

8:45 a.m.

[Mr. Langevin in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we're all here. I'll call the meeting to order. There's one member, Mr. Gary Friedel, who won't be able to make it. I spoke to him yesterday. He apologized, but he was tied up with some other matters.

I want to welcome all the committee members this morning. I know you all look forward to Friday morning meetings. It's great to see you here.

Also, Mr. Whelan, welcome. We appreciate you taking the time to come and meet with the committee this morning. As we all know, committee members and yourself, the term of appointment of a Chief Electoral Officer in this province terminates one year after a general election. In order to assist the committee and to start making decisions for the future, we'd appreciate the opportunity to have a meeting with you and to review some of the operations of the office. So I thank you for coming.

To start with, though, before we go into this dialogue between ourselves and Mr. Whelan, I'd like you to look at the agenda. I'd like to review the agenda and have approval of the agenda for this morning's meeting. Do you have anything that you'd like to add?

MRS. FRITZ: I was just going to move approval of the agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: You'd like to make a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. All those in favour? That is carried. Thank you very much, Yvonne.

Now the approval of the minutes of the last meeting. You all have a copy of these minutes.

MRS. O'NEILL: I'll so move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mary that we approve the minutes as circulated. Any discussion on that motion? If not, all those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Now item 4. The reason we're here this morning is to review the operation of the office and the term of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Derm Whelan. I had circulated a letter which I had drafted and sent to Derm on October 16, and what I did in this letter was I listed some of the issues that I thought we may review this morning. If you have any that you would like to add or that you want to bring out as we go through the process of our discussion here, you're all welcome to do that.

So unless there are other comments, maybe we could start by talking about the budget. We all had a copy of the budget for 1997-98, and there was discussion on that budget a year ago by this committee, by the previous committee, because the election was budgeted for two years, not knowing in which year the election would exactly fall. There might be other items there to review.

Mr. Whelan, I'd like to give you a chance to start the discussion on the budget and if you want to point out a few things to the committee. Is that acceptable?

MR. WHELAN: Of course.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, it's good to be here again. I hope that the presentation will not present any problems, but if there are any questions, of course, we'd like those to be asked, and I'll try to answer them. If there are questions asked that I cannot answer, I'll attempt to get the answers for the committee as quickly as possible.

With respect to the budget, earlier – that is to say, in May of this year – the chairman asked that we recast the budget, having in mind a review and ultimately in the supplementary estimates a reduction in the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer. So before you, you should have a document at the bottom of which is the date May 9, 1997. It's the revised budget that was prepared for this committee. Before it came up for scrutiny by the committee, it was necessary to address another concern, which relates to the interaction between the Legislature and the budgetary process in government. To make a long story short, the chairman advised me that the meeting would not be going forward. However, this document is basically pretty well on target.

If I could just walk you through it, the first page is an overview of all the elements in the 1997-98 budget. The last two columns are most significant. The original estimates for this fiscal year in total amounted to \$6,265,770. That was to cover an election and an enumeration that might or might not be paid for in 1997-98.

As you know, the election was called in February. The register was established before that date. Our requirements fiscally are \$2,599,310, which essentially means that in our budget there is approximately \$3.2 million that ought to revert to the Treasury. If supplementary estimates are going forward, then it would be quite appropriate to reduce it by that amount, \$3.2 million, in line with this outline.

The capital investments relate to the register. The register, the software and hardware, is going to cost approximately \$560,000. That's our ceiling. We're not prepared to spend more. The RFPs for the register have been received. There are seven companies involved. We'll be evaluating the RFPs early in November and making a decision with respect to the software and the hardware required for the register.

The \$560,000 has to be amortized over five years, so although it will be paid for out of this year's budget, it will appear as a charge of \$112,000 in the next four years; that's to say, 560 divided by five, the first year being in the \$560,000. In the four subsequent years the amount is \$112,000.

On the second page is the election office element. I have with me a document . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Whelan. If members have questions, I wonder if we could ask them as we go. Otherwise, we may get into other figures, and then we'll get lost from the appropriate place in the budget.

MR. WHELAN: Of course, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think Mary has a question.

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Derm, could you tell me why the division by five and the amortization when in fact the expenditure is to be made out of this year's budget?

MR. WHELAN: Well, I'm not sure that I totally understand that, but the Auditor General's policy is to capitalize any equipment that's worth more than \$15,000. The expected life of computer equipment, IT equipment is generally taken to be five years. Now, we would certainly hope to get a decade or more out of that equipment. That's the rule of thumb that the auditors use. So even though we spend all

the money this year, it'll be charged back over a period of five years so that at least in the books it has the appearance of being amortized. It's like buying a car.

MRS. O'NEILL: Yeah. I understand the amortization of a loan for buying a car, but if the expenditure is there and the money's gone and it is paid for, why do we put it on the books?

MR. WHELAN: Well, those are the instructions and recommendations of the Auditor General with respect to capital equipment. I think it's a part of the accrual accounting philosophy.

MRS. O'NEILL: I realize it's beyond your purview to answer. But, Mr. Chairman, I find it kind of not a true reading. Maybe you can help me out here.

8:55

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques, on the same issue?

MR. JACQUES: Yeah. It's consistent with the consolidated practice of all departments, Mary. That is that in any given year you're approving the operating – as we do in the Legislative Assembly – as well as the capital, for example in the Legislative Assembly. But with the internal mechanism within ministries and departments, notwithstanding the fact that \$560,000 has been spent in '97-98 and will actually flow to the bottom consolidated line and will show as an expenditure of the total expenditures, internally, within the department, it will continue to show the following year \$112,000 amortization, as will public works on government automobiles, for example, or the department of environment on vehicles.

MRS. O'NEILL: I won't belabour this, Mr. Chairman, but is this a lease agreement?

MR. JACQUES: It doesn't make any difference.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's a purchase.

MR. JACQUES: If you purchase it outright, you still do the same thing.

MRS. O'NEILL: I realize it's bigger than this committee, but it seems to me very peculiar.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's like capital expenditure in a company.

MR. JACQUES: It is a confusing thing because what they do internally in a department is not the same as what appears in the total consolidated bottom line of the total province of Alberta expenditures and balance sheet.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you. I don't want to belabour it.

MR. WHELAN: We endeavour to follow the Auditor General's advice with respect to accounting procedures that are followed by line departments. Quite frankly, I would be quite happy to put it in at one time. You know, I think it would be just as accurate. But I think we have to try and do things the way the Auditor General wants them done.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Derm.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Derm, in terms of the register of electors, can you just refresh my memory? Is this net of any federal contribution?

MR. WHELAN: Yeah.

MR. DICKSON: What was the federal contribution to the register of electors?

