity to deal with that in the agenda? I mean, it's an attachment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Like future meetings?

MR. DICKSON: Well, no. In fact, there are some items. I'm interested in raising the idea of changing in the Ombudsman Act complainant protection, some of the things Mr. Johnson had advocated and requested in the past. Can we deal with that at some point this morning?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that wasn't on our agenda, Gary. What I would like to do: the way it's been explained to me in the past is that the Legislative Offices Committee doesn't sit during the Legislature, and we were trying to get a couple of items done here. I think that certainly as soon as the session is over, those will be the first things that will come up at this committee. If there's a general discussion you'd like to have on a specific topic, what would that be, Gary?

MR. DICKSON: Well, I'm interested in two in particular. I understand Mr. Johnson in June of '92 had felt strongly that there should be some complainant protection in our Ombudsman legislation. Secondly, I think in August of '93 he had some other changes. Now, I'm anxious, where it's possible, to be able to make this guy's job more doable and make him more effective. I know these have been outstanding for some time, and I'd like to see us at least discuss them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We certainly will, but we haven't got any background information right now.

MRS. SHUMYLA: We do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yeah, we do.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I just ask: is it urgent, Gary? Can we do it after session?

MR. DICKSON: Sure. I hadn't realized . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's have a general discussion then.

MR. BRUSEKER: Are there items that are emergent and pressing, that must be dealt with today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two; yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Those are the National Ombudsman Conference and the Audit of the Auditor General's Office. Those are the two issues that are pressing today.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, maybe I could make a suggestion. If we're not prepared to deal with these follow-up things and if they're not urgent, can I just request that they go on the agenda, then, for the next meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You certainly can.

MR. DICKSON: Perhaps what we could do, then, is arrange to have the back-up material made available for everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. BRUSEKER: In fact, even if there's time today. I was going to suggest that maybe let's deal with the pressing items that we must deal with today. Then if we have time later on we could perhaps move back to what Gary's talking about, because I think they are important issues. But let's do the must-dos now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

That being said, can I ask for a motion for approval of the agenda? There was one over here. Harry?

Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Okay. Then we'll move to the Audit of the Auditor General's Office. We have a letter of engagement in section A, and that again is one of those housekeeping things. There was a motion to approve the chartered accountant firm to do the audit for this coming year. They just sent us a letter of engagement and so on -- and of course you can see them -- dated April 26, and I guess all I would like is approval of that letter of engagement. Is that right, Diane? That's what we need. So it's more of a housekeeping thing. If you so agree, I would like a motion to authorize myself to sign the letter of engagement.

MR. BRASSARD: I so move. That's at the agreed price of \$13,000?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, that is last year's bill, the \$13,000.

MR. BRASSARD: Oh, I see.

AN HON. MEMBER: On the letter of engagement it says the fee will not exceed \$13,125.

MR. BRASSARD: Do you think we should have a limit on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; yeah.

MR. BRASSARD: The \$13,125 is listed as a maximum.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just a question. The \$13,125: have we in the past had bids on this task? Is this a best price, or is this a firm we've engaged in the past? Could you give me some more background on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm a rookie here, so . . .

MR. DICKSON: Same price as last year.

MR. BRUSEKER: I know it's the same price as last year. I'm just wondering . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: How is the auditor selected?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll ask Diane to explain that a little further.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Okay. The way I understand it is that the firm of Kingston Ross Pasnak has completed the audit for the Auditor General's office I think for the last four or five years, but in the last year we did have bids from other companies. Although one bid I think was lower, it had expenses. I'm not sure of the total amount, but it also said: and other expenses. In other words, it may have become over \$13,000. Kingston Ross Pasnak is the bid we went with last year, and for the office of the Auditor General for the coming year the committee has the opportunity to seek bids from other people.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you have any idea how long we've used Kingston Ross Pasnak?

MRS. SHUMYLA: I think it's four or five years. I do have the records in my office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I entertain a motion to authorize me to sign the letter of engagement?

MR. BRASSARD: I made that motion already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now we'll vote on it. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

I guess there's not much to discuss about a bill of \$13,125 that's been outstanding since June. If there are no discussion or thoughts about that bill for the year ended July 31, 1993, I would entertain a motion to authorize payment of that bill. Gary. Any discussion about that?

