

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

10:05 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Hierath]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call the meeting to order this morning. I think that maybe all the committee members have looked at the agenda and read the minutes. I'd like to ask for the committee's approval of the agenda.

Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, just one point. I notice an omission. We had received a recommendation from the Ombudsman I think one or two meetings ago not only in terms of complainant protection but also in terms of an independent review of the office, with recommendations and so on for changes if required. What's the intention? I thought we'd be dealing with that when we started meeting again in the fall. It's not on the agenda. What's the plan there, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Gary, there are a couple of agenda items that have been postponed. One of them was a voters list discussion that was a tabled motion at our last meeting and the subject that you've brought up this morning. Both of them are issues that we should discuss. I had one real problem with getting this group together. We started with trying to hold a summer meeting and were unable to. Then Diane started again with the 1st of September, checking with all your assistants on your timetable, and we were unable to do that. I was hoping to have two meetings before the session started. When we had our last meeting in May, I was hoping to have two, and I've been able to only squeeze in one. I guess as the chairman I attempt to kind of set priorities, and in the case of Mr. Johnson, the Ombudsman, I certainly will give you the assurance that this will be discussed at the next meeting.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. Thanks.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, at the last meeting I indicated that when the Auditor General next appeared before this committee, I would raise the question of vacation payouts for senior managers. He is coming today, and sometime under 8 or 9 I intend to raise that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Would anyone on the committee like to move approval of the agenda? Gary Friedel. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Item 3 with regard to our previous meeting. If all committee members had an opportunity to go over the minutes of the previous meeting, is there any discussion of the minutes of the May 31 meeting?

MR. BRUSEKER: Just on that point again, Mr. Chairman. In our minutes on pages 24.95, 25.95, and 26.95 there was discussion that the issue about the voters list would be tabled until our next meeting, which is apparently this one. I guess my question would be: are we tabling that yet again to another meeting sometime in the future? What's going to happen there?

THE CHAIRMAN: I guess, Frank, in my conversations leading up to this meeting today, in conversation with Derm Whelan he had

asked that the priority of this committee's time be spent with the elections amendment Act. Again, the same thing I said to Gary Dickson a few minutes ago: you know, if the committee wishes, we can certainly move into discussing all of these items that are on our agenda. I know that this item was tabled to be discussed at the next meeting. Certainly we can bring it up this morning, but I just am trying to set priorities on the time schedules with the committee members. Rest assured we're not going to forget it.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess my difficulty, Mr. Chairman, is that it's not on the agenda. I don't want to take up too much time on it, but I know we did consider that we discuss with the federal Chief Electoral Officer for Canada development of a permanent voters list, and I wonder if we might have some discussion about that issue, about any progress that has been made on that issue.

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, actually, it's germane to the point on the interim amendments. Certainly it will come up.

MR. BRUSEKER: So it will come up at some point on the agenda? All right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the previous meeting's minutes?

MR. SEVERTSON: I move the adoption of the minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

We'll move into agenda item number 4. That is the 1997 Annual Conference of the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws. Maybe I'll turn that part of the discussion over to Derm, about the conference that you've been bidding for on behalf of Alberta.

MR. WHELAN: Yes. We attended the annual meeting, actually the annual conference, of COGEL in Washington, both Bob Clark and I. Our presentation was well received, and we were able to outdo or at least to gain more votes than Washington. The state of Washington, Seattle in particular, had a proposal that was also under consideration. I don't particularly know the details of the vote, but a friend, Eddy Giguère, the assistant chief elections officer for the province of Quebec, said that the vote wasn't even close. I'm happy to report that the site for the conference is Edmonton in September 1997.

COGEL is a group that deals with not only election finance loans and election loans but also with privacy, freedom of information, lobbying, judicial ethics, conflict of interest, and governmental ethics generally. We're certainly hoping that 300 people and their families will attend in Edmonton at that conference. We'll do our utmost to prepare a good platform of discussions.

As a matter of fact, related to that, I had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Justice John Sopinka of the Supreme Court of Canada when he spoke here to lawyers earlier in September, and he assured me that he would give every consideration to being one of the plenary speakers at the conference.

The COGEL conference is totally self-sustaining; it will not cost the government of Alberta anything. As a matter of fact, in the 20-year history of the conferences only one conference, to my knowledge, did not break even, and that was in, I think, Hilton Head in Carolina. The following year Toronto was the host, and they made good on the loss. COGEL has an obligation to cover any financial deficits. We don't expect any, and both Bob Clark and I have been planning very carefully to make sure that that doesn't happen. As a matter of fact, there was a Canada fund

established by the conference in 1987, when Quebec City hosted it. The interest on that fund since, which came from the profit that the conference actually made, has been used to bring speakers like Johann Kriegler, the Chief Electoral Officer from South Africa, now a judge in their constitutional court, to speak at the conferences, and of course there have been many others. So we certainly look forward to welcoming this conference.

I think we'll have a significant, although perhaps small in the scale of things, economic impact on the province. I'm sure we'll all welcome good American money in Alberta.

That's all I had to say on that, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Is there any discussion on that conference that's coming up in two years?

I neglected to introduce the gentlemen who are with us. My apologies. Derm, of course, and Bill Sage and Brian Fjeldheim from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

That was more of an update. If there are no questions, the next item on the agenda is Correspondence from the Chief Electoral Officer, and you have correspondence in your binder under item 5. Item 5 is the Chief Electoral Officer's letter that went out to MLAs in a September 14 memo that informs I think all of the MLAs about a speakers' bureau that Derm is setting up. I thought that it was important to bring this item to the committee to have some discussion about this speakers' bureau. In light of the Electoral Boundaries Commission that has been set up and is reviewing electoral boundaries, I just wanted the committee to be aware and have some discussion on this item. So I'll open it up.

Derm, if you want to make a few opening remarks.

10:15

MR. WHELAN: Yes, I'd just like to make a preliminary remark. With respect to the different topics that are listed, that was developed over the last 12 months. Very obviously, certain of these topics at different times will not be able to be discussed. Among these are the first. I don't think it would be appropriate, inasmuch as I'm trying to assist the commission the best way I can, to be talking about the determination of quotients, et cetera, or reviewing Canadian cases either in a federal or Alberta context. So I'd like to say immediately that the acceptance of any invitation will very much depend upon the appropriateness of the topic and also the suitability of the audience with respect to that topic.

We don't really anticipate that the speakers' bureau will have any negative impact on our office. Every request that we receive will be reviewed, and we would either accept or reject the request based on its merits. For example, I certainly don't think that we will embark upon a major campaign to speak to every grade 6 class in the province. As desirable as that might be, we just don't have the resources or the staff or the time. On the other hand, if we were traveling throughout the province for a proper business reason and such a request came forward, certainly we would consider it. So I don't anticipate having any of my staff or myself traveling throughout the province speaking to individual classes of grade 6 students. But I do feel that I need to travel to the electoral divisions. I need to get to know them better, and as I do that, I will alert people and make them aware that I'd be happy to speak on appropriate topics.

I also talked about two-day presentations, and I don't think my office will be doing that very often. However, we were involved over a period of three days during the annual conference of the Conservative Party. Otherwise, during the last year I think we may have spent three hours with the Forum for Young Albertans. The point is that we don't really seem to be dealing with the public

relations aspect of the duties of the Chief Electoral Officer with any great amount of success. So I just wanted the assistance of MLAs in particular and constituency associations with this. I think we need to be talking about elections if for no other reason than to encourage young people to vote when they reach the age of 18.

Finally, as I was saying, I don't think that my office would make any two-day presentations. However, you might want to know that staff from my office, including myself, did attend and made presentations on political party financing and the reporting thereon at the Progressive Conservative Association annual convention in April.

So the intention of my memo, which you have before you, was really to formalize a service that has always been available. I do hope that all the stakeholders, and I mean all electors and senior students, will take advantage of it, but I hasten to add that we're going to be very much limited by our resources. If there is a major interest – and I don't believe there will be, given that in the last year there have been two invitations – well, then I think we'd have to formalize it and maybe develop a program with the appropriate budget and present it to the committee for approval when the time comes for a budget.

So I don't really have anything further, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on this item 5 from committee members? Don Massey.

DR. MASSEY: How do other departments handle the business of requests for speakers?

MR. WHELAN: As a matter of fact, I have on my desk a video and large posters and voting material that are used in the province of Quebec. What they have done is hired one person to do nothing but public relations with respect to schools, in particular high schools, secondary schools. What they're doing is assisting the schools to elect their own student councils using the methodologies that are used to elect the provincial Legislature in Quebec. Their long-term goal is to encourage interest in civic affairs and the democratic process at an early age in the schools, because people are beginning to notice all across the country that the voter participation, especially in municipal elections and recently here in Alberta in a by-election, is 30 percent. Many people think that the electoral offices, therefore, should do something about this. So some provinces have very formal programs.

DR. MASSEY: I'm sorry; I was referring to other departments here in Alberta.

MR. WHELAN: Oh, in Alberta.

DR. MASSEY: Is there any central compilation of speakers from government departments?

MR. WHELAN: No, I don't know the answer to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion? Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Just a general observation. I have no problems with the concept of what you're doing, you know, making the information about elections and even the idea of promoting more public interest in it, but I guess I'm a little nervous about the general philosophy. Should any part of government be going out and promoting at government expense this sort of thing? I would

suspect that it's not going to have a significant impact on the number of people that go out and vote.

I suspect from your comments that you were talking about working with grade 6 classes where that's part of their program, knowledge about different levels of government, that if someone asks, this is not a problem. I refer, I guess, a little bit to some of the TV advertisements that we see, you know, government promoting itself. I'm not sure that government generally should be in the business of advertising itself or any of the services. I think people are quite capable of figuring out what they need.

This being an offer of availability of staff to participate on a casual and as required basis, I have no problems with it as long as it doesn't turn into a promotional thing that becomes a budget item and then requires eventually staff additions to sustain it. I would caution there that there should be some concerns.

MR. WHELAN: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I would make one observation. In the material approved by – I'm not sure if it was this committee – the select committee on the choice of choosing a person for the position of Chief Electoral Officer, one of the clearer customs, or conventions, as described relates to public relations. Let me just read it.

The Chief Electoral Officer also maintains a public relations program to ensure political parties and the public are aware of the important aspects of the legislation by:

- producing and distributing information and educational materials;
- answering inquiries from all sources;
- maintaining liaison with political parties, their agents and other interested groups and individuals.

So I guess that's where we're coming from, but the point is well taken. We don't want to create another division in our office and spend money that nobody has, really, for funding for this purpose. That's not the intention. But I think we certainly have to discharge this public relations program and cut the cloth according to our means, Gary, if I might put it that way.

10:25

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I was just going to make the observation that we're not talking about a department of government. All government departments have the benefit of the public service bureau, which is very much in the business of going around and telling Albertans what services are available and how to access them. The legislative offices are in a different position. It seems to me that it's a key part of the mandate of each of those officers and I think, most recently, the Information Commissioner. If the Information Commissioner doesn't go out and tell Albertans what his job is and what he's there for, how else are Albertans going to get that information? So I think it's positive.

I assume you will not be overwhelmed with requests, but I think part of our expectations should be from each of the legislative officers that they'll go out and tell Albertans what these offices are all about and how they can be of assistance to our constituents.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yvonne, and then Gary Severtson.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you. I just had a couple of questions. How many requests have you had in the past three years on a yearly basis? Have they increased?

MR. WHELAN: To my knowledge, two: one from the Conservative Party and one from the Forum for Young Albertans.

MRS. FRITZ: So you've had two requests.

MR. WHELAN: I've only been here for a year. I suspect the Forum for Young Albertans, every year, on two occasions at least. Others, Bill or Brian?

MRS. FRITZ: I'm sorry. I missed the two requests. You had two requests, one from . . .

MR. WHELAN: The Conservative Party annual convention and the Forum for Young Albertans.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay. Thank you.

What do you anticipate the costs will be to implement this service?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the costs will be minimal actually. If indeed we receive invitations, we will make sure that they're only accepted when it's possible to join them, or marry them, to another function. For example, if I'm going to be in a certain district for a certain business purpose, well, at that time I would try to highlight the fact that a person would be available or another staff member would be available in the district. It's going to be relatively easy to do in Calgary and in Edmonton because they're larger centres. In the smaller centres there would be considerable cost if you were going to a remote school, for example, and for that reason only. Well, quite frankly, you know, our funds are so limited, we'd have difficulty with that, and indeed we might even have to decline it.