MR. WHELAN: Well, I finished our last negotiations about 10 days ago in Ottawa, and it's roughly \$1.6 million. To be precise, it's 1.5 million odd dollars. So our expenditure with respect to the enumeration and the register has that credit. But that goes to the general revenue account; that doesn't come to my office. So I had to reflect what we spent. I would tell you, of course, when the opportunity arose, that more than 1 and a half million dollars went back to the Treasury.

MR. DICKSON: Good. Thanks for the clarification.

MR. WHELAN: But that's not reflected in that figure, Gary.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you want to continue, I think that's all the questions for now.

MR. WHELAN: Okay.

Well, page A deals with the election office budget, and this is pretty well on target now. In the revised column you will see that I've actually adjusted that upward from \$400,200 to \$461,740. Legitimately the question should be asked: well, why? Basically we have a position, the director of operations, that I did not fill when the incumbent retired about three years ago. We thought we would get along without the director of operations, so the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer did the deputy's duties as well as the director of operations' duties. In my view it's just too much. So when I was preparing to bring this budget back, I wanted to have the funding for that position approved again so that we could bring that person on board. In fact, there is an acting chief director of operations, and that person – Yvonne would know her – is Alice Killam. She is a federal returning officer, widely experienced with the register concept. So that accounts for most of the difference between the \$400,200 and the \$461,740.

Additionally, our receptionist was only a receptionist. She couldn't do any word processing or anything more complicated than answering the phone and welcoming visitors to the office. We felt that we had to upgrade that position to make it a full-time clerk/steno type of position. So again, the way I filled that position was on an acting basis. But it has moved the budget up 40,000-odd dollars, and that accounts for the difference. Otherwise that's pretty well spot on target.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have a question on that issue.

Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Yeah. Just a couple of questions for clarification, Derm. Has the person been hired?

MR. WHELAN: The person has been hired on an acting basis as a temporary. The reason is that the position is not abolished, but when the budget came forward and was approved last year, money for that position was not approved. In other words, the personnel funding for that position was not approved. So I felt that had to come back before the committee again before the person was put in place on a permanent basis after a public competition.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to ask: at what time was that position not filled? Was that a couple of years ago?

MR. WHELAN: I think it was in the '95-96 budget. It was clearly stated then that I was not abolishing the position; I just wanted to see how this would work. Quite frankly, we could have used a lot of help with that position during the election.

MR. JACQUES: What's the total remuneration that is being proposed for that person on a per annum basis?

MR. WHELAN: Roughly \$30,000 per annum. Earlier it had been \$56,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: I missed that figure. What is it now?

MR. WHELAN: We plan to fill it at the lowest level on that particular scale, which is roughly \$30,000 a year. The incumbent that retired, or the previous person, was making about \$56,000, right at the top of the scale after 15 years or whatever.

THE CHAIRMAN: So the person you have acting at this moment is around that \$30,000 figure?

MR. WHELAN: Around \$30,000, yeah, and the person is temporary. I mean, there are no benefits being paid, and the person has not been on board full time. But as we go forward with the registering and getting it ready, there's an obvious need for that position to be filled by a person on the staff with really some expertise with the way registers work, especially, and also the operations at Elections Canada.

MRS. O'NEILL: Forgive me, but you gave some figures, Derm, and I don't think I have the same ones. What was the differential there?

MR. WHELAN: Well, it's \$400,200, so there's a difference of \$40,740.

MRS. O'NEILL: Okay; \$40,700. All right. So a difference of about \$62,000. Thank you.

MR. WHELAN: Anyway, on that point, that will come back formally on December 2 in next year's budget with a very full and clear explanation for the committee to evaluate and either approve or disapprove.

MR. JACQUES: I just want to make it clear, Mr. Chairman. If I look at the subtotal, which is representing your contract employees, et cetera, there's a difference of about \$62,000. In the salaries the difference is about \$48,000. The next biggest difference is in the contract employees, which are scheduled to go up \$11,000. Do you have a reconciliation or breakdown of what those . . .

MR. WHELAN: In salaries we would include all part-timers that were brought on board for the election only. So our original estimate was \$236,467. During the election, among part-time staff at headquarters we overexpended by the difference, roughly \$50,000. The part-time employees would have been involved in the communications centre. We had six or seven people answering the phone through the election.

MR. JACQUES: No. I'm sorry; maybe you misunderstood me. I'm looking at the '97-98 original column versus the '97-98 revised.

MR. WHELAN: Right. Are you looking at 711A, salaries?

MR. JACQUES: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: Well, that explains the salaries.

MR. JACQUES: The election was on March 11.

MR. WHELAN: That's right, but, you know, the election was called a month before that. It was called on February 11, and we were doing the register in January, so we had additional staff, salaried staff, for that purpose.

MR. JACQUES: But this starts effective April 1.

MR. WHELAN: Of 1997.

MR. JACQUES: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: I understand you, yes. Well, the bills for all the salaries and the overtime bills that were accrued during the election account for the difference. To give you specific line-by-line explanations, I'd really have to get the director of financial operations to come to a meeting. That was his revised estimate, and it's the estimate for the rest of the year, until March 31 of next year.

9:05

I may have a better explanation. There are eight permanent positions. The total is \$142,004 for three full-time equivalents in the management area. The other five positions are nonmanagement, and the total is \$146,963. So the total is \$288,967. Clearly, our finance man has costed this out and revised the estimate of what it would cost.

Now, why he had a lesser figure, quite frankly I don't know. Well, I could go back and maybe see. Yes. He had six permanent positions in the estimates: two management, \$112,004, and four nonmanagement, \$124,463, for a total of \$236,467. So the difference actually is in these two additional positions. The one management position – and remember, we're asking now, or were going to ask when this was revised, that the position of director of operations be filled again. So that accounts for the one management position, and it drives the budget up from \$112,004 to \$142,004. So there is a difference of roughly \$30,000: \$112,004 to \$142,004.

Nonmanagement positions: there are now five. In the earlier budget there were four, and the total was \$124,463. The total now is \$146,963, which is a difference, I think, of around \$25,000. So that's the position where the secretarial person acting as a receptionist can give that further support.

This revised budget was prepared in May to be presented to the committee for the committee's approval and never came forward. I don't know if I made that very clear.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. I guess it raises two questions, Mr. Chairman. If I may, I'd like to pursue this. One is the rationale for hiring two more people. That's number one.

MR. WHELAN: Okay.

MR. JACQUES: Secondly, you have forecast in the '97-98 revised estimates, as I understand your earlier comments, that the salary for the full year has been included in there, whereas that person actually has not even been hired at this point in time, for example, halfway through the year.