MR. FRIEDEL: I'm just wondering: were the parameters set up within the guidelines of their bid?

MR. DICKSON: We were just going to clarify that as well. I wasn't sure. I wanted to ask that before. The invoice submitted is compatible with the bid that had been submitted by the 17th?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes.

MR. DICKSON: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in agreement with the motion, please raise your hand? Opposed? Carried.

I'm missing something: the letter or statement regarding the audit; letters and financial statements.

MRS. SHUMYLA: That's just information from the firm.

MR. BRUSEKER: Behind tab B, is it? We're looking at that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. That is just for information.

MR. DICKSON: You don't need a motion that we received it for information?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think so.

Okay. We'll go on, then, to the National Ombudsman Conference in Toronto.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I just ask one question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. FRITZ: I don't mean to interrupt. I was reading where we have the little blue tab on the Legislative Office. It's just an interest question. Why are the travel expenses so high? It went from \$177,000 to \$214,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What tab are you on there, Yvonne?

MRS. FRITZ: That's under B.

MR. BRASSARD: Page 2 of B.

MRS. FRITZ: It's the financial statement of the Auditor General. If I can just leave that with you, Mr. Chairman. I could even ask you later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What was your question?

MRS. FRITZ: Why the travel expenses are like that. They went from \$177,000 up to \$214,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. That was the budget figure.

MRS. FRITZ: So they went to \$167,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It actually went down by \$10,000.

MRS. FRITZ: So they got a shortfall?

MR. BRASSARD: We're less than last year.

MRS. FRITZ: Even so, why are they that high? Where do they travel to and from?

MR. BRASSARD: The Ombudsman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the Auditor General.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I just leave that with you to sort out and let me know even quietly?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. FRITZ: I'm just interested in where they go.

MRS. SHUMYLA: I'm not sure, but I believe they probably travel throughout the province for their audits.

MRS. FRITZ: For all the different offices? I see.

MRS. SHUMYLA: We can clarify that.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay. Thank you.

9:11

MR. CHAIRMAN: So should we move now to the National Ombudsman Conference in Toronto, November 2 to 4? You all received an agenda for this conference under tab 4. Maybe I'll let Diane explain a little bit about what this committee has done in the past as far as traveling to conferences and maybe a little bit about what we were approved for traveling for this year.

Go ahead Diane.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Okay. Under tab 4, the first thing there is National Ombudsman Conference, a draft agenda. If you go to the back of that tab, I've also got a sheet in there called Standing Committee of Legislative Offices, Conference Attendance. This shows the type of travel the committee has done throughout past years to various conferences.

If you go to 1993, Conference of Legislative Auditors (Public Accounts Conference), we had approval in our budget to attend that conference. However, as we didn't officially have a committee in July, there was no attendance by anyone from the committee. Council on Governmental Ethics Laws Conference: as it was out of Canada this year, the Members' Services Committee did not approve our travel to that conference. That conference sometimes is in Canada; sometimes it's in the United States. The National Ombudsman Conference is the one we're looking at right now. Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation Conference had previously been in our budget because the Auditor General's office also attends that conference, and that's why it was nice to have a member from Legislative Offices attend. That was cut out of the budget for this year as well by Members' Services. I think in past years sometimes we had two delegates from the committee attend conferences, but now we're down to one delegate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary.

MR. DICKSON: Two questions. The first is: we've got a tab 5 budget estimate for this committee. I'm not quite clear. Forgive me, I've not been on this committee before, but how it is that the Members' Services Committee has the last word on how we spend our envelope of money in this committee? How does that work?

MRS. SHUMYLA: The way I understand it, the Members' Services Committee approves all the budgets for the Legislative Assembly. They approve all the committee budgets for the Public Accounts Committee, Legislative Offices, Parliamentary Reform, whatever committee we have. As well, the Members' Services Committee also approves budget estimates, for instance, for the Clerk's office or the MLAs' offices and that, so they have the final word. Conference travel was something that was cut down in the last year.

MR. DICKSON: But once we've set a budget as a committee, does the Members' Services Committee still have the right to tailor it and change it over the course of the next year?

MRS. SHUMYLA: They do. They do at the time we do all the budget approvals.