MRS. FRITZ: But you've had two requests. I don't hear that there's a demand from Albertans, because they'd certainly speak up if they felt a need for this service.

MR. WHELAN: Yes.

MRS. FRITZ: If you've had two requests, and you know that you have limited funds – and I hear you saying that it's not intended to create another position within the department and that you won't be back to this committee for further funding, et cetera – I'm still unclear about why you're doing this. I read it, and I thought it was quite ambitious. When I read the time that you can have somebody from your office – 30 minutes or a two-day seminar, please call us; there's no charge – I quite frankly would take this and send it out to my schools that do have grade 6 classes, and I'd say, "Well, listen; this office is offering this service." But what I heard you saying when you gave your presentation was: "We probably won't be going to grade 6 classes," or "We probably won't have any requests. We probably won't be doing two-day seminars." So I'm just a bit confused about exactly why this is here, what need it is to meet that you've had request for, what the bottom line is going to be when people actually do call you, and whether or not you'll be able to provide the service without any further funding.

MR. WHELAN: Well, I'll attempt to try and unscramble or remove the confusion if I can. The letter is written in a positive, upbeat way to generate interest, when over the course of a full year or perhaps longer there have been only two requests. I thought that a positive letter would be the type of letter that should be used. It was never intended to be a carte blanche invitation that would take every moment of every person's time traveling extensively throughout the province. I guess that's my response. Certainly when you say that you're prepared to speak to institutions or groups of people – political parties, constituency associations, or otherwise – the control of your activity has to be left to you. Just as you would turn down invitations that you receive – and you

must receive very many. You can't possibly attend every function in Alberta or for that matter even in your district often if you're busy.

MRS. FRITZ: But I don't write to people and say, "Please invite me."

MR. WHELAN: We didn't write to everyone. This just went to MLAs and MPs and Senators and some libraries. We didn't send this to schools. If you chose to do that, you would be extending our mandate, our invitation. We did not want to do that. You know, I could have sent this to every single school in Alberta; I did not. I sent it only to the MLAs and to the federal members and Senators.

MRS. FRITZ: I guess I need to ask, then, what did you feel an MLA would do with this information?

MR. WHELAN: Well, hopefully be aware and assist us and discuss it, as you're doing. Indeed, I think your office did phone with respect to this, and I explained it to the person that phoned. But there's a limit to the resources, and certainly we're not inviting or wanting to be in every community in Alberta talking to every class that has an ethics or a civics component in their curriculum. It's just not possible. So I think that interpretation is certainly more than we intended. We don't think that this is going to be a serious problem for Elections Alberta at all. However, we'll try to positively respond the best way we can, but I'm sure that if there's a large number of calls, we just won't be able to deal with it. One issue has been raised – we may just see what the Public Service Commission is doing. They have a budget for this. Maybe we can get involved in their program, but that's another issue.

MRS. FRITZ: Where will this fit on your priority list as to your budget now?

MR. WHELAN: I would say that it's an important matter, but it's certainly not a priority. It fits into the public relations activities, and you know that they're limited.

MRS. FRITZ: You see, I keep hearing that, Mr. Chairman, and quite frankly I'm still concerned that I as an MLA receive this and other MLAs may do the same; maybe not. I don't know. I just know for myself from receiving this that it may actually be misleading to people that you send this out. Really I know now from the discussion here that this service is actually very limited because of the budget and knowing that you won't be back for further funds to meet what's been presented to us. It's probably not an issue that's solvable, because this has already gone forward. We'll just watch it for a year. Anyhow, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Severtson.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, share Yvonne's comments. When you read the covering letter where you mention community organizations, churches, service clubs, as an MLA you look at this and say: now this is a service that the Chief Electoral Officer is supplying. Then we forward your offers to these various organizations, and it could be quite costly. But I'm not against educating the people about elections.

MR. WHELAN: Gary, I can only say that we're extending an invitation, and every invitation has to be viewed both by the recipient and by the person who's extending the invitation with

some good common sense. Certainly we're not going to be able to respond positively always, but this I will assure you: whenever it is possible, when we receive a request through your offices as MLAs in particular, every effort will be made. That's what I want to do: respond in a positive way.

10:35

MR. SEVERTSON: Actually, when I stuck my hand up, I just wanted to be clarified on the part, which I think the chairman mentioned at the start, about the aspect of electoral boundary divisions when we've got a committee consulting with Albertans now, that we wouldn't be having two areas of Leg. Offices going out and giving a mixed message to the general public. You'd be sensitive to whatever area, what was going on in the general cover.

MR. WHELAN: Gary, I said earlier that certain topics at certain times would not be discussed in the public forum, and certainly while I'm assisting and involved with the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, I feel it most inappropriate to be talking about it. We won't be talking about those things, nobody from my staff.

MR. SEVERTSON: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I think that was an interesting discussion.

We will, if it's okay with the committee members, move to item 6 on our agenda. This is Correspondence from the Speaker regarding the 18th Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, and that is under tab 6. You've probably all read the letter and the remarks in the Auditor's report, so I think maybe I would just like to have Derm explain a little further about the context of his remarks and the Speaker's letter.

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, I was reading something this morning that Bobby Kennedy wrote, and I came across this line: one-fifth of the people are against everything all the time. I certainly hope that's not true. I don't quite believe that.

When I received the letter from the Speaker – and I certainly appreciated his comments because this was my first report as Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer. But I would like to say clearly that my closing comments were not intended to be an implied criticism of existing legislation. As a matter of fact, I'm very anxious to get the ad hoc committee, where all the representatives of the different political parties are involved, active again. It has been dormant for some time.

So I made those remarks in the conclusion to the report with the intention to perhaps suggest topics which I felt might be discussed on an ad hoc basis by the parties registered throughout the province. Actually, there were numerous other topics I could have mentioned. I didn't have to pick those two, and I certainly didn't intend to imply that the legislation should be changed or anything else. I was talking about an exchange of ideas with these parties and free expression in the discussions. I may have been premature in commenting about an ad hoc meeting of this committee, which hasn't occurred, but I think these meetings will be necessary because they will benefit the parties in the province and also my office, and it is a forum where we can talk informally in a nonbinding way.

I hope that explanation will suffice. I don't have much more to say. I thought this would be a good opportunity to suggest generally that the parties begin to meet again in this ad hoc committee in an informal way.

MR. DICKSON: I'm just going to move that the committee accept for information the correspondence from the Speaker dated September 20, 1995.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like to speak on the motion?

MR. SEVERTSON: Not on the motion. I would like to speak on the item, not the motion itself. I don't know what the ruling is. Do we have to deal with the motion first?

THE CHAIRMAN: Would the committee members like to have the motion read back?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Moved by Gary Dickson that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices accept for information the Speaker's correspondence dated September 20, 1995.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on the motion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.
Okay. Now we'll move on to item 7.

MR. SEVERTSON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak on the contents of the letter. I think we just accepted the letter from the Speaker. If I recall right – and I looked up the *Hansard* records from the last meeting in regard to these two items – we had a piece of paper distributed for the last meeting, and I remember asking the question whether we were going to discuss them today. It was more or less said that we'd bring the papers forward and discuss it at a further meeting. It somewhat disturbed me to see in your annual report comments to those papers that were circulated to committee members when we had no discussion at the table. I'm referring to the part about the financial disclosure and more so the questions about how political parties select their leaders. It was circulated for review but no discussion at this table, and it was in your final report. I thought it was a little inappropriate to jump to this from a document which was circulated without discussion of the Leg. Offices.

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, if I might respond. Indeed there was a background document about the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, but it was never formally presented to this committee for discussion. It was a background paper, and I think it actually got distributed quite accidentally at the last meeting. As a matter of fact I have a copy of it here, but it was never formally put before this committee. If this matter had been formally before this committee, I would never have suggested that it be discussed in an informal way. It would be already under the purview of the committee, and why would I do that? Certainly that would not have happened, but it is coincidental, I think through inadvertence, that it ended up on the table at that last meeting. It was a background paper that we're developing for members of the committee to study privately with their coming forward in a more formal way, perhaps. And I underline the word "perhaps." It certainly was not on the table for discussion, as I remember and as I intended, Mr. Chairman.

So I apologize, Gary. I certainly did not intend to – well, let me tell you quite bluntly. I have the greatest respect for this committee, and you'll not find me doing anything that will either blindside you or involve you or embarrass you in any way. I'm well aware of my bounds, and, Gary, I want to assure you that I will remain within them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion?

MRS. FRITZ: I just have a question on process, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. FRITZ: What is the follow-up then to the Speaker's letter? It's been received for information. Do you correspond back with the Speaker or does Mr. Whelan?

THE CHAIRMAN: As chairman of the Legislative Offices Committee I was just copied the letter. There's no reply required by me unless the committee wants.

MRS. FRITZ: I guess I just think the line saying that the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices is the body to deal with the item . . . I mean, we received the letter for information. Are you planning on responding back to the Speaker?

MR. WHELAN: Yes, very definitely, Yvonne, I will respond. I will thank the Speaker for his comments and explain as I explained to the committee.

MRS. FRITZ: So you'll address the area of "privately elected by parties" that the Speaker had disagreed with in your report?

MR. WHELAN: Well, I will certainly respond to his letter.

MRS. FRITZ: Then that will come back to the committee as well, Mr. Chairman, the response?

MR. WHELAN: I will copy it to the chairman, of course.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the committee agrees, we will proceed to item 7, which is the Draft Interim Amendments to the Election Act. I'm sure that all committee members have gone through this. What I might suggest with your approval, Derm, is that we maybe go through it page by page and have you explain it a little bit and then field questions. We are scheduled to be finished by 12 noon, if we could.

10:45

MR. WHELAN: We have until noon?

MRS. SHUMYLA: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: Okay.

Well, first I should identify, because of the concern that was raised with relation to the register of electors, that the bulk of these amendments are amendments to the enumeration process. The window for establishing a register of electors is disappearing. So we had to begin to think seriously about the next enumeration. Our timetable normally is to begin this in November by reviewing the present electoral boundaries and dividing the electoral boundaries into districts and subdivisions. By December and January we're really in a position where hopefully returning officers for the purpose would have been appointed. I'm just making the point that this is no longer an academic matter. We probably have to think about an enumeration in 1996.

To put this in context, what we're recommending in this amendment is a method to do that that

would allow us to at least cost share it with the federal government. Having said that, you know that ordinarily, according to the statute, the enumeration would take place in September of 1996, but of course it can be deferred or delayed by this committee. It will be at a time that you decide, but we should not

be unaware of the fact that we have to begin preparing for this. So I want to make that point.

The second point is that the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada wants to come and talk to us in October about the possibility of sharing the cost of this list. I mean, how can we do this so we could split the cost? It will cost Alberta half for their 1997, let's say, election and it will cost Canada half if we have the same list.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, just on that point. Can you define "us"? You said that the Chief Electoral Officer was going to come and talk to us. Do you mean your office or this committee and your office?

MR. WHELAN: Oh, sorry. I was about to say that he's asked if he could talk with people in my office, but I was going to suggest it might be an appropriate time for the subcommittee on the processes of enumeration to be involved and to talk with him at the same time. Now, first his staff will come, and then he personally will come.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you have a date yet?

MR. WHELAN: Well, we have tentative dates. The dates are, I think, the 12th and 13th of October, and he's talking about coming early in November. I suggested to him I prefer the end of October – I have yet to hear back on that point – because I'll be with the commission throughout November with their public hearings. What he has said is: the window of opportunity is here; we at Elections Canada have an obligation in November to go back to the committee of the House of Commons dealing with this and would like to know what the province of Alberta might or might not do with respect to the possible sharing of your list. It's not the register of electors that we're talking about in that paper on cost benefits. This is another enumeration. It is done by computer in such a way that its cost can be shared with the federal jurisdiction. However, we need changes in the law. So that's the reason for the proposed amendment in respect of this list.

Just let me very quickly give you an overview. The amendments really won't change the present style of the list of electors. What is published to be used by political parties and even used in the polls will be exactly the same. It will just simply have an initial, the family name, and the address. Of course, the assumption is that the person is over 18 and a Canadian citizen and a resident of Alberta for six months as well as a resident of the district in which they wish to vote. So that won't change.

So what are we proposing? Well, first, the list of electors is not going to change. It's the method of getting the data that we're recommending be changed.