MR. WHELAN: No. The position has not been permanently filled, but a person has been hired on a temporary basis, was hired on July 1 for that purpose.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. Well, I guess that then raises the question: how could the person be hired if there was no funding approved for it?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the funding for the development of the register and for the work in the office was generally approved. So, you know, like any deputy minister I have the power to hire temporary staff. We need that person. We can't do the work; we can't get on with the development of the registry without that position being filled. So I have filled it on a temporary basis. If the committee decides in its wisdom that it ought not to be filled, well, that'll be the end of it.

See, this was prepared to bring to you in May, before anybody was hired. Because the House was in session and because of the other general practices between the government departments, being the administrative arm of government and the legislative officers being the legislative branch of government, it was considered wise not to bring this forward to the committee and was not brought forward. So our intent of asking your permission in advance got short-circuited.

So I've explained the figures to you, and I've also told you that on a part-time basis I've filled these positions. I don't have any choice. My office has to operate, has to develop the registry and has to have it ready, first, for a possible referendum, which could occur early next year, and certainly for the political parties and members of the Legislature early next year. We have also a statutory requirement to give every member of the Legislature and all registered political parties a full copy of that registry or the list that it produces on the second anniversary of the election, which is March 11, 1999. It takes a lot of work to get that ready, so I just can't stand still and do nothing. I had to get on with the work.

I don't know if that's a very clear answer or not; nevertheless, that is what happened.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you.

MR. WHELAN: The next element is the election element. Our net expenditures from the election element up to the 30th of September – you don't have this in front of you, but in my notes here I have \$800,691. We anticipate in that element, according to our director of financing, that we may spend as much as another \$400,000. Now, what does that include? Well, we still had to do all of the advertising of the candidates' financial returns. Very expensive. We had to begin our resupply.

We were monitoring the appeal in the courts about prisoners voting. We had to do that because we'll be caught making a vote perhaps in the middle of a by-election. We wanted the court to say it could be done this or that way, if they agree, if that's the court's decision. So we had to have input.

Thirdly, in the amount there's enough for three by-elections. Now, in my view, two certainly are very possible and perhaps three. There have been three before. That's where the \$3.2 million will revert to the Crown, because most of the cost of the election – 4 and a half million roughly – was paid for out of last year's money.

THE CHAIRMAN: The '96-97 budget?

MR. WHELAN: Yes, '96-97 money.

So here the \$400,000 reservations are for the purposes I've stated, so we'll leave approximately \$3.2 million unexpended. I think we can live with \$3.2 million going back to the Crown, not being

expended. I don't think the money is even drawn down until we ask for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have a question. That's page B.

MR. WHELAN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have the 1992-93 actual, and that was a . . .

MR. WHELAN: Now, page B. Yeah, okay, the actuals.

THE CHAIRMAN: That was not an election year.

MR. WHELAN: Well, 1992-93 was \$296,732.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, and this year we're looking at \$1.2 million for another similar year.

MR. WHELAN: Yes. Right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Where is the big need for the difference there?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the net expenditures as of the 30th of September for the election – and bills for the elections are still coming in – were \$800,691. I'm saying that an additional roughly \$400,000 will be needed to deal with the advertisements under the Elections Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act with respect to candidates' returns. We have an obligation to publish those. We had to pay for the ads in the newspapers. Secondly, we had to begin resupplying. All of the material used for the election has to be replenished. Thirdly, we have the case in the Court of Appeal. And we have budgeted for three by-elections.

MR. SAPERS: Have you decided where they'll be yet, Derm?

MR. WHELAN: No, I haven't, but I've got a good political nose. I have a fair idea where they're going to be or may be.

Mr. Chairman, is that okay?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: So it's in this section here where the money will really – if you're going to do supplementary supply, the committee should feel free to, say, reduce the electoral office budget, the electoral element, to the amount in here, \$1.238 million.

Should I move on?

9:15

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: The last element is on page C. We've changed the word "enumeration" to "register." Our net expenditures to the 30th of September out of this particular vote are roughly \$56,000. We'll need much more than that. We'll need the full \$900,000 because we had to acquire the register and get it up and running. So our revised estimate has gone from \$1,327,900 to \$899,150.

Part of the explanation for that is the amortization over four years. If you look at 717, which is the fourth line from the bottom, you'll see the amortization is at \$112,000, and that portion is included in the \$899,150. I'm not sure I can really explain this, but this still includes the expenditure of \$560,000. Now, I don't know how the accountants explain that, but that is what will happen. There must be questions on that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Wayne.

MR. JACQUES: The register of electors element. In looking at contract services, which is kind of the basic chunk of the budget, excluding the \$112,000, \$737,000, you had mentioned that to the end of September or thereabouts you had only spent . . .

MR. WHELAN: Fifty-five thousand nine hundred, yeah.

MR. JACQUES: So in the balance of this year you're going to spend close to \$700,000 or thereabouts.

MR. WHELAN: Exactly.

MR. JACQUES: Now, that then combines with the \$560,000, as I understand it, which is the capital, the computer or whatever you called it. On the register of electors it's \$560,000, which I understand was the hardware and, I guess, some software; right?

MR. WHELAN: Uh-huh.

MR. JACQUES: So we've got that cost, and then we've got the contract services, which you've indicated again are close to \$700,000. You had said, in talking about the director of operations and bringing that other part-time up to full-time, that that was also in order to do the register, as I understood it. I guess what I'm leading into is that each section seems to have something involving the register of electors. Isn't contract services where the majority of your manpower would actually occur in terms of the actual work to be done? Therefore why would you need a director of operations for that?

MR. WHELAN: Okay. Let's look at line item 712K on that page – that's right – contract services. It's \$1,297,000 in the original estimates. Well, because the Auditor General wanted that amortized, we deducted \$560,000, which is the anticipated cost of the acquisition of the hardware and software. That reduces it to \$737,000.

Now, the \$730,000 is needed for the acquisition of the register and for the consultants that we must use to put the RFP in place. You can't put an IT system in place without at least an outside consultant or someone from public works or some purview from the Auditor General's office, not only because it's a common practice but because of his recent comments on the purchasing, generally, throughout the government of Alberta of IT systems. People are spending too much money. They're paving cow paths in their computer systems, stuff that's not necessary. There's a big emphasis on cost benefit in the system, so we had to engage a consultant. The consultant is already chosen, after a competition, and that will add to our cost. Now, we anticipate approximately \$50,000 for that purpose. We've also had to acquire the raw data for the registry to keep it up to date during this coming year. Our estimate for these different contract services is \$737,000, and you'll see at the bottom that the amortization for this year is added into the cost to bring it down to \$899,150 as opposed to \$1,327,900.

Now, the second part of the question has nothing to do with our staff. This is all contracted out.