MR. BRUSEKER: My understanding, Gary -- and Ron, maybe you understand it a little more clearly, too -- is that I think Members' Services sets the budget and approves our budget for travel, but once the budget is approved for this committee, we within this committee then have the decision-making authority to decide how that money gets allocated. Is that not correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the way that I've understood it too.

MR. BRASSARD: I think you're right.

MR. DICKSON: The second thing I just wanted to ask is: when we talk about travel to this National Ombudsman Conference, I'm assuming Harley Johnson goes anyway. Does anybody else from the staff go? That's not coming out of our budget, but who from Alberta goes to this thing excluding us?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just him and one from our committee. That's what he told me.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes, I think Mr. Johnson and another person from his office will be attending, and that is paid for out of his budget. We have funds for one delegate from this committee to attend.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, it's just one now? I was just looking at past attendance. I noticed that often there were a couple of names.

MRS. SHUMYLA: In the past it was two, but we're cut down to one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Plus, it included spouses in the past, but now it doesn't.

Gary?

MR. FRIEDEL: I'd just like to suggest that appearances and public expectations are fairly important these days. If there are any of these kinds of things in our budget, I think we're going to have a real good look at the actual benefit. You know, is it something that could be perceived as a perk? Is there particularly a benefit to this committee? It's not that I want to do somebody out of a useful trip, but do we have an opportunity to really investigate in advance how much actual worth it will have for us so we can defend that expenditure? Certainly everything that is done these days is picked up by the media and scrutinized and goes through a wringer.

MR. BRASSARD: I agree completely with what Gary is saying. Having said that, however, I think we're all at the start of a new term of office. There are a lot of changes. I think the role of the Ombudsman is critical to what we're doing, our interaction, and I would like to recommend that at least one from our committee goes. Traditionally it's been the chairman or vice-chairman. I'd like to nominate Harry Sohal to go on our behalf and bring back a report. It looks like a fairly worthwhile conference, from what I read, and I think we should attend.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; we have a motion. Let's keep it loose if we just want to interact a little bit. Go ahead, Gary.

MR. DICKSON: I also don't want to do Harry out of a trip or anybody else, but I take Gary's point that, you know, we're in the midst of some pretty radical surgery in terms of delivery of core services to people. I'm going to suggest that in this year it sends out all the wrong signals. I mean, it isn't going to break the banks sending somebody to Toronto for a couple of days, but I think symbolism is so important. My feeling would be that we send the Ombudsman, who's had this office for a couple of years, and somebody else from his office if they're going any way; we ask that they come back and give us a full report.

When I look at the agenda, it seems to me for the most part to be a fairly routine agenda. This looks like annual housekeeping. I don't see anything here that's a new, major departure. It seems to me that if the Ombudsman were to go, come back and give us a report, I think quite frankly that that would keep us reasonably well informed.

MR. DOERKSEN: You're Diane; right?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes.

MR. DOERKSEN: I'd like to ask what has come out of these conferences in the past. The question in my mind -- and I agree with what Gary has said in terms of the spending, but we're also looking at some of these very same items you mentioned before, Gary, where it talks about complainant protection, changes to the Ombudsman Act. And who drives you? Does the Ombudsman drive you, or does the Legislative Assembly drive you? If we're counting on the Ombudsman to set his own criteria, that can be dangerous too. So what has come out of these in the past?

MRS. SHUMYLA: First of all, I've only been with the Legislative Offices Committee for about a year and a half, so my background doesn't extend for a long time. However, usually when a committee member or someone like the Ombudsman attended a conference somewhere, either the Ombudsman or a committee member or maybe both would come back to the committee and give either a verbal or a written report as to what they had gained from the conference, which gave the committee members information. In the case of this Ombudsman conference, the Ombudsman was in our office recently. In fact, he might have even been at this meeting today to talk about the conference; however, he wasn't able to be here. One thing he had pointed out to the chairman and to myself is that his term of office expires, I believe it is, on February 1, 1994.* His comment was that whether he is to continue as Ombudsman or not, the committee is going to have to decide who the future Ombudsman for the province will be, and he felt for those reasons it would be very crucial for committee members to become really familiar with the role of the Ombudsman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I can just make a comment further to that discussion I had with the Ombudsman. I certainly see Gary's point of view about fiscal restraint and cutbacks and so on. We have to, since we are all new people on this committee, be very aware that we have to be informed about making decisions, you know, maybe important decisions on things, with a different perspective than the Ombudsman would have at this conference. Any elected person in this committee may bring back a completely different flavour. You know, if we were a bunch of old hacks that had been at all these conferences before, I would certainly agree with what Gary said. Since we are all new, I personally think it's imperative that someone attend.