Just to divert for a moment. In the amendments we're proposing other things: the sale of liquor on polling days; we really don't believe that it is now necessary to ask businesses to close, especially international airports, when there is a by-election and for that matter when there is a general election. So that is proposed. Secondly, arising out of the by-election in Calgary-McCall, many of the parties wanted to use acronyms, abbreviations, on the ballot paper to identify themselves. I've used the Liberal and the PC candidates at that time to make the point. The word "Shariff" and the word "Shergill" are very similar. If a person doesn't read well, they might need to know what party. Well, we can put in the Confederation of Regions Party for Alberta, a very long name to put on a ballot, or we could put in COR. We could put in Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, or we could put in PC. We could put in Liberal Party of Alberta, or we could put in Liberal or just LIB, whatever abbreviation the

party wanted. These are two practical things, and it would allow us to use acronyms or party initials instead of very long names on the ballot paper in particular.

Apart from these things the rest of the amendments deal with the enumeration. As I say, there won't be any visible change in what's produced and given to the parties and used at the polls, but right now we're not able to use computers. The law actually – I suppose with the broadest interpretation we can use computers to make our lists of electors. So we're making the legislation clear on this point. Also, not only will we want to be able to use computers, but why would we want to get bigger what we already have over again? Fifty percent of the lists last compiled are still accurate. So if we can use that, just have it confirmed or updated or corrected at the door, why produce it again? We're wasting all that money. So we're suggesting that as well.

We also – and I know, Yvonne, you have very strong concerns about this, and I mention it now because you mentioned it before at another meeting – can save a million dollars by having only one enumerator per electoral subdivision. Now, let's look at this very carefully. If there's any possibility that there's a security danger or a threat to a person, then we of course would send two men to do the enumeration, the door-to-door enumeration, but when I think of the postmen and women and the telephone people going around from house to house on a daily basis, they're not travelling in pairs. People that come to collect for the heart fund or the kidney fund and so on do not come in twos. I suspect that if there were any danger of course they would.

So what I'm suggesting is that we change the legislation to allow one person – and indeed in rural areas that's the way it is now – and we feel that a savings of nearly a million dollars would be achieved. But I want to underline that built into the recommendations is a security aspect, that where the returning officer and the Chief Electoral Officer have a concern, two if not three or four people may be sent for the purpose. But surely in every division in this province there is no need to send great numbers of people like this and spend an extra million dollars.

The process would be changed a little. Right now with this preprinted or prepared data from the old lists the person would only have to confirm the data; there's no change. Delete data: well, my father died last year or my brother has taken a job in South Africa, wherever it might be; he's working in Ontario. We delete the data, or if there are any changes, new people, we add data. This was tried and proven by the federal jurisdiction in Alberta in the 1993 election, and it was used in all the federal by-elections of February of last year. It saved the federal jurisdiction, according to their reports, \$16 million. I didn't ask what the savings were in Alberta, but I'm willing to bet that they were in the order of \$1 million to \$2 million. If there is less work, of course, for enumerators, there may also be a possible revision of the tariff that they're paid.

Finally, the printing. We won't get into this mass printing of list after list after list. We can put this on CD-ROM, and anyone with a computer in the campaign office can download and use this list any way they want to. So we would provide it in an electronic format, either CD-ROM or on a computer disk, as well as in paper format. So we feel that there'll be savings arising from that.

The use of the lists: we think the legislation should clearly say that it is to be confidential and to be used for electoral purposes only, no other purpose unless it is authorized by law; for example, a liquor plebiscite or a vote on whether judges could be elected or some sort of original referenda.

10:55

Now, the private contents of the list. This is what is going on the computer, the data bank. This would not be a public list; this

would be internally managed. We would need full names, full addresses, perhaps the date of birth or at least confirmation that an elector is over 18, a statement about their citizenship. The federal jurisdiction has gender. I don't really know why; however, it's worth at least another field on the computer for identifying purposes. I tend to think that 97 percent of the given names that people use in Canada generally identify their gender. Salutatory prefixes, again, may not be necessary.

Then a question about: do you need translation services at the polls when you go to vote, or will you be needing level access? We feel that these are very minor considerations. If you take out your driver's licence, here's what you will find: your family name, your middle name, your given name or your first name, your date of birth, your photograph, your signature, your full address with a postal code, your eye colour, your hair colour, your height, your weight. That's in a private registry and, as I understand it, is accessible to anybody that wants to go and see who is the person who ran into them. Whether that should be or not is another question. But having this data would make it possible for us to split the cost of enumerations with the federal jurisdiction, provided that it was current and up to date. I mean, if we do a list next year and then two years elapse before the next federal election, it would be two years old, and unless we were updating it, which is the registry concept, which is another issue, it may not be that they would want to share the cost.

So we've said that and also that the revision of the list really shouldn't require three or four days. One day is enough for the revision. In other words, after the people have gone door knocking, we have compiled a list. There are invitations: "Did we miss you? Please come forward. We'll revise it and put you on it." Three days aren't needed. We thought that a shorter period of time would be enough.

We are also suggesting that the number of visits be at least two to assure the completeness, accuracy, and currency of the list. Also, to keep the enumerators focused and not to give them more than they can do, we thought we would limit the number of subdivisions they could actually enumerate to three.

Also, it would save us a great deal of money if we had the polling location identified well in advance so that when the enumeration is completed, we can say, "Now, here's where you go to vote," instead of buying these huge advertisements in the paper or getting cards and mailing them out or having the political parties incur expenses that way. So if that can be done, we would like the opportunity to do it.

Finally, we would like to provide only one list and one electronic list to the political parties and the candidates instead of the four, five, or six that are now required. If you have an electronic disk, you can make as many lists as you want, so why would we print more and more and more of these when we can give the data on a disk?

That's an overview, Mr. Chairman, of the amendments. Brian has a number of slides that would probably just make this more focused for you. I notice that it's just 11, and if we have until 12, you might want to think about taking a break at this point, and then we'll do the rest of the presentation, if you would like to. Or will you have questions now?

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we'll have a question right now from Gary, and then maybe we'll have a break.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, we've had basically this package of draft amendments since May 30, and for the most part I view them as what I'd characterize as housekeeping amendments. There are two particular concerns I've got, but they tend to be technical.

I'll just flag them now, but I was going to propose actually moving that this committee recommend to the Legislative Assembly that the Alberta Election Act be amended to incorporate these recommendations so that the thing is framed for purposes of debate.

Just before I do that, I'll tell you that the two minor concerns I have are firstly . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we were going to go through this page by page. It's what I wanted to with this thing, so let's not jump all over the place. I wanted Derm to make a few opening remarks and then have some form of order to go through the thing page by page here.

MR. DICKSON: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd still like to hold to that if I could. So that being said, is that what Brian's presentation is going to do, walk us through this thing page by page?

MR. WHELAN: No. It will just give a focus on the process and the changes, and then I'll go through it page by page. There are only three overheads, only a few minutes, I would think, to present that. So we should proceed?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. WHELAN: Okay. These are three scenarios. We're focusing on the enumeration process. The first is the present system.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a five-minute break, committee, while they set up, and then we'll proceed.

[The committee adjourned from 11:02 a.m. to 11:13 a.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'd like to call the meeting back to order and turn it over to Brian.

MR. FJELDHEIM: I'd just like to take a minute to run through three scenarios for voter registration. First of all, I'll go over what we do in Alberta at the present time; secondly, what we're looking at for an amendment; and thirdly, what the feds do when they do an enumeration at the present time.

First of all, what we do at an enumeration is the enumerators visit each residence in the polling subdivision. The polling subdivision is that little area that the electoral division is divided up into. In urban centres there are two enumerators in each polling subdivision, in rural areas one or two enumerators in each polling subdivision. They're out knocking on the doors. They go up and have a little form, and they ask: "Are you a Canadian citizen? Are you 18 years of age or older? Have you been ordinarily resident in Alberta for the past six months, and do you ordinarily reside in this polling subdivision?" Yes, yes, yes, yes. "Anyone else here?" You get their name and their initial and the address. You tear off the form. The form will hold up to four electors on it. "Here you are; thank you very much. Your name will be entered on the list of electors for this electoral division and this polling subdivision." That's how we do it.

Derm, is there anything you want to add to that?

MR. WHELAN: No.

MR. FJELDHEIM: Scenario 2, the amended system. Once again enumerators at this time are given a list of electors in the polling subdivision – this is what we had last time – and they'll visit each

residence in the polling subdivision. Once again the same thing to there. Then enumerators confirm whether or not the information recorded on the list of electors is correct. "Brian Fjeldheim, do you still live at this address?" Yes. "And your wife lives here as well?" Yes. "Any other additional information on that?" No.

If that is incorrect, we have to ask those questions again: Canadian citizen, 18 years or over, Alberta resident for the preceding six months, and ordinarily resident in this polling subdivision. In addition to that, we're looking at the given name – instead of O.B. Fjeldheim we'll have Brian Fjeldheim – gender, date of birth. Now, here we've confirmed it's 18 or over, and we may get the date of birth or may not.

The salutatory prefix, that Derm mentioned earlier, Mr., Mrs., et cetera, whether interpretation at the polls is required, and whether level access at the polls is required where none is available: now, this is stuff from the federal legislation. On the record of name will be recorded the surname and the address, and all this information is going to be on that record. The information is compiled on a list of electors by alphabetical or geographical arrangement, the same as now.

Finally, the list of electors for political use, as Derm mentioned, contains only surname, initial, and address.

MR. WHELAN: The same as we have now.

MR. FJELDHEIM: The same as we have now.

Now, I'll just quickly go over the federal scenario, and you can see the similarities. In the federal system the enumerators visit each residence in the polling subdivision the same as us: Canadian citizen, 18 or over. The big difference of course is that six months' residency; the feds don't care about that. If you just moved to Alberta from Saskatchewan, the day you take residence here, you can vote federally. Provincially, of course, it's six months.

In their legislation – this is copied from the legislation – they try to obtain the address, the surname and given name, the sex, whether interpretation at the polls is required, and whether level access is required where none is available. They record all that information on the record of name form, and this is the same as what we're looking at for an amendment. The information is compiled on a list of electors by alphabetical or geographical arrangement, and then the list of electors for political use contains only the surname, the initial, and the address.

Does anyone have any questions about those?

MR. BRUSEKER: Why, when you produce the list of electors, do you just put on the surname and the initial? I understand you don't need to worry about the date or even, for that matter, the gender, but it'd be nice to have the first name.

MR. WHELAN: The federal list has the first name.

MR. FJELDHEIM: The feds do have the first name.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, okay. That's not what this handout says though.

THE CHAIRMAN: What page are you looking at?

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm looking at page 3. Your third transparency says, "List of Electors . . . contains only surname, initial and address," which is what you have on page 2, or scenario 2, showing only "surname, initial and address." At any rate the question is: why not put on the given name as well?

MR. WHELAN: Well, it is on. You'll see it in a moment.

DR. MASSEY: Is there not some objection to that by women?

MR. FJELDHEIM: Okay. That was going to be my part. The more information, of course, you have, the more identifiers you have. Is S. Smith Sally Smith or Stan Smith living at that residence? Of course if you have the given name, it's Sally Smith, and you can tell.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, in reality in Alberta until several enumerations ago we used to have the full name on, and then the change was made to just go to initials for exactly that purpose.

MR. WHELAN: But it is true: for every federal election people freely give this information. If they don't want to, they don't. I mean, it's a voluntary thing. Their list does have the given name, and I think even after the name there's either M or F for the gender. Do you have a copy of that?

MR. FJELDHEIM: Yes. I'm not going to spend time going through this, but this is what the federal enumerators carry around when they come to your door, and all those questions that I referred to earlier are recorded on this sheet here. I won't take your time going through that. This is a sample of their list of electors. This stuff on top is similar to ours. You can see here John Doe, first name and last name. In this column they have the gender and then the address, which is similar to ours. So do you follow me in terms of what the differences are between what the feds gather and what we gather and some of the problems that we may be running into in trying to put these two systems together? The feds get more information than we do.

MR. KOWALSKI: The basic, basic difference is the full name on the list that they have. Is that not correct?

MR. FJELDHEIM: And gender.

MR. KOWALSKI: And gender; okay. The full name, gender, but not age or anything.

MR. FJELDHEIM: And the six-month residency.