MR. JACQUES: I understand that, but in your earlier comments you had said, if I understood you correctly – and correct me if I misunderstood you – that one of the basic justifications for having the position of director of operations was because of the register of electors requirement. That was kind of a driving reason for it.

MR. WHELAN: It's one of the primary considerations, yeah.

MR. JACQUES: As well as, not to a lesser extent, upgrading that with a part-time to a full-time in terms of one of your staff.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah.

MR. JACQUES: In light of that comment, that's why I was questioning the contract services amount. Most of that work is going to be done on a contract basis and most of that is going to be spent between now and the end of March, because you've hardly spent anything to date on that. If it's primarily contract, then why would you need a director of operations? I'm kind of missing something here.

MR. WHELAN: Well, I think so, and I say that with all candour and in a very friendly way. There has always been a director of operations. The position still exists. We left it unfilled for the election. We paid the price. We had major problems with operations: with mapping, with location of polling stations, simply everything. I mean, we really got in trouble because that position was not filled. There's a full position description that doesn't even mention a register of electors. That person had an outlined set of duties: training, mapping, supply, relationships with returning officers. That person was not there during the election. To add to the difficulty of not having that person there, we now have this gigantic change, from a door-knocking enumeration to a '90s system that will produce a list of electors.

You know, to say the register only – no, that's my fault. I should have explained more adequately that that position has to be filled, not only because of the register but because of the electoral operations involved. It's not a new position. It has always been there. We thought initially that we would be able to get by without that position being filled, so for pretty well three fiscal years, for two anyway, we didn't spend the money required for the position. On the other hand, we didn't abolish the position. We just left it sort of in the closet to either abolish or reinstate as required and as determined by our operational needs. So that's the reason.

Now, the contracting services. That's to get the system up and running and working in our office, but the ongoing day-to-day maintenance of the register, which is going to produce a list of electors, will require the full-time, hands-on involvement of one of our senior staff. So this will be among the duties of the director of operations position.

9:25

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Howard.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. Derm, could we go back to page B for just a second? I want to ask you again about contract services, line item 712K. There's about a \$1.8 million difference between the original estimates and the revised estimates. Is any of that \$1.8 million capital?

MR. WHELAN: No. Oh, wait a minute. Just let me get my notes on 712K. This is the election element?

MR. SAPERS: Yes.

MR. WHELAN: In the context of elections 712K includes returning officers' fees and honorariums, \$25,000; enumerators' fees, \$75,000; support staff, \$1,000; resupply of forms, \$50,000, because it's contracted out; registry costs, annual operating costs, annual maintenance and replacement costs . . .

MR. SAPERS: Annual maintenance and replacement of what?

MR. WHELAN: Just let me make sure that I'm reading the right note. Sorry. Okay, here it is. It includes \$16,200 in returning officers' costs; election clerks' fees for by-elections, \$12,000; polling day officials' fees, \$59,800; support staff, by-election, \$1,500; printing, returning officer, by-election, \$1,000; mapping revisions and printing, \$400,000; election cleanup, \$441,500.

MR. SAPERS: So that's the \$932,000.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, that's the \$932,000. So it has nothing really to do much with the register.

MR. SAPERS: Right, and there's no capital. Well, that's why I was confused, because on C, this same line code, 712K, you've explained that the reason for the variance between the original estimates and the revised estimates is the \$560,000. Did I understand that correctly?

MR. WHELAN: Yeah. That was amortized.

MR. SAPERS: But that was also explained as a capital purchase, which is why we're amortizing it.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah.

MR. SAPERS: So why in the construction of your budget would you put a \$560,000 capital expense under that code originally? That's what I'm trying to figure out.

MR. WHELAN: Well, it was actually simply a mistake. You know, it should never have been there in the first place. It should have been amortized, and the \$112,000 should have been the amount put in this subsection of the budget.

MR. SAPERS: So none of the contract services reflects any capital money elsewhere in your budget.

MR. WHELAN: Not to my knowledge, and I'll read it again. The maintenance costs, the printing, the supplying of the list of electors for registered parties to all the members of the Legislature, the political party use: that's what's involved.

MR. SAPERS: So when we look at the summary page, which is the cover page of this package, the only capital investment that's in your budget is the \$560,000.

MR. WHELAN: Precisely.

MR. SAPERS: Okay, and that's going to be a current year expense amortized over five years.

MR. WHELAN: Yes.

MR. SAPERS: The adjustments for contract services. We can take that to be your call of what you need other than your core staff.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, precisely.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we leave this page, for these two positions, the one that you have filled temporarily and the other one that you want to fill, you're going to wait for the 1998-99 budget?

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, put the formal proposal forward to have it ratified.

THE CHAIRMAN: So nobody will be permanent until then.

MR. WHELAN: No, no, of course not. But I do want to say that the director of operations has been with the election office since it was born in 1978, and it was a grand experiment in cutting off your nose to spite your face. That's the point. It interfered with the operations of the office.

MRS. FRITZ: Just a brief question. Whose decision was it not to fill the position?

MR. WHELAN: The team's.

MRS. FRITZ: Was it the committee's decision, or was it your decision?

MR. WHELAN: No. We recommended to the committee that we hold the position – you know, we don't want to abolish the position – but not fill it.

MRS. FRITZ: Right. Yes.

MR. WHELAN: A mistake. A big one.

MRS. FRITZ: But the committee didn't say to you at budget time that this is a position, operations manager, you shouldn't fill.

MR. WHELAN: Oh, no.

MRS. FRITZ: This was a decision made by management at the time, and the position was left remaining . . .

MR. WHELAN: And recommended to the committee. Yeah.

MRS. FRITZ: Now you're making the decision that it needs to be filled.

MR. WHELAN: Precisely. Yeah.

Anyway, on the first page if you look at the . . .

MR. SAPERS: Go back to the summary page?

MR. WHELAN: Yes. I just wanted to bring to your attention again that we won't be talking about enumerations anymore. We'll be talking about the register, what we refer to as the register of electors element in our budgets.

Again, I want to point out that the one point – I think it was 1.5-odd million dollars. It's written down somewhere; I'd need to look at it. It went directly to the general revenue account, so you don't see our budget reduced by the funding input from Elections Canada. I should tell you that as a result of my meetings in Ottawa 10 days ago we sawed off \$669,000 into a 50-50 split, so that topped up our recovery from the electoral process by \$335,000. Those negotiations had been ongoing.

Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry. If my director of finances were here, he would probably give you a finer pencil line-by-line description of these items. I, of course, just have a global overview, and sometimes I don't know the details of each thing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, the \$1.5 million contribution from the feds that went directly to general revenue. That was in this year's

budget?

MR. WHELAN: Oh, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: Plus \$300,000 now.