Frank, then Roy, and then Yvonne.

9:21

MR. BRUSEKER: Just along that line, I'm very sensitive to the comments that Gary Dickson has made about wanting to cut back. As I look back to 1992, it looks to me like potentially we had six people going. We had Mr. Ady, Mr. Hyland, Mr. Tannas, and potentially their spouses. Now we're saying we're going to send one MLA sans spouse. That is a substantial reduction in expenditure, and I think that's appropriate.

Also, just to comment, if I may be so bold, I recall speaking with Yolande Gagnon who attended the Canadian Ombudsman Conference in Halifax in 1990. While I don't recall the details of the presentation she made to our caucus at that time, the substance was that she felt it was a worthwhile trip. I think sending one representative from this committee on his own would be an appropriate move. So I support the motion.

MR. BRASSARD: Just in support of my motion, I feel we are going to be turning over our Ombudsman in our term of office. I think it's imperative that someone from this committee has a good handle on just what the duties are, because traditionally the role of the

Ombudsman is fairly independent. So the continuity aspect was one of the big considerations. When I was referring to the agenda, I looked at the first page, for instance, the plenary session. "Working Smarter: The Ombudsman in a Time of Fiscal Restraint" certainly is applicable to us today. The next day is: "Recent Trends in Canada -- Challenges to Ombudsmanship" in our interaction. The one that really caught me is on day two: "Accountability vs. Independence of the Ombudsman" and "Ombudsman as Mediator." There has always been this feeling that the Ombudsman is somewhat above accountability to his or her employers. It should be that way. I just think it would be great for one of our members to take in a session like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yvonne, then Don.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you. It's just to support the motion that's on the floor but also to ask that we do have a written report and a presentation for sure.

DR. MASSEY: Mine is along the same line. Do they produce written proceedings of the conference?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Diane, do you know?

MRS. SHUMYLA: I'm not sure about the Ombudsman Conference, but some of them provide audiovisual tapes. They were fairly expensive. There are also a lot of handouts as well that come out of these.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further comments on the motion by Roy? Are you ready for the vote? All those in favour of Roy's motion to send Harry to the conference? Opposed?

MR. DICKSON: Everything can't be unanimous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

The next item on the agenda is the Legislative Offices Committee Budget Estimates. That is on tab 5. We just put this in for your general information. Maybe it takes a little bit of explaining. I just kind of wanted to bring it to the committee to look at. You'll certainly see where Travel Expenses are cut back to virtually nothing, on the first page on tab 5, from \$21,800 to \$3,000. Allowances and Supplementary Benefits are the fees to attend conferences. The Professional, Technical, and Labour Services: virtually that was the audit we passed just a few minutes ago.

There's just one other thing, and then I'll ask for any questions. On the back page, then, is the estimate detail by expenditure code. Now, \$15,000 is for the attendance at meetings of our committee members. The Expenses are travel related to our meetings when the Legislature session is not meeting; right? So this is for our group.

MR. FRIEDEL: Excuse me; can I interrupt? That's \$1,200?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Twelve hundred dollars.

MR. FRIEDEL: You better not have me come down twice.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hitchhiking doesn't cost very much money.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, he's Peace River, and I'm from the south, so about two trips from each of us would have that gobbled up.

*see page 7, right col., para. 9, line 4

MR. DOERKSEN: Give us a background on how often this committee meets and what else we talk about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I mean, do you not know who you supervise? The Ombudsman, the Ethics Commissioner, the Auditor General, and the Chief Electoral Officer are who this committee supervises. Did you not read that in some of your literature?

MR. DOERKSEN: No, I didn't read that anywhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's in some of your paper that you got.

MR. BRASSARD: The second page would give you an indication how often we meet because there are things carried over from that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that when the session isn't meeting, we actually meet once a month or so. Is that about right, Diane?