MR. WHELAN: Well, you see on the top that it names the district, of course, the municipality, and then the street. This is Joseph Street. The number of the house is here, the postal codes, and each consecutive elector on that page is numbered. As streets change, the numbering changes. Anyway, you can see, if you remember the list provincially, there's very little difference from what you see. Actually it's a no-brainer. It's different, but it's not a great difference.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. What I would like to do is go through the amendments, the draft interim amendments to the Election Act, page by page. I would then maybe ask Derm to just page by page highlight it, and I'll ask members of the committee for questions. Then we'll go on to the next page.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Section 1 is just the title, "The Election Act is amended by this Act."

Two, it would add as 11.1 this section. The list of electors means, as you're reading there, any format that is comprised of mechanical or electronic data processing, or other information storage device that is capable of reproducing

required information required in intelligible written form within a reasonable time.

So this is the empowering section that would permit the use of electronic data processing and nothing more than that. It's an all-embracing definition because we don't know where technology will lead us in the next 10 years. It may be that scanning will be regarded as a photographic method as opposed to an electronic method. It is a new section, but that's why it's recommended.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just on that point, I think that's moving in the right direction. The question I would have is: what will you do to ensure that if you hand over a disk with 30,000 names on it, I will be able to access that disk? In other words, you have the master program, and then this is just a data diskette. Are you going to provide both for all candidates, or are you going to provide only a data disk?

11:23

MR. WHELAN: Well, we would provide only the list disk. In other words, what you get now is what you will continue to get. If the committee in its wisdom feels we should add the given name, yes, we will do that. Basically, it would not even have gender.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, no. My question is not with respect to the nature of the information that's on the list. I'm talking about accessing the information. You're going to give me a disk with a bunch of names on it. Now, which program are you going to pick to run that disk?

MR. WHELAN: Well, whatever one you want: ASCII, WordPerfect, whichever is decided. We'll make it so that it can be downloaded and changed.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think what Frank is saying is: what happens if my computer doesn't accept your disk? Are you going to give me a new computer?

MR. WHELAN: We're trying to make it as generic as possible, of course, but if you have a computer, a 286 from 1950, it's not likely to work, you know, or if you have a Wang. Wangs are not good now; we're using more developed software or hardware. We've tried to make it in a format that's readily usable by the stakeholders.

MR. BRUSEKER: Would this be just on a word processing thing, or would this be a specific kind of a list program?

MR. WHELAN: I think you'd be able to use it on a PC, a desktop computer, even a portable one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any further questions?

MR. WHELAN: Brian just made the comment that the language or the type of method that we use could be discussed at these ad hoc committee meetings so that we were really in tune with what people wanted.

In section 3, after 11.1: "For the purpose of conducting an enumeration, the enumerator may use" lists prepared from the last enumeration and produced by the computer method set out in the clause we were just discussing.

When a prepared enumeration record is used by an enumerator, the enumerator shall verify, correct, delete or add additional records as may be [required] during house to house visitations.

So, again, it's a new section, but we will build on the information we have. We wouldn't reinvent it or go get 50 percent of it again. We already have it. Why do we want to do that?

MR. KOWALSKI: This is legislation. This will come before the Legislative Assembly. There are three words in there that could lead to considerable debate and have every civil libertarian in North America wanting to know what they mean, and those words are "or add additional." Remember, we're talking about legislation, and unless that's clarified to have a meaning, that could mean literally everything from income to marital status to God knows what. That's one of the key points that, when you deal with legislation, has to be refined; otherwise it will never get through.

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to point out that this is a very rough draft. I mean, this would have to be vetted by Parliamentary Counsel. You know, I'm sure that we will make every effort to make sure it doesn't cause any problems because of the language. Ken, I hope that reassures you. I don't want to hold this forward as the final draft; it's just a preliminary.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you're kind of red flagging some of the comments for some of the members.

MR. WHELAN: Yes, I'm highlighting them.

MR. KOWALSKI: I was under the impression that these would be the words. So now this is just a preliminary. It's okay as long as I know what we're doing. That's all I want to know.

MR. WHELAN: I'm sorry, Ken. Let me explain. I wrote this. You know, I'm not a legal draftsman. It's just to get the ideas forward. The final wording and the precise wording are left to the professionals.

THE CHAIRMAN: But Ken's point is that if the committee is in agreement on something that is red flagged, the document will come back here for approval in another draft form; right? Isn't that what you're asking, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: Fair game. Otherwise you'll have uncertainty, and the stuff will never get through.

MR. WHELAN: Section 4. Section 14 of the present Act is amended by striking out "and shall be followed by a period for revision consisting of the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the second full week in October" and substituting "and shall be followed by one day of revision during the second full week in October." Now, there are explanatory notes with this. I won't reread the present section. I just make the point that our experience – and I mean collectively; Brian here in Alberta and Bill have got 25, 30 years or more between them – has demonstrated that one day for revision is sufficient. Very few electors take advantage of the revision opportunity offered by the enumeration process. To hold this event on more than one day is not only counterproductive, but it's certainly an unnecessary expense. So there's a small amount of savings that would result. We don't have to pay 83 returning officers for two days and they do nothing but twiddle their thumbs: that's the point.

Clause 5, unless there are questions.

MR. BRUSEKER: You know, we've gone through a few here now on 3 and 4 that deal still with the whole process of moving about door to door, and so far we've not dealt with the issue of a

permanent voters list. If we move on to the whole issue of a permanent voters list, this entire section will become redundant.

MR. WHELAN: Of course. That's the point. We haven't brought that forward, I don't think, for discussion, and we have to plan for the enumeration next year. We don't have time to waste. We want to plan it in a way that will allow us to share the costs with the federal jurisdiction. So this is a sort of midpoint between what we have now, which is really a manual system, and a register, a completely computer-driven system, which is what we talked about earlier. So, Frank, that's what I meant. We will be touching on this, but as an interregnum. It's not a substitute for a register.

MR. BRUSEKER: If we indeed move to a permanent voters list using computer data that's already available, as we've discussed before, how long would it take to implement such a system?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the federal government intends to have it in place for the next federal election if possible, but you know, the words "if possible" are underlined. They need all the provinces. They can't do this alone. This committee would have to agree that we can do this in Alberta and they can share the cost with us. Conversely, if they did it, can we take their lists?

MR. BRUSEKER: Do we have any information as to where the other provinces are with respect to a permanent voters list on a shared basis with the federal government?

MR. WHELAN: Some, but it's rather imprecise. Of course, British Columbia already has a computerized list of electors, so that's where they stand. We're negotiating and dickering. Of course, we have a subcommittee, and we don't know where we're going on it yet. New Brunswick in particular and P.E.I. are running tests on certain ways of doing this in their polling divisions. The province of Quebec is developing their own list. They have already completed their final enumeration by using health records to go to a continuing register. Ontario is prepared at the municipal level to feed both the provincial and the federal lists. Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan are sort of out of the picture; the Northwest Territories, Yukon, out of the picture. Manitoba: a lot of work. They're working jointly on trials. They're testing. They're going to try this and see if it does work well. It's moving very fast.

What will happen, in my view, is that we get on board and save money or it'll be there and we'll have to buy it and won't save any money. The feds seem to be so determined to have this that in my view the time has come to stop knocking on doors four or five times, you know, for municipal school boards, plebiscites, federal and provincial elections. It's just a duplication of costs and effort, and it's very inaccurate when people are not home to answer the door and so on. So it's in the middle.

I don't know if I've answered your question.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, while concerned with respect to 4, it also rears its head again in 22. All constituencies are not the same. There's an assumption here that there isn't the need for the additional days of revision, but I can think of at least four constituencies where there's a turnover of vastly more than 50 percent of electors between elections. That's an assumption that was made in note 22. It seems to me that while it's persuasive to say we don't need excessive days of revision in all 83 constituencies, surely we have to recognize that there are constituencies in some of the urban areas where there's a much higher rate of turnover, and there ought to be the flexibility, the opportunity for additional days of revision there. This doesn't

admit to that kind of flexibility, so I'd suggest there should be that kind of provision built in.

11:33

MR. WHELAN: Yes. On that point, on the federal list the revision time is not set by day certain. They say: it shall start on this day and continue to the day before polling day. Therefore, there's no need to go to a specific place and conduct a revision or supervise it, and they avoid the cost. But it does mean that a person can come in anytime and have their name added or revise the list before they do the final printing. So that kind of accommodation is not going to create a problem. But as I understand the experience here, there just hasn't been a need. Is that right, Brian?

MR. FJELDHEIM: Keep in mind that this is the revision period that is conducted after the enumeration. There is an extensive revision period during the election. So the interest has not been there. When the enumeration is done in September, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of the second full week in October is the revision period. Well, the excitement is not there; there's no election called. So it's been three days, and I believe in this case it could be one day and would not have an adverse effect, because once the election's called, as I mentioned before, there is an extensive revision period during the election. That's when people are anxious to get on.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, that was the one point I wanted to make. During an election, a 28-day election time frame in Alberta, you can virtually even on election day go and have yourself sworn in and added to the poll if you have been ignored. So it's more than simply that one point of three days.

Mr. Dickson's point about the perception today of the three days, reducing it to one in a select number of urban ridings where that might be difficult, also applies of course with weather conditions. One of the reasons we had the three days in the past is that you might have a blizzard somewhere in Alberta and nobody can make it and then they feel they cannot get on the voters list. But the reality is that they can get on the voters list at any time including the point at which they walk into the polling station to be sworn in. I don't have a problem with consulting people.

MR. WHELAN: I might add now that the present Act says that the returning officer, considering it necessary, may extend the revision. So that's not being changed. You extend it, instead of from three days on, from one day on as required. So I think we've covered that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Carry on, Derm.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you. In clause 5 at the bottom of page 2, 18(1) is repealed and the following substituted:

The returning officer shall, under the direction of the Chief Electoral Officer, appoint one enumerator to revise the List of Electors in each of the polling subdivisions located in his or her electoral division.

So we're saying that generally there would only be one. Right now it reads that there may be two in certain cases. We're saying that there should be one generally. Read this with clause 6, because 6 says 18(2) is repealed and the following substituted:

The returning officer may appoint two enumerators for any subdivision where it is deemed necessary for the completion of the enumeration, the security of the enumerators, or another reason approved by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Again, the note is that whenever necessary this provision permits a returning officer, in the interests of security and safety of enumerators, to appoint additional enumerators with respect to individual subdivisions. I think that meets the test. You know, where it is not necessary, let's not waste money. If it's clearly necessary, then you're empowered to act. And this, as was said earlier, we think will save in the order of a million dollars.

Questions?

MR. SEVERTSON: Maybe I'm reading it wrong, but it does say that you could have two enumerators going out individually in a polling division doing that in order to complete the enumeration. I don't think that's what you want it to say, but that's the way I read it. That could happen.

MR. WHELAN: Well, what is meant is that the returning officer has the option of running two enumerators in any subdivision "where it is deemed necessary for the completion of the enumeration, the security of the enumerators, or another reason." The completion of the enumeration: take the scenario of a person who just has not been able to do the work and has had only seven days to do it. It may well be necessary to give some assistance to that person. That's what the concept is here.

MR. SEVERTSON: Yeah. I thought this clause was in here for the security of the enumerators, and the way it reads is that theoretically the Chief Electoral Officer could appoint two enumerators to get it done quicker. I'm just questioning whether you want that done or if this is the way the wording is. In the first paragraph you say you want to go down to one enumerator to save costs, and then in this one, the way it reads, the Chief Electoral Officer could have two in all of them.

MR. WHELAN: That's right.

MR. SEVERTSON: Maybe you could check that to reword it better: where security is required, the Chief Electoral Officer can appoint two enumerators. The way it reads, just to get it done you could appoint two.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, you're right. But in the Act, section 18 has five different subsections, and the side heading is enumerators for subdivisions. So what we're saying is: generally there will be one. However, in subsection (2) we're saying notwithstanding (1), if you need two for a security reason, you may appoint two. I think the final drafting will pick up on that, you know. It was not clear, and I'm highlighting your comment.

MR. SEVERTSON: Fair enough.

MRS. FRITZ: Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. FRITZ: I'm pleased to see section 6 here, and I appreciate the effort that's gone into making this reasonable. I do understand why you have worded it in the way you have, because there is merit to more than one reason for having two enumerators in an area. I think that's what you're actually saying.

MR. WHELAN: You're quite right. Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. On to the next one.