MR. WHELAN: No. The \$300,000 is included. We had \$1.2 million, and then we topped it up.

AN HON. MEMBER: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any other questions on the budget?

MR. DICKSON: How much are you budgeting for the inmate voting cases in front of the Court of Appeal now? I'm interested. What's the reserve? What's the anticipated cost to see that thing through to a judicial determination?

MR. WHELAN: Roughly \$20,000. I shouldn't think the appeal will go on longer than two or three days, but we budgeted for seven.

MR. DICKSON: But you're only talking about the Alberta Court of Appeal. I'm assuming that the thing will go to the Supreme Court of Canada.

MR. WHELAN: Hopefully, it won't go before March 31, so it will be in next year's budget.

MR. DICKSON: I'm sure it won't.

MR. WHELAN: You know, the course will wind its way slowly. Justice rides a slow horse, Gary. You should know that, as a leading attorney in Calgary.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we can carry on to the next item here, the current staff complement. Do you have anything to add further to the two positions that we discussed in the budget discussion?

MR. WHELAN: Maybe I'll just have a go at explaining what we're trying to do in the interests of really keeping the committee apprised of operations. We went through all the cutbacks that the general public service did: the 20 percent cutback in the overall administrative costs, the 5 percent cutback, and so on. The previous Chief Electoral Officer – you know, we followed everything. When the first budget came up, the person who was in the position of director of operations had decided – he'd been 25 years in the air force and had been 10 years with the elections office – that he wanted to retire and spend some time with his grandchildren. He's also not well. At that point and in discussions with the committee and with Ron Hierath we agreed that, okay, we'll try to get along without that person.

9:35

Now we have turned around 360 degrees. I mean, there's a massive change to go from a door-knocking paper exercise to an intelligent technology that produces a list of electors at will at any time in partnership with the government of Canada. So in addition to all the duties that were there before, we now have this complex task of making sure that this register is going to work. We've reduced the cost per elector from \$2.37 to \$1.21, and I intend to get it down to less than 50 cents a name. That's not going to just happen. That takes hard work, clear thinking, sharp negotiations, and good, competent people on the team to make it work. So that's the reason I want to refill the director of operations position.

With respect to the other position, a much minor position, it's very important, in my view, to have a receptionist in an office that is able to answer questions accurately, a person who understands how electoral subdivisions are created, a person who can understand and intelligently answer questions on the computer version of this document, which I think everybody has, the street list and the community key for all of Alberta which we just finished producing. All of you should have received this. This has to be kept up to date on at least an annual but probably a quarterly basis because of new streets being developed in every community. Really, for all the staff that we have there, we only have one person who can do word processing. It is very hard to operate any office, especially a legislative office, without support staff. So that's the reason. Now, there's not a great deal of difference. I think the difference is \$15,000 a year on the operations side, and that's what we're doing. So having said that, it's a staff issue.

When I worked in Namibia and for the United Nations in 1988, I met a computer expert who worked with Elections British Columbia by the name of Harry Neufeld. Harry has gone on to develop computerized electoral systems all over the world, and in Zimbabwe last year he presented a paper on the computerization of electoral offices. Well, the paper is sort of our business plan, although we are developing a new three-year business plan. It has in it items related to finance.

Right now if a reporter in Calgary wants to know what contributions were given to whatever party or whatever candidate, they have to find a person to come into our office in Edmonton, sit down in the library, get out the documents, and we watch them because we don't want them to disappear. That's how it's done. We want to make that an electronic filing system and also an electronic library so that you can access it through the Internet. We already have the web site established. If you look under the government web site, you'll find Elections Alberta. You'll find access to all the subdivision maps. You'll find the results of elections. As we build up the data, you can even get the history of elections in Alberta. So that's where we're going. I mean, we're intending to make this a smart office. It isn't, in terms of the technology that's already available. We've already bought into it. It's just a matter of getting it on-line and using it.

So on the operations side, trying to streamline the office so that (a) filing can be done electronically and (b) research can be done with respect to political money electronically is a pretty important thing, at least for the public. Of course, all the voters will have access to that site too.

What else does it do? Well, a Calgary returning officer said to me: you know, this time I couldn't even get a list of the enumerators I had before because the names are all buried in paper files. Well, that system, the electoral information system, should be on a computer, surely, so that we can give any new person a list of the people that worked on the election previously. So things of that sort are involved.

If the committee is interested, I can give you a copy of Harry Neufeld's paper. It has the basic parts of our business plan for the next three to four years. The development of the web site is another part of it.

The register. Well, we're not making much headway with the municipalities. It's because of an omission in the amendments to the municipalities legislation and perhaps also in ours. We have high-level meetings with the city of Edmonton next week. We're still trying to convince them to use the register of electors. The problem is that they have to run conjointly the school board elections, and we have absolutely no data on school boards. So to get this devolved down to the third level or lower level of governance, we're probably going to have to talk about the municipalities, through the Election

Act, permitting that data to be gathered. It's not simple. Then somebody will say, "I want to vote for private schools," and someone else will just simply say: "No. It's public." Apparently there are a lot of other issues involved. So it's not a simple process, but in our plan we certainly intend to try and encourage municipalities in Alberta to use the register. We'll have to look at the development of that particular profile in addition to what we already have.

We have good maps for about 95 percent of the polling subdivisions in Alberta. The 5 percent that are not good are bad, real bad, so we have entered into an agreement with Elections Canada to review these. Because they're the same, we want to keep them the same and not change them unless population dictates that they be changed. So we'll be working with Elections Canada to make these changes, reviewing in the districts, in the electoral divisions all of the subdivisions that have created problems, the location of the polling sites.

It's a major planned project. Costs will be shared by Elections Canada. I've said that we must use focus groups. We have to ask the stakeholders: what do you think of this? Quite frankly, very often the returning officers don't know how to draw good maps, so they need assistance; they need input from others. In the focus groups we would try to include constituency associations, the incumbent member for the electoral division, and some voters. At any rate, what I'm saying is that that's a major part of our plan: to make sure that these building blocks for electoral divisions, federally and provincially, are properly configured to assist voters, for the convenience of the voters. Secondly, the location of the polling station, although it won't please everyone, at least will be central and will give everyone the same access or opportunity to get to the polling station.

So in the strategic plan that Elections Canada and Elections Alberta have, we have on our plate to do this. The target date is June of 1998. Now, this will be beginning very shortly.

Why June 1998? You can't just change a line. Like, if I change a line, I take a whole pocket of people and move them from point A to point B. To do that, I either go out and do it manually by saying, "Where do you live?" or by going visually through a list of electors. That takes too long, and it's too inaccurate.