MRS. SHUMYLA: I think in the past the Legislative Offices Committee has met approximately eight times in the year. As the chairman mentioned, those four officers report to the Legislative Offices Committee. At the back I've got the Acts from the various officers' offices, so that's why they are there. Legislative Offices Committee deals with things such as approving the budgets for the officers' offices, which we will do in the spring. There may be search committees for some of these officers who may be retiring or who may no longer be officers in the future, and we anticipate those may come up in the coming year. As well, there are many things such as perhaps recruitment of positions or perhaps more money needed for the election or whatever type of issues are brought to the committee by the officers. So we deal with the issues that the officers will bring to the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you done, Victor?

MR. DOERKSEN: That was good. That was somewhat helpful.

MR. DICKSON: Just a thought, Mr. Chairman. I hadn't realized the Ombudsman's contract or term was coming up in early 1994. I remember the last time this body went through the process, and that was a huge undertaking in terms of interviewing and reviewing short lists and so on. Also, there's always the prospect we may end up with a freedom of information commissioner, and one of the options is that that person would be appointed and supervised by this committee in the same way we do the other officers. So those are potentially two major projects.

Just leaving that aside for the moment -- and I'm going to sound a little bit like Scrooge here -- I've always been concerned about us charging beyond expenses. I think it's perfectly legitimate that we be fully reimbursed as committee members for out-of-pocket expenses and attending meetings and the work we do as part of the committee. I know some committees like the Public Accounts Committee have tried to show some leadership by saying that they're not going to charge for time attending committee meetings. I'd like to propose that we as a committee consider doing that, recognizing that if it turns out we're in a time intensive job search, that we'd review it. Until that time comes, if we're just doing the normal housekeeping kinds of things, I'd like to propose that the committee members go on the basis that we utilize the expense reimbursement process but that the members of the committee not claim a fee.

My reason is just that I've always felt that we get paid a salary, and part of the job description is attending to constituency work. Another part of the job description is meeting in committees and this sort of thing. I just have a lot of difficulty with getting extra

compensation because I happen to be attending a committee and doing some committee work instead of working in my constituency office. It's still to my constituents, I think, part of my job description.

9:31

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was one of the things I was going to bring up under new business. I understand that the Members' Services Committee has made that recommendation. Also, it has to be made clear that from the way I understand the process, we can make a motion here, but if somebody claims it, it will be paid. That's the way I understand it. I might be wrong. [interjection]

Well, just a second here, first I've got Roy and then Gary.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I just ask a point of clarification though?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MRS. FRITZ: What is it that you're talking about when you say expenses and then when you say pay?

MR. DICKSON: Expenses would be your air fare, your cab fare, the things that it costs for you to get from Calgary to a meeting of the committee here. The other is a hundred dollar a day meeting thing that we're allowed under the members' services guide.

MR. BRASSARD: When I look at the expenses of \$1,200 for a year and I look around the room recognizing that there are about 10 members on the committee, it hardly seems like an exorbitant amount.

MRS. SHUMYLA: If I can just comment here. What I've noticed in the past with meetings is that we did pay the committee members for their attendance at the meeting, for their time at the meeting, but there were very few committee members who did claim expenses. I think we only had one person who claimed kilometres, because I think usually we had the meetings at a time when members may have been here for other reasons. So the expenses are very low because committee members were not claiming them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got Gary here and then Don.

MR. FRIEDEL: Just on what Gary Dickson is saying. I think in the past there's been some kind of an understanding that during session, for example, people don't claim the allowance -- and I'm not talking about expenses -- for attending meetings. I also understand it was sort of an honour system discretionary thing as to what happened out of session. If someone is traveling into Edmonton out of session -- and in my case more often than not this involves two days. I wouldn't feel terribly guilty about saying this destroyed two days of my work, and I've got to catch it up someplace, not that I'm particularly in it for the money. Certainly if we're in session, I wouldn't even consider claiming it. I'm not so sure, Gary, that we should put this in. It traps some of us who may have different circumstances. It makes us look like we're money grubbing or we're into ulterior motives, and that certainly is not my position. I left a job that pays twice as much as I'm earning now, and I think that demonstrates that money is not my objective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before you say something, Don, I just want to make a clarification of what the meeting claim would be, the dollars. If we had a meeting of four hours or less, it would be \$100,

four to eight hours would be \$165, and over eight hours would be \$260. I just wanted to make sure that everyone understood that.
Don.