MR. WHELAN: Clause 7: 18(4) is repealed and

a person may be appointed an enumerator for the number of polling subdivisions that the returning officer considers advisable but, in no case, may more than three polling subdivisions be assigned to one enumerator without the permission of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Currently it reads:

A qualified enumerator may, at the discretion of the returning officer, be appointed as an enumerator for more than one subdivision.

So it's an unlimited number, and our experience is that it is better to have not more than three. You get better quality in the work, and people don't take on more than they can handle.

MR. BRUSEKER: As I read that, I wrote a question in the margin to simply say: is that feasible? If you reduce it from two enumerators down to one and then say that one enumerator, an individual person, would cover three polls by himself or herself, urban or rural, in a rural area you could have that person traveling huge distances, and in the urban areas, you know, you can get some polls that are pretty large numbers in terms of just numbers of doors to get to. So my question is: is it feasible?

MR. WHELAN: Well, Frank, it is, because the general rule is that the returning officers appoint only one enumerator for every subdivision, and it's only the exceptional person that would even think about taking on two or three or more. This is just to limit it, to make certain people are not in the position where they have more work than they can do in a quality way.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, let me just follow up with that then. When maps are drawn that create the polling subdivisions, is there, generally speaking, an attempt to make sure they are more or less equal in terms of the number of households a person would have to go to?

MR. WHELAN: Very definitely, yeah. Four hundred and fifty voters.

MR. BRUSEKER: The reason I ask that is because, I mean, this makes sense. I have one polling subdivision in my constituency that has three households and five residents. Obviously someone could handle that plus one more fairly easily, but that seemed to me to be rather much of an aberration.

MR. WHELAN: There is a number, and the subdivisions are drawn according to that number. I believe it's 450.

MR. BRUSEKER: Four hundred and fifty . . .

MR. WHELAN: Electors.

MR. BRUSEKER: . . . electors, and 250 households.

MR. WHELAN: Now, it makes the point: if it's possible in the fullness of time, we'll try to use the same polling subdivisions that would be concurrent with the federal polls. But I think that number over a full week is not too large a number for one person to enumerate if they only have one. Then for the ambitious people thinking they really want to earn a lot of money and work, well, two and then three, but certainly not more than three.

11:43

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Clause 8.

MR. WHELAN: Clause 8 is the section that changes the data collected.

By visiting each residence in the subdivision, the enumerator shall

- (a) as far as it is reasonably possible, determine whether the person residing therein is a Canadian citizen and eighteen years of age or over, and shall try to obtain and record the following information on the enumeration record prescribed by regulation.

Now, I don't know where we are on this "prescribed by regulation." That may be changed further as a result of Gary's work or other submissions that we may make to the committee. For the moment, we'll just leave it.

First, the address, including the postal code; two, the surname, given name, and initial; the gender – and I might say, this need not be there. I personally feel it's not necessary, but the feds have it. We have to negotiate with them, and the meshing of the lists is very important. The date of birth of the elector at the residence: of course, people are free not to answer this question, but surely we have to be sure they're over 18 years of age. Salutatory prefixes like Mr. and Mrs.: I don't think that's absolutely necessary, but it improves the quality of the list. For that purpose, it might assist political parties with their addressing of campaign literature. So if people don't object – and usually they don't. They'll say Miss or Mrs. is fine. Anyway, the final point: whether the elector requires interpretation at the poll or level access, dealing mainly with the handicapped and with people that do not speak English.

We just did major research in Calgary-McCall, and the conclusion was that interpreters were not necessary. Despite the fact that it's an ethnic district, the conclusion of the research clearly shows that it was not necessary to have interpreters. It didn't say it wouldn't be useful, but it was not necessary for the purpose of the voting. Sorry for the digression.

And "(b) not visit treatment centres." Now, I think the word "not" – privately Gary Dickson said to me that maybe that should be changed. I agree. We'll take the word out and make it a positive statement.

You had a suggestion, Gary?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I was just saying that I suggest it should read: not be required to visit treatment centres, students' residences . . . The way it reads now, the enumerator is banned from a whole series of institutions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you have a point on that, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: I accept what Gary said. I want a definition of "treatment centres." Is this the traditional one we use to mean hospitals? Because senior citizen nursing homes are enumerated.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah. A treatment centre is defined in the definition section of the Act. It means

- (i) a hospital, a sanatorium or a facility under the Mental Health Act, or
- (ii) any facility not referred to in subclause (i).

I'm not sure I understand that, Brian.

MR. KOWALSKI: But the point is that we're not changing the current definition.

MR. WHELAN: No, we're not changing it. No.

MR. KOWALSKI: Nursing homes will still be enumerated.

MR. FJELDHEIM: And lodges and so on. This is a treatment centre, the idea being, of course, that if you have it enumerated, it's

enumerating a hospital. A number of people will be gone the next day, and new people will be in and so on.

MR. WHELAN: And

- (c) leave at the residence of each person eligible to have his or her name included on the List of Electors a Record of Name form containing the details of that person's inclusion on the List of Electors and setting out, whenever possible, the location of the polling station where the eligible elector shall vote on polling day.

Again, it's an attempt to say, "Well, you're on the list, and here's where you vote" and save money on having to give notice. So again, the explanatory notes.

MR. SEVERTSON: In your reference in (c) to "location of the polling station," if we're talking about having a dual role between federal and provincial, putting in a polling station will confuse it, because they're not going to be the same.

MR. WHELAN: On the contrary, Gary, the intent would be to make them the same.

MR. SEVERTSON: Well, I presently represent a riding that has three federal ridings in one provincial one.

MR. WHELAN: Right.

MR. SEVERTSON: So how can you have corresponding polling stations the same?

MR. WHELAN: Well, we'll split them out into provincial districts. For example, X polling stations in a given district are in both one federal district and one provincial district. We'd identify that from the data. You know, our data already identifies where we have polling stations provincially for every subdivision. The feds have the same. So we take the same geographic area and agree we'll have one polling station there. We may not agree in some cases where it's not possible.

MR. SEVERTSON: Well, I just look at polling stations such as, say, the Legion hall at Innisfail. You can't even put that, because when the election is called, it might be booked and a polling station will be some other place.

MR. WHELAN: I need to say that right across the country everybody is working smarter. Why do we go out just on the eve of every election to make these plans that are never really satisfactory? If we just plan them in advance and try and say, "Well, you assure us that your facility will be available when the election comes up," and people are prepared to say yes – for example, it might be a school. So that's how we would rationalize the choice beforehand. But, Gary, I want to add that it would not be possible in all cases for the reason of the very point you're making. There may be a facility – the Canadian Legion is a good example – where they say, "We have it booked for something else; we can't give it to you." Well, fine. Then we'll have to do it after the election is called. We can preplan if we want to.

MR. SEVERTSON: But what I'm saying is that if you leave this on a card that says that the voting for provincial elections or federal elections is in Innisfail Legion hall or Sylvan Lake Legion hall, and then an election is called and it's changed, you've got the confusion of two different polling stations. I think you're going to confuse the situation more than you clarify it by having it listed before you know. I mean, you've got hundreds of polling stations

across this province. In mine alone there are probably 40 polling stations, and to guarantee that whenever the election is called – we don't know what day it's going to be called. There are just too many variables, when you do an enumeration once a year, to say where the polling station will be three years from now. I think it is going to confuse the issue.

MR. WHELAN: Gary, I need to be very clear about this so that the concept is well understood. First, I don't believe you'll ever see another enumeration that is less than six months away from an election. It won't be three years; that's for sure. So in terms of time, you know, it will be close to the event. But when you give notice on this form that you know the polling station, you're going to have to be fairly certain that that's not about to change. If there's any doubt, that simply would be left vacant or blank. We would take ordinary, reasonable precautions to make sure this was not done capriciously, arbitrarily, or without due thought in the sense of consequence. It's a planning exercise, and you try and nail everything down the proper way. Now, there will be errors. Some will change, but hopefully 98 percent will not. That's the suggestion.

But your point is well taken. There may indeed be areas where it will not be possible before the election is called to say where the poll is going to be held. In these, they would be addressed at the appropriate time. So that's the suggestion. The election people, at least, believe it will help the administration of the election and lower its cost.

THE CHAIRMAN: Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions on the section. In 25(4)(a) you list six different things that the enumerator would be asking of the person at the door. Why would you ask those six things? What would you do with that information?

MR. WHELAN: Well, this is the data that would be used to comprise the data bank in the computers and to make it possible to shift people from a provincial to a federal district or a provincial to a federal subdivision, because linked to the addresses, which we might call an entry address register, we are just sort of saying, "Well, this is permanent; this home, unless it burns down or is moved, will be there forever and a day." So we just link to it the people that live in it as electors. The data base, because it has all these details, can be moved so that we can say, "Well, here's a list federally; here's a list provincially; here's the list for a school board election or a liquor plebiscite." Without these details, it would be impossible to ensure anyone that the electoral population in a given division is actually the people that should be linked to the addresses. So we have to have the full names, the full addresses, and so on. Now, with relation to the date of birth, we have a big difference in the law. The feds say that if you live in Canada today and only today you became a citizen, you have the right to vote. The law in Alberta says that unless you live in Alberta for six months, you cannot vote. So we have to have the data to prove the validity of the list. Let's put it that way.

11:53

MR. BRUSEKER: So what you're saying really, then, is that you're collecting all this data to try and be able to cross-reference the lists and be assured of as much accuracy as possible.

MR. WHELAN: Of course. Yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: But the question then is: if you're collecting all this information, then why not provide it? At least certainly the

address makes sense, and certainly the surname and the given name and the initial make sense. Why not provide that on the list of electors that is then made available for political use?

MR. WHELAN: I don't have a problem with that. I'm just saying that the present law doesn't provide for that. If the committee wants that changed, I don't have any problem whatsoever with it.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, since we are going through potential changes and that is one of the further amendments down the list, amendment 15 dealing with section 34, I guess what I'm saying is that if we're going to collect all of this information . . . I mean, I don't need to know your birthday, for example. All I need to know is: are you over 18? As a candidate I really don't care about your age as long as you're over 18, and judging by the gray hairs, I would say that you are.

MR. WHELAN: The observation is mutual.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes.

I guess what I'm saying is that I don't necessarily need to have all the information. Even something as simple as the given name and the salutatory prefix Mr. or Mrs., et cetera, et cetera, is rather irrelevant.

MR. WHELAN: Well, I would say in answer to that question that I would not have a problem with Mr., Ms, Mrs., or the given name. It's really up to the committee and to the Legislature. The feds have it already, and it's already being used in Alberta for major electoral events, the federal elections. It's been used by people that are campaigning on behalf of their parties federally. It's already there and being used. I don't know why we would not be consistent.

MR. BRUSEKER: So I guess we need to discuss it more under amendment 15 that you propose.

MR. WHELAN: Well, it is a change. It's a change from the initial, which gives the anonymity to the person and the privacy that they feel they want, to where there is less. You know, you're giving the given name to the political parties, but I hasten to add that that's the way it works in almost every province in Canada. Alberta is a big exception. We use only the initial.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. My other question on this section deals with section (b) about places not required to be visited by enumerators. I understand remand centres to a certain extent, because obviously there's going to be a lot of turnover there, but you list penitentiaries and correctional institutions that are not necessarily visited by enumerators. Then in the next section you talk about leaving a list or sort of identifying a location for a polling station. My question – and the reason I'm asking this is that I have two penitentiaries in my constituency – is that if the enumerators don't go into the penitentiaries and if the residents, if I can call them that, the inmates aren't informed as to how to get on the voters list and where they can vote, how will we ensure that in fact their right to vote is enabled?

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. WHELAN: This is a little bit off topic, I think, Frank, although it's a good point. You see, people in penitentiaries and in

prisons in Alberta can't vote. Now, that's unfortunately probably going to be overturned in the middle of an election. The judicial law at a very high level, the Supreme Court level – in fact the Supreme Court of Canada, the Supreme Court of many provinces – says that prisoners serving sentences of two years or less should be entitled to vote. But Alberta law is clear: prisoners cannot vote, not even remand prisoners, as far as I understand it. These are people that are not tried. Is that right, Brian?

MR. FJELDHEIM: In remand they can't. They are awaiting trial.

MR. WHELAN: Remand prisoners can't vote. So apart from that, you know, we would have no reason to enumerate penal institutions at all, because they don't have the franchise. Whether they should or not is an issue for another time.

THE CHAIRMAN: That being said, I think if we were close to being through this, I would let the discussion go on a little longer. We have scheduled the Auditor General to come in at noon, and there's no way that I think we could go through this in 10 minutes, Derm. I don't think we should rush it.