The GIS, the geographical information system that Elections Canada and we are developing, will be able to automatically move people because they'll be georeferenced on the maps in the computer by June. That's the target date to finish that project, June of 1998. So by mid next year all of that ought to be corrected.

There will be a possibility of input from the focus groups in each electoral division. As a matter of fact, I wrote a couple of members, including Ron Hierath, asking if they would be amenable to looking at things in that way. So that's our plan.

If you have any other questions – I could ramble on here forever.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll see if there are any questions. No questions on operations?

Now the current staff complement. You kind of put in there the operation of the office, so we're doing the two now, I guess, talking a lot about the operation of the office.

MR. WHELAN: The other thing that I . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Ron has a question here.

9:45

MR. HIERATH: Well, I'm not exactly sure where we're at. I mean, you're talking about an enumeration and polling stations and so on.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. It's all intertwined.

MR. HIERATH: So if you're in agreement, I'll ask the question about the enumeration process.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HIERATH: You know, Derm, I realize that there were some very major changes that went on. Most of the public and maybe some of the MLAs don't realize the restructuring that really happened with regards to the register of electors and the involvement of the federal government and that what was driving it was trying to get to efficiencies. I do know that there were, of course, some problems with the mapping of polling stations and the electoral divisions. Of course, also what enumerators were faced with was the added information that they were requested to ask of electors: birth dates and gender and telephone numbers and so on. Then the other big one was a changeover from a noncomputer system to a computer system.

You know, it seems to me that the office in general was having a hard time working with returning officers in this major change. I'm just wondering, looking back, what your observations are now, a few months after the election, that the returning officers are your main contact in each one of the constituencies. There seems to be quite a bit of confusion as to the lack of input from returning officers on boundaries of polling stations and the federal government having more involvement in boundaries of polling stations. Did that cause a lot of problems within your system during the election?

MR. WHELAN: Well, let me see if I can answer it this way. You know that I'm on the record as having recommended to the committee that returning officers should be chosen on the basis of merit and that secondly they should have tenure. I don't think any electoral office can perform as well if on the eve of every election they're presented basically with a slate of people who have been uninvolved, who don't have the experience, who don't have the ongoing connection with the office. Many really don't have the skills, quite frankly. So I made that recommendation, and I make it again. I know it was unacceptable and that it probably will not change, but I would be intellectually dishonest if I didn't tell you that that's the beginning of the problem.

Now, the enumeration was in November. The enumeration was actually started before some returning officers were appointed, and I can get out the orders in council and tell you that after the enumeration started, we were actually training people on how to do an enumeration. The enumeration started on November 1, and we had a system of faxing and giving people instructions, encouraging them to be in touch with us, which I'll just deal with briefly in a minute. But I want to say this: once returning officers were appointed, they had my undivided loyalty, my support. I would not publicly criticize them. I never have, and I'm not doing so now. Each one to the best of their ability worked hard and did the best they could, but not all were able to do as well as others. So I want to make that point also. As a matter of fact, some of the returning officers had full-time jobs and worked those full-time jobs and tried to do an election at the same time. That's not possible. I mean, something has to crack.

Just having made these general observations, let me say this about the enumeration process and the change. The maps were offered to us free of charge by Elections Canada in August. The legislation was not passed and in place with the new boundaries until early September, so everybody went crazy. I mean, they were trying to get the maps ready, and they turned out to be not the best maps. They had very little local input. We knew that and the returning officers knew that right from the beginning.

So on November 4 I issued a bulletin, a very brief one, on map

review to all returning officers. This is what it said: "Please return one set of your amended maps to our Office (attention Gene)" – Gene was the mapping person we had on staff – "as soon as possible. This is most urgent." During the training it was explained that you had to review these: tell us what needs to be changed, and we'll change it.

- Include all your amended descriptions with the package.
- Where maps have been altered . . . to keep the number of electors down to the maximum allowed, please outline the affected areas with coloured flow pen.
- Please note, again using a coloured outline, where polling subdivision populations were extremely low and two or more could be combined, while still remaining below the maximum and staying within a manageable geographic area.

And this is the point that I want to make, Ron.

- If you have noted any serious errors which will inconvenience electors on polling day, please outline the area and forward your comments along with the maps.

Right at the beginning we asked people to do this. That was November 4.

There was a further memo on the same point on November 14, and even earlier than that, during the training, there was an outline on the returning officers' enumeration checklist relating to the review of the maps.

What happened? Well, it was November. It was a vicious winter month. The returning officers couldn't get people to do the work. They had personnel problems, they had training problems, and they had mapping problems. So it's reflected in the work output. I mean, it was less than desired. But by and large most of them came round so that we had, I would say, about 95 to 97 percent of the polling subdivisions in pretty good order. During the election and afterwards I was in touch immediately with the Chief Electoral Officer – voting subdivisions are the same for the federal elections – advising: look; you'd better get this changed, if you can, very quickly. We brought it around to the point now where we have an organized, systematic approach to fixing this.

When you change, there are going to be growing problems and there's going to be some pain. Remember, as you said, Ron, that the returning officer is the person who runs the election. I don't. I can't go to 83 divisions. Neither can Brian or the rest of my staff. We have to rely entirely on the returning officers. I don't want to criticize any individual. I do want to say that there were some problems.

MR. HIERATH: Returning officers have had an increase in responsibility and an increase in workload up to the '97 election. I just want to conclude, Derm, by asking you then: with all the changes that went through the system in moving towards a continuing register, in your opinion is that a onetime thing, where the next provincial election will see the benefits of the change that was made in this election?

MR. WHELAN: I don't think there'll be any doubt. I think that by the year 2000 and for elections thereafter this will be just taken for granted: no more knocking on doors; the maps will be right. If boundaries are going to change in Alberta again, talk about the basic building unit being the polling subdivisions that don't get changed again and are only changed because of growth or out-migration. So that's the long-term goal, and it could not happen.

I want to say why it couldn't happen. In August the Legislature considered the report, Judge Wachowich's report, which, you know, I wrote. The logic is mine; the decision is not. The decision was made by that commission. It was ratified by the Legislature. In September it received Royal Assent. So we finally knew what the maps were going to be, and four of the names got changed. One of

them was in Calgary, and it caused such terrible confusion between what was east and what wasn't east. We had to contend with that in Calgary as well.

9:55

Anyway, the point is that here we are now in September. We finally know what maps we need, and not a pen is on paper. There's no point. If the legislature is not going to approve this, why change the maps? They're very expensive. Canada offers to do this. The enumeration has to be in November. I wrote to the former Minister of Justice, Brian Evans, in February of 1996 asking: would you please appoint the returning officers? Some of them didn't get appointed, as I told you, until September and as late as November, when the enumeration had started. So you had the change in the districts, the sudden appointment of a lot of new people, the winter enumeration, a complete change in the process, and then an election in the middle of winter. There had to be problems. It was unavoidable.