DR. MASSEY: Can I just clarify? Page 8, Meeting Attendance is what you're talking about, the honorarium, the \$15,615?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

DR. MASSEY: And the expenses were \$1,200.

MR. BRASSARD: Oh, I see. Okay.

DR. MASSEY: So that's quite different.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, again, the way I understand it is that, yes, in fact we can make a motion here, but it is not binding to any individual member that wishes to make a claim. Now, that's the word that I've got. So we can make a motion and have an agreement that we're not going to claim for meeting per diems, but if some guy puts in a claim, then it's going to be paid. That's the way I understand it.

Yvonne.

MRS. FRITZ: Can I just ask what Members' Services Committee said?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I haven't attended Members' Services.

MRS. FRITZ: Oh. I thought you said that Members' Services recommended that . . .

MRS. SHUMYLA: As far as the way I understand it, there's a provision in Members' Services orders that members can claim for the meetings.

MRS. FRITZ: I guess I'm just looking for some clarification. Is the hundred dollars to pay for your meals and if you stay overnight?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. That's expenses, Yvonne. The hundred dollars or the \$165 or \$265 is a per diem. It's an extra pay.

MRS. SHUMYLA: It's pay for your attendance at the meeting.

MRS. FRITZ: Then we claim expenses over and above that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MRS. FRITZ: So we could do it the other way where you just get your hundred dollars and not put in expenses. So that's what you meant that people were doing, Diane, and that's why it's only \$1,200?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes. In the past usually people would claim for their attendance at the meeting, but I would get very, very few expenses.

MRS. FRITZ: Not putting in expenses. That paid your cab and your meals and if you stayed overnight.

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes.

MR. DOERKSEN: The Public Accounts Committee really didn't do anything special this year because it was always the understanding that once you're in session, you don't claim that per diem, and that's

what we're talking about here. It just makes common sense. If you're here, you don't pick it up. If you have to make a special trip, that's a different matter. So that's always been the understanding. In Public Accounts, I'm sorry to say, that was always the case. That wasn't anything special this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So if I could just make a suggestion here. We either could ask for an agreement amongst the members that is nonbinding that they will not claim allowance for time spent on committee, or we can have a motion. Neither one is binding, but for austerity purposes it probably would help all of us not to claim by having an agreement or having a motion, again being said that if someone makes a claim, it'll be paid. It's up to the committee whatever you want to do.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I think we're all in the same predicament. I don't think any of us are going to exploit the situation. In that we don't have any final say in this matter anyway, we could indicate to Members' Services that we will likely not claim it. Whether we move to claim it or not I think is irrelevant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So then I'll just ask for an agreement amongst the members of this committee. Is there a general agreement not to claim committee allowances?

MRS. FRITZ: Well, no, I'm not going to agree to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: While we're in session?

MRS. FRITZ: During session I agree.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then when we get out of session, we'll have another meeting, and we'll discuss it further. How does that sound?

AN HON. MEMBER: Fair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All right.

MR. FRIEDEL: I'd like to just suggest that it is covered in the members' services handbook. We're all grown-up people. I think we all know what austerity means. We're concerned about public image. I would like to suggest that if the circumstances arise and anyone felt that there was additional expense, they're entitled to it. That's why it's there. If people use their best discretion not to abuse the system, then we shouldn't even have to have a special motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MRS. FRITZ: But in session we're not claiming this money?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. FRIEDEL: I think that's a standing agreement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From what I understand, usually this committee doesn't meet when session is on. We'll certainly discuss it. If any of the members want this on the agenda at our next meeting, feel free to contact me.

MRS. FRITZ: Otherwise, just for clarification, out of session this \$100 can be added up, like taxi, and all the stuff, parking, and whatever?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, are you talking about expenses, or are you talking about per diem?

MRS. FRITZ: I'm talking about this \$100 a day. When you get your taxi and you get your parking and you get your stuff . . .

MR. DICKSON: Yvonne, as I understand it, the \$100 a day is over and above reimbursement for every reasonable expense you incur in getting from your office or your home in Calgary to a meeting place here. All of those expenses you put in a separate expense sheet for, and you recover those.