MR. WHELAN: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've got a suggestion that maybe these committees should meet as soon as possible again, during the session even, to discuss this topic only and get through this. It's very difficult to allocate time for these meetings, and I'm just throwing that out to the committee members to ask their opinion on what we should do at this time.

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, before the others comment on your question, if it's possible and convenient to the committee, we certainly would be prepared to come back and finish this at any time that you suggest today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does that meet with the approval of committee members if we can schedule a meeting for this agenda item and finish this up soon?

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, I agree. I think we should, but I'd like it to be expanded to also include the other issues we dealt with last meeting that were linked to electoral reform. There was the business of returning officers. That was a substantive issue that is closely related to this, and so I'd be hopeful we'd be able to deal with that at the same time.

MR. KOWALSKI: But you don't mean today.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, not today. I know everybody's time frames are set around the time frames that I had set out in the agenda. I know that at 1 o'clock we'll start losing members. Well, that being the case then, Derm, we will attempt to have a date within the next few weeks to carry on with this.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman, just a question before we conclude. Would it be the wish of this committee that the subcommittee be involved in the scheduled discussions with the federal electoral office and with the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada? It seems to me that it might be useful, but you need to decide that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I think so.

MR. BRUSEKER: Speaking for myself, Mr. Chairman, I would certainly be interested in meeting with the federal Chief Electoral Officer.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Great.

MR. WHELAN: Sorry if I was long-winded, but you know I was flying today. I was trying really hard to get through this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, it's important. So I thank you, Derm and Brian and Bill, for your time this morning, and we will get back to you as soon as we have a date.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

We will take a few minutes' recess. Lunch is over there. I would imagine that Peter Valentine is close to arriving. So take a little break, and we'll have a working lunch.

[The committee adjourned from 12:01 p.m. to 12:09 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to welcome Peter Valentine and Andrew Wingate to our meeting this afternoon. For committee members this is under agenda item 8. Peter Valentine has asked to attend our meeting to bring us up to date on some of the issues that he's facing with regards to his budget and the computer system and the RHAs. I'll stop there and turn it over to you, Peter.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here. This is the room where I was sworn in, and this is the first time I've been back. Things are going well at the end of the seventh month.

Today we are going to follow your agenda, Mr. Chairman, and then tack on a couple of small things at the end. I'm going to ask Andrew Wingate to deal with the matter of the section 12(b) audits which pertain to our involvement with the regional health authorities.

Before Andrew starts, I might comment that there's some press in the Calgary newspaper this morning with respect to the reporting on the regional health authorities. I don't want it to end up being entirely negative. This was the first year, and those smaller health authorities that didn't avail themselves of the services that we were offering will – first of all, it's a very small portion of the beds in the province, and secondly, as they mature, I believe that they will see how the others are doing it and follow the lead. I don't think it's entirely out of control from the point of view of the government's responsibility for reporting, but there are some funny things there.

So, Andrew, would you care to advise the committee of our involvement with four of the RHAs?

MR. WINGATE: Yes. You should have a copy of order AG 3 in front of you, and really this is to provide us with the capacity to do the audits of regional health authorities. If you remember, the Auditor General was the statutory auditor of all provincial general hospitals, university hospitals, and mental health hospitals. Now, of course, those hospitals operate under RHAs, and the situation as far as audit of RHAs is concerned is that unless the Minister of Health appoints the Auditor General as the auditor of a specific RHA, then the RHA has the authority to appoint their own auditor. The minister has not made any appointments under that provision. In other words, all RHAs are free to make their own choice.

Four RHAs, being Capital, Calgary, Chinook, and Palliser, have decided that they want to use our services. So the basis of our involvement in fact will be that we'll audit the consolidation of the financial statements for the hospital sites that are audited by our agents. In other words, we'll be using agents extensively on these audits.

Now, AG 3 merely provides us with the necessary capacity to conduct those audits under section 12(b) of our Act. So that's the purpose. As you can see, in the second section, the Auditor General may, with his consent, be appointed auditor of any foundation or body closely associated with a regional health authority. That's to bring in the subsidiaries of the regional health authority itself, such as foundations and that sort of thing. So it's really very straightforward. It's a question of providing us with the capacity to do the audit.

MR. VALENTINE: Let me add two points, one in support of the reason that this has happened. Firstly, I have undertaken with all four – for that matter, for all of the 17 regional health authorities – that if they appoint my office as the auditor, we will accept their choice of the agent provided they follow reasonable procedure by which they would choose such an agent. The agent will do the attest audit and will report to the board of directors with respect to that audit and report to me. I will sign the consolidated financial statements, as Andrew indicated. The advantage to it all is to get my office involved in the planning for the additional work that comes under section 19 of the Auditor General Act and under a section in the accountability Act whereby I have some obligations to report to the Legislative Assembly. The whole idea is to not involve the administration of a regional health authority on two occasions; that is, when the attest auditor goes in and when the Auditor General goes in.

So we are going to involve ourselves in the planning and the organization of all of the work, and the agent is going to conduct some work for me and some work for the attest opinion on the financial statements directly for the health authority. In that way I believe we can get the greatest economy and efficiency and get the job done.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Two of the committee members would like to ask you a question. First Gary Friedel, then Frank.

MR. FRIEDEL: Well, I've got a general question. First of all, why would we even find it necessary that the Auditor General should have to do these audits? I'm going on the presumption that audit standards universally are equal. I realize that it's not required right now, but it would strike me that at the beginning it's optional, and eventually there's pressure to make it compulsory for the sake of conformity. By doing this, I think you're precluding the option or the potential for an RHA to maybe get a better deal by a little bit of competitive bidding.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, they are getting the competitive bidding in this process. The Calgary Regional Health Authority and the Capital Health Authority have issued their tenders. We're in the process of assisting those two authorities in that we've been involved in the design of the proposal call, we've been involved in the administration of the proposal call, but we will have no involvement at all in their choice of the successful agent. The whole of the bidding process will be taken into account as they see fit, as they want to measure a fee against service, against the nature or the cut of the cloth of the service team, and it will be their choice. So the entire competitive opportunity is out there. The partnership, if you like, between that chosen agent by the regional

health authority and my office will be to conduct the work that I am responsible for pursuant to the Auditor General Act and the accountability Act at no duplication of cost to the regional health authority.

MR. FRIEDEL: I accept that this may be the feeling now, but I just can't help but feel that through some compulsory co-ordination the regulatory environment gets just a little stiffer as the time goes on, and I think before long there is going to be some inhibiting regulation. I can appreciate that I'm coming at this from a hat I wear at another committee, but I can't divorce myself from it. I would feel this way anyway, because I believe I'm on record at earlier meetings of the Legislative Offices Committee. But I would like to see more of the areas that the Auditor General is responsible for – that some of those clients have the option of comparing the services they get from the AG's office with what might be available in the private sector and have the option of choosing one or the other, notwithstanding that there are certain standards that have to be met. But I believe those standards are met in any event.

12:19

MR. VALENTINE: I'm not quite sure what your concern is. If your concern is that the Auditor General Act and the Financial Administration Act, the accountability Act, provide for the reporting by my office to the Legislative Assembly and that that's an inappropriate reporting, that's one concern you could have.

The second concern you could have is whether or not the entity being audited is being audited for a competitive price. The mechanism that I've designed has been designed to satisfy that concern one hundred percent and at the same time create an absolutely level playing field with a choice of the auditor of the RHA. I know that if you speak to members of the audit committees of either the Calgary or the Edmonton facility, they will tell you that the process that we have assisted them in designing is absolutely first-rate.

If you're concerned about the authority that I have under those other pieces of legislation, then that is quite a different concern. What I'm trying to do is marry these two requirements together on an efficient basis so that both parties – that is, the board of the regional health authority and you, the Legislative Assembly – get what you are entitled to in a cost-efficient manner.

If I'm not explaining that correctly, please help me, because it's very important that you understand this.

MR. FRIEDEL: My concern leans more to the second part of what you mentioned, not so much the competitive. I believe that could eventually erode slightly.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, I'd be very interested in why you believe that, because it's fundamental to me that the whole process be one in which the free enterprise or the competitive influences are there, and if they're not there, then I'm the first guy that wants to know about it. I think that's why you hired me.

MR. FRIEDEL: Okay, and then we could probably get into a minor debate on this. I'm not suggesting that you yourself or the office would deliberately or even inadvertently circumvent the reason why the competitive factor would deteriorate, but I just believe that the more there is control built into any situation, it does grow of itself, that there is some inhibition.

MR. VALENTINE: I wouldn't disagree with you, Mr. Friedel, but I'm not the guy that makes those regulations. I'm not the guy that makes those pieces of legislation. I would be more than happy to tell you at any time where I think that control or direction or

whatever it is that's creating an administrative roadblock exists. I mean, that's part of our mandate, you know. I know right now that the operating units, the regional health authorities are not exactly enamoured by the requests for information that are flowing from the Department of Health. That's not any great secret, and in the fullness of time I think Andrew and I will have a reasonable amount to say about that.

MR. FRIEDEL: Then I'll just conclude by saying that I would personally see nothing wrong with each RHA obtaining their own audit in whatever way they see fit through qualified audit firms, that they would be allowed to do that, providing certain prescribed information to the department, but I'm not so sure that we need to do that through . . .

MR. VALENTINE: I think you're sort of talking to the wrong guy. You should be over there talking to that department, because that, then, is the issue about what the department is telling the RHA, and, as I said a moment ago, it's no secret that there's less than harmony.

MR. WINGATE: At the moment the RHA is free to choose the auditor it wishes unless the minister appoints the Auditor General, and at the moment the minister hasn't appointed the Auditor General to be auditor of any RHAs. So that means that all RHAs can choose their own auditor. Now, in the four instances where they've chosen us, we're using the private sector to conduct the audit work. The RHA is involved in that selection process. All we're doing, really, is providing a knowledge and understanding of the process to that exercise. So I think it's a win/win situation if the RHA wins and the system wins and our experience and knowledge is available to an RHA. That, I think, can be a very useful thing. We also have to discharge our responsibilities under the new section of the Act that was put in under section 19, and we can do that this way.

MR. VALENTINE: In fact, I'm going to have the agents do the work for me, and then we'll report.

MR. FRIEDEL: I may be missing something here. I'm possibly misunderstanding the request. Perhaps it might be appropriate, rather than to take up so much of the time of the debate, to let somebody else get involved and see if there are similar kinds of concerns. It might help myself to see if in fact what you're proposing is different than what I'm concerned about.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we'll move on the speakers' list. I have Frank and then Ken Kowalski.

MR. BRUSEKER: Although you haven't been explicit, I take it as being implicit that this is with your consent.

MR. VALENTINE: Yes, sir.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay.

I think the next question I have falls a little bit upon what Mr. Friedel was talking about. I understand the RHAs will select the firm of Price Waterhouse or whatever. They'll select the firm they wish, and they will have to pay a fee to that firm in order to conduct the audit. Will there be any additional costs to the office of the Auditor General by taking on this audit role, and if so, will that be on a cost recovery basis or will you have to absorb that in your existing budget?

MR. VALENTINE: Well, if there is a cost – and I don't anticipate one – it will be on a cost recovery basis.

MR. BRUSEKER: And that will go directly back to the RHA?

MR. VALENTINE: Uh-huh.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

MR. VALENTINE: But the whole idea is to enable me to get my job done, for which I will pay the agent when he is working for me for the discharge of my obligations to the Legislative Assembly. The agent will expect to get a fee for that work, and we will pay that agent that fee – my office will – for the attest audit. For the opinion on the financial statements that says “the following financial statements present fairly,” that fee will be paid by the regional health authority. That fee will be paid by the regional health authority whether I'm appointed or Joe Blow is appointed. So that part of it is exactly the same. That's what makes it, Mr. Friedel, a competitive, level playing field, because the regional health authority will have chosen who they want as an agent. The fee would be part of that consideration, and they will know up front what the fee arrangements are for the period of the appointment. In the case of the Calgary regional health authority, the period of appointment that's being suggested is three years. I think we will likely see in the proposals that come back – and they're due tomorrow – that the fee commitment will be for three years, which makes it a nice bit of planning for the regional health authority.

MR. BRUSEKER: When you pay that fee to the agent who is doing the work for you, will you then in turn be billing the RHA for that work, that will come out of your department?