Canada had the same problems. On June 2 they were faced with an election. They didn't have the problems with weather, but they moved from a 55-day calendar down to 35 days. I mean, this change in the electoral process to bring it in line all of a sudden with almost every democratic country in the world – you know, in Great Britain it's 21 clear days. That's it; the election is over. The lists are done by continuous rolls by the municipalities. Nobody knocks on doors. It's a waste of money and time.

I think – and I'm sort of expanding – that we shouldn't encounter problems like that again. I think the change will be firmly in place, and now the pitfalls and the trenches that can cause broken legs and arms are visible. You know what to watch for. I'm confident – so is the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada – that this process will work and will be in place. I might tell you that Quebec is on board, B.C. is on board, Alberta is on board, New Brunswick is on board, and they're negotiating with Nova Scotia.

Ontario is in a mess. I was there also to determine another issue, which I can tell you about. The problem is they can't figure out whether the electoral officer or the municipality should do the list of electors. They have this huge election early in November that puts six cities around Toronto together into one huge city, and I'm told that the dead on the list and the people that are there twice are significant. The numbers are significant. They have a really serious problem.

Otherwise, the rest of Canada is going in this direction. The only province going nowhere – and that's because of the politics in the election office – is Saskatchewan. You know that their Chief Electoral Officer resigned in a kerfuffle about political money.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary has a question.

MRS. O'NEILL: My question is: what is the origin municipally of the information for this roll? What are they going to use to continue it? Just the tax base?

MR. WHELAN: You mean in Great Britain?

MRS. O'NEILL: No, no. Here in Alberta.

MR. WHELAN: Well, what they do, Mary, is that when a person comes in, they take an affidavit, and on the affidavit they indicate which school board they want to vote for. So they have the name, the address. I don't think they have age or date of birth or gender, but they do have the school preference. So that's what makes our lists.

MRS. O'NEILL: But, Derm, my question is: for the next provincial election what will be the source of and how current will this electronic registration of voters be? The requirement is that you just be – what? – so many months in residence and a certain age, et cetera.

MR. WHELAN: Well, the key elements in the plan for building the register. First of all, the onus is on us to reach out to electors. We had to ensure privacy, that it will be used for electoral purposes only. So there had to be safeguards: security at the offices, locked doors, et cetera. Electors had to have the option to opt out. I mean, they had to be able to say: no, I don't want to be a part of this. Our goal is to maintain reliability of greater than 80 percent.

Now, how is this going to happen? Well, the research shows – and this is factual – that 16 percent of people each year move in Canada. That's 3,200,000 moves. That'll be tracked through an agreement with Revenue Canada and through an agreement with the registrar of motor vehicles in each province. In Alberta I have left it to the Chief Electoral Officer to make those arrangements with the motor/voter people, because I think we're going to be their client rather than their supplier of data. Fiscally it makes more sense. We're just not big enough to run that kind of a computer shop, so we'll be downloading the data that they have. So that will take care of the people that move between elections.

Elections Canada will update this on a quarterly basis. There'll be a check-off box this year on your income tax form: if you have moved, may we share this data with Elections Canada? If you tick it, fine; if you don't, well, we won't record the move. People will have to get in touch, or on election day they can make the change then federally.

People reaching the age of 18. Each year 380,000 reach the age of 18 in Canada. Where are we going to get that from? Again from the registrar of motor vehicles and from Revenue Canada.

New Canadian citizens. You have an interest in this, Yvonne. One percent a year, or 200,000 new Canadians, become voters every year. There is an agreement in place with Citizenship and Immigration Canada that requires the informed consent of the person. So that's how they will be added to the registry.

Then, removing people. One percent of the population of Canada die every year, 195,000 people, so data with respect to that will be supplied by the registrar of vital statistics.

Now, what else? Well, obviously any by-election updates, any municipal data that are easily available about changes: we'll try to track these, and we'll feed them to Elections Canada. Like, this database will be going back and forth between the two major parties. The goal is to keep it at least 80 percent accurate. When the election is called, we will then attempt to get it to the 90 or 95 percent. It is very seldom more than 90 percent accurate anyway. How will that be done? Well, I'll be recommending to the committee – and we can do this anyway – that instead of putting maps that people can't read into the paper, we'll send cards to each household. So we would get rid of the advertising cost, and we'd pay for the cards. It's a win/win proposition. One will substitute for the other. From these cards we'll update the register, and we'll have a very active/proactive revision process during elections. Of course, some people will never want to co-operate. Polling day will come, and they'll get sworn in on polling day. That's when they will be added either federally or provincially to the registry.

So that's the plan. It's three years of research and \$5 million to bring it to this stage by the federal government. You know, we haven't spent – we're sort of a tag-on in partnership.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary, did you indicate that you had a question?

MR. DICKSON: I sure did. Are you finished, Mary?

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes, I am.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. A couple of different issues. I'm most familiar with what happened in Calgary-East, Calgary-Fort, and Calgary-Buffalo. I don't know whether some of these issues in the province were to the same extent in other parts of the province. Firstly with respect to the published report from your office in terms of the election enumeration, on page 6 you detail concerns and problems relative to the whole issue of informed consent. We may agree to disagree on the importance of that informed consent. I'm just looking for a specific recommendation in terms of – it's implicit but not expressed in your report that you think the informed consent was a mistake. Do you think we should avoid seeking the consent and telling people that they have an option not to disclose the other information? Can you just sort of tell me what your specific recommendation is?

MR. WHELAN: Well, I'm not sure that I've made one so far. I generally described what happened. I think that both the Privacy Commissioner and I, as we discussed this, made a serious mistake. We didn't focus on the fact that one person in each household would be supplying the information. So when the mother came home or an adult son or daughter came home – “You shouldn't have given that information; I don't agree.” So for every set of five names we got, we had a telephone call saying to take three off. Nobody anticipated that.

To specifically answer the question, I think informed consent is necessary whenever it's possible to get it. During the enumeration it was not possible for the reason that I told you. The enumerators weren't talking to probably 80 percent of the electorate. At least 70 percent never talked to the enumerators, and the information was given by a third party. Well, the third party, unless they had permission, really couldn't give the informed consent. So that was the primary problem with the informed consent during the election, but there were many enumerators that just didn't ask the question.

10:05

The federal Privacy Commissioner's report actually draws attention to the same problem federally in the 10 provinces and the territories where there was an enumeration. He says the same thing, that the enumerators didn't clearly explain at every door that this was voluntary. As a result there was a fair amount of discussion in the press and a fair amount of speculation as how to best handle this. Well, I've come to the conclusion that the best way to handle it is that in the future, as the state is coming in on changes, unless the informed consent is clearly indicated, people will have to be sent a letter and asked whether they opt in or opt out. So that's what we're going to do.