MRS. FRITZ: But, Gary, when there's this many people on the committee, I don't understand how \$1,200 can pay for that.

MR. BRASSARD: It didn't. The \$15,000 did.

MRS. FRITZ: Oh, I see. The \$15,000 pays for . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The expenses.

MRS. FRITZ: No. That's why I'm confused.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pardon me. I'm confused.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would guess that because all MLAs are allowed trips as they see fit to travel back and forth to Edmonton, they never claimed it specifically just to this committee. It probably just got lumped in with all of the other regular travel expenditures that you do when you come up Monday morning and when you go home presumably Thursday evening. So I think probably why the figure of \$1,200 is as low as it is is that people never distinguished between a regular trip going to the Legislative Assembly for whatever purposes and a trip to come to Legislative Offices in particular. If we were to allocate all of our expenses directly to Legislative Offices, I expect that figure, as you said, Mr. Chairman, would be substantially higher. Air fare for the four of us from Calgary would eat up the \$1,200 in expenses for one round trip. So clearly not all of these expenses are really being allocated to this particular committee.

9:41

MRS. FRITZ: Right. Is air fare to be allocated to this committee?

MR. BRUSEKER: I would say apparently not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, because you're doing that anyway.

MRS. FRITZ: Right. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one other thing on that page. Down below at the end there is "Pensions (10% of salaries)." That was only in effect until June 14, when all MLAs' pensions were eliminated. So if there are no further questions on . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: I just have one question going back to that same document on page 3. I notice that all the travel has been cut back. I was just wondering what the rationale was. Was that directed to us from Members' Services, or was that a decision of the former Legislative Offices Committee to eliminate that, or was it decided those conferences weren't appropriate? It's quite a substantial reduction. I'm just wondering why.

MRS. SHUMYLA: That was not eliminated by the Legislative Offices Committee. It was eliminated at Members' Services meetings when they were approving budgets.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Chop, chop, chop.

Okay. If there are no further comments on that or no other new business, then a date for the next meeting. I think that if historically we didn't meet until the sitting was over, maybe if it's okay with this committee, I would schedule the meeting soon after the session is over.

MR. DICKSON: Just one query. I'm not familiar with the terms of engagement of the current Ombudsman. I take it that it's a fixed term contract, and it comes to an end.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. With the Chief Electoral Officer it's one year after the election, from what I understand.

MR. DICKSON: So do we have to do something sooner?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll just read this out to you, Gary. The Auditor General's term expires on March 31, 1994. The Chief Electoral Officer is one year after the election. The Ombudsman is January 31, 1995.* The Ethics Commissioner's term expires on March 31, 1997. So that kind of gives you an idea. We've got the Auditor General definitely within the next year, March of '94, and I guess the Chief Electoral Officer in June of '94.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. I had it in my head that the Ombudsman was coming up in '94, so if it's not until '95, then forget what I said before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BRUSEKER: What was the first one again that you said?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The first one was Auditor General. His comes on March 31, '94.

MR. BRUSEKER: We have three next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two.

MR. BRUSEKER: The Auditor General, the Electoral Officer, and the Ombudsman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. The Ombudsman is '95, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay.

MR. BRASSARD: Could I suggest that under Other Business we do put something on the next agenda for a review of the Auditor General so that we're in a position to have some meaningful discussion, whether we want to renew his contract, whether we would like to terminate it, and what we would be looking for, and so on?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll have some information available to the committee on the guidelines and so on for the existing contract.

MR. BRASSARD: The same with the Electoral Officer.

*see page 4, left col., para. 2, line 14

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Will do.

MR. BRASSARD: Those two we should be able to have a meaningful discussion about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then shortly after session is over we'll click in and have a meeting. Is that acceptable?

MR. BRASSARD: You bet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else?

MR. DOERKSEN: You don't want to do it during session?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Historically this committee doesn't meet during session.

MR. BRUSEKER: It's difficult to find the time, Victor, to fit it in during session.

MR. DOERKSEN: You're going to cut into my Christmas party.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, maybe we'll do it in January, Victor.

MR. BRASSARD: We need a longer meeting than just an hour like this that you can squeeze in here and there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other new business? I would entertain a motion to adjourn.
Don.

DR. MASSEY: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:47 a.m.]