MR. VALENTINE: No, no. That's the Legislative Assembly, who's the client of that board.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Ken.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, my questions or statements will be a follow-up to what has already been said. I think there is some confusion, so you have to help us unravel it. I look at section 12 of the Act – and you have this piece of paper in front of us, to the standing committee, basically following through in section 12(b). You say on the one hand, if I'm following this correctly, that you're currently dealing with four regional health authorities in terms of an audit process. Am I correct here in assuming that you don't have the authority to do that unless you get this piece of paper?

MR. VALENTINE: That's correct.

MR. KOWALSKI: Then how could you be doing that? I guess it's fundamentally a question of law.

12:29

MR. VALENTINE: Well, it's a process in evolution, and we're here today to ask for your consent to this program, which we think is an effective and efficient method of both parties achieving their goals. You know, I don't have to do this. I can let the audits of the regional health authorities get assigned to private-sector auditors

across the province, and then I can plan the work that I have to do in order to discharge my obligations to you. I can hire more people and I can send them in and we can do all of that work and we will report to you and the cost will be doubled. But more than just the monetary cost, the thing that concerns me is that the administrative resources of these institutions are spread very thin now as it is, particularly in the smaller and more rural institutions where there wasn't a lot of depth in the resources to begin with.

If we have two sets of auditors come traipsing through there, I can predict with a reasonable assurance of being right the outcome of that action. I think that we'll have all the administrative people with the regional health authorities mad at my office, not a good thing; they'll be mad at the masters in the health department, not a good thing; and they'll be mad at whoever set up this procedure in the first place. I don't know if you want to identify who that is or not. It just seems to me that the logic of this planning makes eminent sense, to achieve an economy and an efficiency and not build empires and get it done at a free enterprise price.

MR. KOWALSKI: I appreciate your response, Mr. Valentine, but I'll go right back to the first part of your statement, when you said: we don't really have to do this.

MR. VALENTINE: That's correct.

MR. KOWALSKI: So please help me understand this. If we don't have to do it, why are we doing it?

MR. VALENTINE: I said that we don't have to make this appointment and this partnership arrangement between the private sector and my office. I don't have to do that. I can let it sit. Each regional health authority can appoint whomever they wish as an auditor. They will get an attest opinion on their financial statements, and then I will start in and I will decide where and in which regional health authority we will make a section 19 Auditor General Act examination of the propriety of the collection and the payment of funds and the economy and the efficiency of running their business. In addition, I will go in and will have a look at everything in order to meet the reporting requirement I have under the accountability Act, where I have to report on the information that has been provided to the minister from all of the regional health authorities. So I have another assignment to do. Now, my goal is to do that assignment without the acquisition of additional resources in order to carry it out, to make it efficient for the regional health authorities in dealing with one set of auditors, not two, and in dealing with a consistent application of audit procedures across the board and all the rest of it. I really honestly believe that it is the appropriate way to go.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay.
May I, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: So this is premised, then, on section 19. The authority you're requesting here would come under section 12, but you're being motivated by what's in the Auditor General Act under section 19.

MR. VALENTINE: Together with what's in section 3.1, I think it is, of the accountability Act, but I can be wrong on my citation.

MR. KOWALSKI: I appreciate that, but you're motivated by what is written in this Act that says you have to do certain things. So

my question, then, is to the chairman of the deregulation committee. Is this an area that's being looked at for deregulation as being unnecessary and not required?

MR. FRIEDEL: I'm not sure this is the appropriate place to talk to that debate. It definitely is the area where I was coming from in my earlier question, but right now I couldn't honestly tell you where the deregulation committee, or the Regulatory Reform Task Force, comes into the review of the Auditor General's regulations. We are meeting with them to discuss concerns that they have, but as far as the actual review of their office or the regulations they administer, we still have to determine where our authority lies. I would suggest that it'll be more a consultative advisory process, but it definitely was the reason why I asked my original question: do we need this additional level of control, I guess?

MR. VALENTINE: Let me make a reiteration of something I said when I appeared before the search committee. There's no incentive for me to build an empire coming into this position for a period of six years. I come from an operation where, to put it bluntly, you ate what you killed. Whatever you could get on the bottom line, you could take home. I lived with that discipline, and I continue to live with that discipline. So I'm not here in any sense of the word trying to enhance my own situation, because I don't have a situation to enhance. But I'm going to come to you when I see a clear opportunity within the existing regulation or the existing law to do something far more efficiently than we did in the past. I was here to you a few months ago about the telephone system. I'm going to report some happy news on that in a few minutes. Andrew and I have a substantial agenda of more things, and we're going to be back to you with those kinds of things. This is one of those kinds of things.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I think in our February meeting we had this exact kind of request for Fairview College, in my recollection. We approved that one. I just want to ask Andrew: how many of those have we got that are similar to what was being requested today?

MR. WINGATE: Under section 12(b) I've got a list of the audits we're authorized to conduct. If I could just go back, because I think I can help. On this question of section 19, responsibility to regional health authorities, that is in fact invoked by the new Government Accountability Act. It's a new section. It says that for the regional health authorities section 19 of the Auditor General Act shall apply. I'm not caricaturing it, but that's the nub of it. That's what Peter was referring to earlier, that it's the new Act that in fact pulls in section 19 as far as the regional health authorities are concerned. So that might help.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm still trying to wrap my head around this too. I guess I'm having the same problems as Ken and Gary Friedel. Assuming that we go ahead with this, as you requested under section 12(b), what that will in effect do is, instead of the RHAs having to have two audits – one by an external firm, private-sector agent, and yourself – reduce it to one audit, which would be conducted by the private-sector firm as an agent on behalf of the Auditor General. Is that a correct characterization of what you're proposing here?

MR. VALENTINE: It's close, but let me expand on it a bit. The audit that the agent will do is the attest opinion on the financial statements of the regional health authority. The audit work that I will conduct is the economy and efficiency systems audit that I

have the obligation to do under the Auditor General Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act. They are two different examinations, but there are a substantial number of like procedures, or common procedures, and I'm suggesting that those common procedures not be done twice.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right. Thank you.

MR. SEVERTSON: I've got a comment. I feel this is a good move in the sense of what Mr. Valentine is saying, that we're trying to cut down on duplication, because under the various Acts we're compelling the Auditor General to do this audit, whether he does it himself or hires somebody, and we're trying to co-ordinate one firm to do the audits, which would cut down costs. That's the way I interpret this, and we need this form here to allow that to happen. So I'm just speaking in favour of what's trying to be done.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

I've got Gary Friedel and Don Massey.

12:39

MR. FRIEDEL: Okay. I said earlier that I could possibly be confused. I now remove the word "possibly" and admit freely that I'm very confused. I should also make it clear that I absolutely don't question your motives of obtaining efficiency, in spite of perhaps a poor choice of words. That was not at all what I was after.

I think for clarification perhaps we need a bit of an explanation of what your prescribed duties as the Auditor General are vis-à-vis regional health authorities. Just in our brief discussion we've already referred to three different Acts which each seem to have some affect on these duties, and I think that helps the confusion. I'm not sure if we can even resolve this here and now or if you're able in the time we have available to completely answer that, but it again goes back to this area. Unfortunately, I've become a bit of a cynic over the last six months wearing a regulatory reform hat, but that maybe did trigger that kind of question.

MR. VALENTINE: Could I just borrow your Act, Mr. Kowalski, please?

MR. KOWALSKI: Borrow my what? Sorry.

MR. VALENTINE: Act.

MR. KOWALSKI: Absolutely.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you very much.

Let me talk about it in its global sense and take it away from the regional health authorities. The Auditor General Act and the Financial Administration Act create three kinds of examinations. The first one is an examination of the financial statements of an entity within the government framework, and that examination is called an attest examination, whereby the auditor attests to the propriety of the financial statements. In his opinion he states: in my opinion the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial position of the entity. That's a common opinion, which you see regularly, and yesterday there was a whole bunch of them, some of them signed by Andrew and some of them signed by me, issued in volumes 2, 3, and 4 of the public accounts.

The second activity that we have is to report with respect to any situations or instances where I observe that the collection of public money or the disbursement of public money has not been made in

accordance with the relative authorities, and that's euphemistically called legislative auditing.

Lastly, we have a charge whereby we must inform the Legislative Assembly of those instances where the economy and the efficiency is not in existence, and that's generally interpreted to mean: is there a system of running the business and is the system working? So you have those three things.

The new regional health authorities legislation and the accountability Act – because one's referred to in the other – bring a fourth element, if you like, which provides for the requirement that my office make a comment to the minister with respect to the annual financial statements of the regional health authorities. The regional health authorities legislation said, as Andrew pointed out earlier, that the minister can appoint the Auditor General and if the minister fails to report to the Auditor General, the regional health authority can appoint its auditor for purposes of the attest financial statements audit.

All of the relevant legislation continues the responsibilities of my office to report on the collections and disbursements of public money and the economy and efficiency of running the business. It's the melding of the reporting on the collections and disbursements of public funds and the economy and efficiency of running the business with the attest audit that we're discussing today. My charge is the first two, and the attest audit will be the charge of the agent. There are many common procedures to the two reporting mechanisms. What I want to do is have those procedures done once, not twice. I hope that sort of sets a framework for you.

MR. FRIEDEL: It certainly answers my question, and it leads to the second one. This probably is not the right arena, but there is legislation that prescribes that you have to perform this function. Maybe we should be questioning whether that legislation is appropriate or not and whether it should be amended. I'm not sure whether you'd want to comment on that or not.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, I would agree with you that I don't think this is the forum, but I can tell you that I would willingly comment in the correct forum.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Next, Don Massey.

DR. MASSEY: Just a brief question. How far along are you with those four health authorities?

MR. VALENTINE: We're just in the process of selecting the agent. The invitation to propose has gone out for both the Calgary regional health authority and the Capital health authority.

Just to get a flavour of it, I attended the information meeting in Calgary last Friday. I was very impressed with management's development of materials and the conduct of the meeting. I came away pleasantly confident that management has grasped the problem and is dealing with it in a very efficient manner. I think that the members of the profession that were there and will no doubt participate in the proposal process are very pleased about how the process is open and fully informed and a level playing field.

DR. MASSEY: Then if I might, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move approval.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So you're moving approval of what we have under tab 8. Is there any further discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Peter, you're off to the budget discussion.

MR. VALENTINE: And I'll pass it over to Andrew now.

MR. WINGATE: Okay. We thought you might be interested in the current situation regarding our budget and three-year business plan. What we've got here is a sheet which summarizes the composition. What we've got there is a series of years, actuals for '92-93 through '94-95; the current forecast, which is our best estimate of what we're likely to spend in the current year; and then revised estimates for the two future years. What this is telling you is that our savings are in fact running ahead of plan. You can see down at the bottom that the annual reductions – the first one appears in '93-94, a million dollars and then \$1.7 million. In the forecast period it's only \$33,000. Then we've got the annual cumulative percentage reduction, and you can see that we're now up to 23.71. Then if you express that in terms of cumulative savings – in other words, the money that hasn't been spent as a result of the savings – you can see that we're up to nearly \$7 million by the end of this year. If you compare that with the savings that we were asked to make, being 10 percent, 15 percent, going to 20 percent, we have saved in the forecast period some \$4,000 more than was originally asked for. So all of this says that we're saving money at a rate greater than requested, and you can see that our total expenditure has dropped from some \$12 million to some \$9 million forecast for the accounting period. So things are on line as planned. That's really what this is telling you.

12:49

MR. VALENTINE: I have to fight the guys away from my door every morning because they want a piece of the savings.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'm sorry. They want . . .

MR. VALENTINE: A piece of the savings. They want pay for performance. No, not quite true.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on this?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, again to the Auditor General. In the last couple of months the Provincial Treasurer said that notwithstanding all the good work by everybody in the last period of time, there's now a requirement for an additional 20 percent reduction in administrative costs. Has that been factored in here, in your forecasts for '95-96, '96-97, '97-98?

MR. VALENTINE: It essentially has.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are going to go through the process after the session, sometime in November, for sure at least by early December, with each one of the officers on the budgets update, similar to what we did in SPCs.

MR. VALENTINE: We've started the process of doing some very serious strategic planning in the office. We've had one full-day session already, and we've made some moves following that. We have to have probably three or four more sessions, and we'll then

be in an action plan. I'm of the view that our admin function can be streamlined further, and I hope to come back to you at the appropriate time and give you the specifics about what we think we can do. I believe there's some room for movement and that that room for movement will more than adequately deal with the request.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is that all on budgetary things? Do you want to move to telephones?

MR. VALENTINE: Just a brief note on the telephones. As of Monday we have the new system functional. We're up in the 1995 era, and I thank you for your assistance and support in this area. I'll just give you one number: our annual rental saving. We thought the new system would cost us in the order of \$72,000 a year, but we've come in at \$54,000. So that's encouraging. All of my people can now be contacted any time of the day or night. You can leave a phone message for them. They all have their own phone numbers. Our clients I believe will find the service in the office much better than it was. Andrew and I can talk to one another on a regular basis by voice mail, so we love it.

THE CHAIRMAN: No further questions? Are we finished, Peter?

MR. VALENTINE: Have we got a minute or two?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. Just hold on.
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one quick question on the cost of the audit, that single sheet that you had provided us. There was an increase, and you make a note for the 1994-95 fiscal year that the audit was increased due to changes made to the Auditor General's financial statements. Can you just refresh my memory as to what those changes were that necessitated that increase?

MR. WINGATE: Our financial statements in the past were a single statement of income and expense, and last year for the first time we expanded that to a full set of financial statements. We had income statement, assets, liabilities, and statement of changes. We also gave quite a lot of performance information on the work of the office, which was incorporated in the notes and financial statements. All of that involved the Auditor in more work, particularly as this was all new, and that's the reason for the increase in fee.

THE CHAIRMAN: We approved that at our meeting.

MR. VALENTINE: We believe it to be a one-time fee.

MR. BRUSEKER: And they will be able to do a similar kind of audit process from now on? That was a start-up cost review?

MR. VALENTINE: A learning curve, yes.

Those financial statements appear in volume 2 of the public accounts.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Peter, did you have something else you wanted to touch on?

MR. VALENTINE: I do. I have one thing. I wanted to talk for a few minutes to bring you up to date on the issue of the charging of fees by my office. At the outset let me say that we're in complete agreement with and fully support the government's initiative and advances in the area of achieving accountability in all of its activities, and we've participated in this program in a number of ways. We've included the performance information in the financial statements that were made available to the public yesterday in volume 2 on page 228. We've provided limited assurance on the 1994-95 performance indicators included in the document *Measuring Up*. We've encouraged all of our clients to include performance reporting in all of their financial statements, and some of them are doing it. We're also supporting the development of systems to allocate all significant costs to organizations responsible for delivering outputs. We believe that all organizations need to understand and report the full costs of all of their outputs.

In support of this very important initiative on the part of achieving accountability, my office has embarked on a program of advising our clients that we will be introducing a new billing practice for attest audit services commencing with the '95-96 fiscal year. The purpose of that policy was twofold: one, to ensure that all organizations are in a position to account for the costs of all of their inputs, resulting in an accurate reporting of their outputs, and, two, to implement a fiscal discipline in the office such that the economies and efficiencies appropriate for the office would be achieved.

The notice to our clients of this new policy has caused a substantial concern amongst the clients of my office. In spite of our assurance to the contrary, that we would be requesting a reallocation of our budget to that of our clients such that their program money would not be impinged upon, the fact of the matter is that most of them believe that we're downloading our costs on them without providing them with some sort of funding.

A number of organizations across the government, from departments down to agencies and provincial corporations, do not yet subscribe to the full costing concept, and this is particularly true in a number of the larger departments. In addition, a number of organizations believe that they can seek amendment to remove the Auditor General from his authority to audit their entity and that they can obtain a bare-bones audit from the private sector at a much lower price and as well move themselves away from the accountability to the Legislative Assembly.

Clearly, the introduction of this fee philosophy and policy is premature for the following reasons. First of all, we – and I include the government and my office in that “we” – have not established an appropriate mechanism to account for and fund the cost of attest audits performed by me or under the direction of my office. The budgetary mechanism has not been designed, and an appropriate communication system with our clients has not been effected.

To summarize, we leaped before we looked, and I want the committee to be aware that I've concluded that we should suspend the implementation of this policy for at least a year. In that regard, it is my intention to so advise all of my clients in the next few days and to proceed immediately to the design and implementation of an appropriate plan to achieve this important accountability concept within the next year.

The fact of the matter is that the reputation of the office is somewhat at stake. People don't understand what the objectives of it were. It disappoints us seriously. We are not going to change our unwavering view that this accountability must come about, and

in fact my report at the end of the month will speak to the continuance of that important endeavour.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you have in this regard, and I would also appreciate the committee's support, which we've had in the past, in the concepts.

12:59

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes. I particularly want to go on record as supporting that particular initiative of costing the services to each department. I can accept your recommendation that it might be well to make sure that all the t's are crossed and the i's dotted to make sure there's a comfort level. I can certainly support that, but I would definitely encourage – and I believe you said that you were intending to – that that initiative be brought back in as soon as it's reasonably possible, because I think it's very important to the overall direction that we're going in accountability.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, it's significant. I'm not taking it away. I'm suspending. Let me be clear on that. I'm not taking it away; the initiative is still there. It's just a question of: when can we get it implemented, and when can we get the appropriate mechanics there? You know, if I take another department where it's not yet clear how they would deal with similar matters, in Public Works, Supply and Services they're not quite ready to start charging all of their clients for the telephone system and the rent and other things because they haven't really figured out the mechanism to do it with. So that's why I say that there's a prematurity to this, and it's incumbent on the players, all of them, to get together and work out how we're going to do it. I don't believe it's a monumental exercise, but I do believe it requires a commitment.

MR. WINGATE: Financially it's a zero sum game, because our revenue is the revenue of the general revenue fund, which is then available to fund the agencies that are paying our fees. So it just circulates through. The advantage of doing it is that everyone knows how much our audit is costing. It holds us to account. That's really what it is.

MR. VALENTINE: And I'm not afraid of that. I'm not afraid at all.

THE CHAIRMAN: So the assurance to the committee, then, Peter, is: you know, step back for one year; this thing will happen a year from now.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, I'm very hopeful that it'll happen a year from now. There are some people who are very enthusiastic about the project, and there are others that remain negative, and it's incumbent on people like the Deputy Treasurer and myself and others to get out there and get the right procedure in place and then make it sell.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you're just half a step short of absolute commitment; is that it?

MR. VALENTINE: I'm absolutely committed.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're committed personally.

MR. VALENTINE: They're not waving placards in front of my office saying, “We want bills,” and I hope to get them there.

MR. KOWALSKI: In political terms some would say that we're blinking.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I thank you, Peter and Andrew.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I indicated to the committee a little earlier when we were starting to go over the agenda that there was one item that I'd raised with the Auditor General the last time we had a chance to have a brief discussion, and I indicated that I would raise it again the next time the Auditor General was before us. If I look at the minutes of the last meeting – I can't find the right one. It had to do with payments in lieu of vacation pay. Oh, here it is. I inquired

about the status of vacation payouts for senior managers in the public service, and what the philosophy of the Auditor General was with respect to payouts for his own staff.

He certainly gave us that, and I appreciated getting that information.

I would like to know if there's a mechanism that the Auditor General can use to track down and report back to this committee what exactly the magnitude of those payouts has been in recent years throughout all departments of the government of Alberta. There are some who subscribe to the theory that that's been a very, very convenient way of getting around the wage freeze. All I want to do is have a quantifiable statement as to how prevalent this has been throughout the whole system, exactly how many hundreds of thousands of dollars have been expended in this regard.

MR. VALENTINE: Well, I'm not sure that there's a mechanism for me to report to you on that matter through this committee, Mr. Kowalski, but inasmuch as you've raised the issue, I think it's incumbent on me to add it to our regular work agenda for the coming year, and if we find some concerns, then it would be an appropriate item for my report. I suppose if we were to not find any concerns and the report was silent, then you would be satisfied in the negative assurance category. On the other hand, if there were things that we wanted to say, then you'd be satisfied in the positive assurance category.

MR. KOWALSKI: I just want the facts, that's all, neither subjective nor in any other way. I just want the objective reality of what the magnitude is. In your report you clearly identified that. That was good. I'm not sure I'd have been able to find that in all other reports. That's my point: why one identified that and others not.

MR. VALENTINE: Which then, you know, should lead me to the investigation of the potential concern around that kind of reporting within the government sector. So at the moment I can give you my assurance that it's on our work agenda. How it will unfold will depend upon what we find. If you can leave it at that stage – I think I'm going to be back here on a reasonably regular basis – we can bring you up to date.

MR. KOWALSKI: I will raise it on a regular basis.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Committee members, we've got a couple of other items to get through. I thank you, Peter and Andrew, for coming this afternoon.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Committee members, the audit for the office of the Auditor General, tab 9. Frank, was . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Leaping ahead.

THE CHAIRMAN: . . . leaping ahead a few minutes ago. This CA firm, audit firm, has been doing it for a number of years, and I would like to have a motion of some sort in this regard. Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, I will move that we adopt the proposal that Kingston Ross Pasnak, chartered accountants, as per our package and letter dated June 26, 1995, be the auditor of the office of the Auditor General.

THE CHAIRMAN: So moved. Any discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Other Business. Seeing none, I don't know what your suggestions are for the date of the next meeting. If we can pick one here today, that's fine. If it's the wish of the committee for Diane to co-ordinate something within the next five weeks at the absolute top side – I would like to make sure that we have another committee meeting to deal with Derm Whelan's issue on the interim election amendment Act at least by the end of October, but I'll leave myself a couple weeks there, at least six weeks from now.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess I'm thinking about the issue of the enumeration process being changed as well. Do we want to deal with all of that in one meeting, or do you envision that being a separate meeting? And there's then the issue of returning officers as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I've had Gary Dickson and Harley Johnson with some of the Ombudsman things. Historically this committee does not meet during the session. When I was thinking about having a meeting during the session, I was thinking about this one agenda item. But, you know, I'm not the total committee here; I'm just the chairman. I'm trying to referee this thing most of the time. My suggestion was to deal with something I thought needed to be completed shortly. If there's something else on the agenda and some committee members think there's something really important to put on there, I'm open to that.

1:09

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I guess, Mr. Chairman, just a comment on that, if I might. I wouldn't anticipate, even if we get through the presentation from the Chief Electoral Officer that we did begin today, that we would see those amendments coming before the Legislature in the fall session at any rate. We wouldn't see those until the spring session. Or was the intention to get these into a Bill to be an amendment in this fall session? If we're looking at the spring session, quite honestly I don't see any need to hurry up and do this during session.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, there is a little thought that, you know, if we're all cozy cozy, it could end up in the miscellaneous amendment Act or something, some of this stuff. I don't know where it's going to go, how fast it's going to get through this system. I don't know. I can't answer that. You're likely on perception: in the spring. You probably are. I just didn't want to have this sit out there for three or four months. We've just kind of got to page 5, and we've got four more pages to go.

Gary, you had a point?

MR. FRIEDEL: Yeah. Well, the one that you touched on, the possibility of having this dealt with through the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act. There's one I had mentioned to Ron during our break earlier. If there was any urgency in this, I'm not sure what the mechanism would be to ensure that that was mutually acceptable. I think we have a technical problem anyway, because the proposal as it was presented to us was still in a conceptual, draft form. It would have to go to Legislative Counsel for writing and such. I don't think that physically, even with our best efforts, it's going to be ready for even that kind of a presentation in this session. So I think we're constrained. If we are going to have to deal with a couple of urgent issues, I'd suggest that we might have better luck having a couple of very short meetings where people might be available for an hour, an hour and a half, rather than trying to get this crew together for half a day. I've seen Diane trying to juggle this schedule a time or two trying to get us together. I suspect . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: And that's what I would think, that if we could have a morning – sorry to interrupt you, Gary – for an hour and a half during the week once the session starts, maybe two of those would be better than trying to do one long one. Let's leave it. Diane will get ahold of committee members. I'll start her off with three dates in the middle of October, and we'll see how many people we can get.

Ken.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, okay. Fine. I was just going to say, Mr. Chairman, that if this is going to be a short session – and I suspect that the opposition doesn't want us here more than a couple of days – I prefer having these meetings outside of session. They seem to work much better than when we are here during the session. There's less acrimony.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm inclined to agree. Although having said that, we have a list of 275 questions prepared for question period already.

MR. KOWALSKI: I know you've got 275 questions, but about three of them are worth while.

THE CHAIRMAN: So now, while we're degenerating here, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn.

MR. BRUSEKER: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 1:12 p.m.]