I'm perhaps getting too far ahead of myself. I don't know, without incurring additional costs, whether we can continue to collect the phone numbers for the list of electors in Alberta. As you know, federally the agreement between the Privacy Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada is not to include phone numbers with the list of electors. Well, we'll be left, then, to gather that data independently. I'll be asking the committee to look at this later. My good sense tells me that we may have to let that element go with respect to the list of electors. If you do not want to do that, well, then we will have to collect it provincially because we're not going to get those numbers from the federal government. It's not a huge task, and we can build it into our computer. We'll have it in our computer system, but I think it was the telephone number more than anything else that alarmed voters at the door. True or false? I don't

know. We got 70 percent of them.

You're talking about informed consent.

MR. DICKSON: Right.

MR. WHELAN: I'm saying that I'm not sure that it's totally possible, but it would be our intent to get it whenever it is possible.

MR. DICKSON: Since motor vehicles registry information and vital statistics information are going to be your two provincially controlled data banks to be accessed for this, is there a plan to simply put a line on applications in those two departments simply indicating that the information will be shared with Elections Canada, some kind of a checkoff box or whatever?

MR. WHELAN: As I understand the present negotiations on their contracts – and the contracts are about to be signed. Vital statistics is not a big problem because generally it's people who are dead that you're talking about. You can't get their consent. I'm not trying to be facetious.

MR. DICKSON: No. I get your point.

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, but what they will gather from the motor/voter shops will be everything except date of birth, and they will write people and ask for their date of birth when there's a change. That's the intent of Elections Canada. So that means that the motor/voter people don't have to retool their computers, and we get around this question about informed consent. So that's, as I understand it, where their negotiations are going.

MR. DICKSON: The next question. In Calgary-Buffalo it seemed to me there were in excess of 14,000 people where the enumeration information was inadequate. They had to do a follow-up and a huge effort in terms of phone calls. Was that unusual? Did that exist in at least the other urban constituencies?

MR. WHELAN: In a couple of the Calgary districts in particular we had significant problems with data. I think it was possibly because of the density of the population and the apartment buildings downtown. For example, in Calgary-Buffalo there were 1,781 swear-ins on polling day. Most people vote between 4 and 8. I mean, that must have been a nightmare at the polls on that day. Yes, there were some urban districts where a lot of the data was inadequate, where dates of birth weren't even asked for and so on. There was subsequently a review to try and gather the data.

MR. DICKSON: More specifically I've had the experience of going through three elections in the last five years, and it seems we've seen a succession of issues related to bad lists, incomplete information, and frankly just some breakdowns on election day. Can you give me some assurance that we've learned enough lessons, that at least in those areas where you have a large transient population, a lot of singles, that sort of thing, we've got a handle on that, and we can ensure that it doesn't become such an administrative logistical problem, which ultimately discourages people from coming out and voting?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the enumeration process just plain and simply doesn't work. It never worked alone. This was recognized in the late 1980s when the royal commission on electoral reform did their work. They basically said that because of lifestyles or concerns with privacy and personal security people either weren't at home or they

wouldn't answer their door. That was part of the problem. The second part was that it was impossible to get enumerators in sufficient numbers with adequate skills for the purpose, and thirdly, that the political parties were unable to provide lists of names with respect to people to do this work.

So the enumeration in itself being a door-knocking exercise has been empirically shown in the research to be quite inadequate. What we have always relied on is a tripod involving the enumeration, the revision process, and the polling day swear-ins or registrations to build the complete, or final, list of electors. So the enumeration process is not reliable in the sense that the preliminary lists will give you all the data and all the names that you need. It has to be built during the revision. In your case, Gary, you had almost 2,000 people being sworn in on polling day. You couldn't possibly get a good list until after the election was over. Impossible.

So what's the assurance? Well, if we can track this and keep it up to date through these cards, it ought not present the same kind of problems. If people opt out and insist, "I'll register on polling day," there's still going to be 5, 10 percent of your voting population that you don't know about. You'll have to pick them up as you do your campaigning.

MR. DICKSON: The other thing I wanted to ask. There was a meeting in Red Deer in July of returning officers. One of the problems that was identified on July 9 was that apparently a lot of people weren't even getting the information they required when they phoned the 1-800 number. Can you just speak to that in terms of why it was that there seemed to be so many problems associated with the 1-800 number? What sort of remedial action is being taken, will be taken?

MR. WHELAN: Well, the information line answered 30,000 phone calls election week. We had 16 lines. The lines would trip; like, if one was busy, it would trip to the next. I mean, I would like to think that 80 percent got the information they wanted, but of course people who didn't, who couldn't get through quickly were probably annoyed. Certainly the communications group that we put there to answer questions from voters took very large numbers of calls. Actually I have a statistical breakdown; I just can't find it at the moment. I think for the next election we'll probably need more phones. It's anecdotal evidence. I really don't have a handle on how many people couldn't get through. I heard from many returning officers that people couldn't get through. Well, how many? When? You can never get precise details. So all that we can plan to do with a situation like that is to increase the number of telephone lines, and it would encourage people to phone the returning officers directly instead of phoning a 1-800 number.

10:15

The other thing is that with the computerization of our office – and we have the location of polling stations and the georeferencing in the computers – people have a computer in front of them. They don't have to go through a book to find the answer. So the length of the calls should go from three or four minutes down to maybe one, one and a half, 90 seconds.

The biggest problem that returning officers had with the telephones was the fact they couldn't get in touch with us. Everybody in the office – their lines were busy from morning till night. We should have really had dedicated lines for the use of returning officers only, almost like a second phone on your desk. That did create some communication problems, but generally if people left a message, we would get back to them as quickly as we possibly could. The volume of phone calls during the election: I don't know, I suppose I answered at least 500 calls every day in

terms of responding to messages and the voice mail.

I don't know if that fully answers your question, Gary, but we certainly will have the communications unit again try to attempt to answer these questions during elections. Other than adding to the phone numbers and hopefully making sure people have a card – they don't have questions to ask. We'll be proactive to try and keep the requests for information to a minimum by making sure people get where-to-vote cards.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry. I just have two questions left.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. I'd received information that your office had issued something like 29 – what do I call them? – interpretation bulletins or supplementary bulletins to supplement the initial procedure book that went out to ROs. I'm curious how much of that would be attributable to enumeration, enumeration issues or problems, or was the procedure book that deficient or skeletal that . . .

MR. WHELAN: No. It's a policy manual, and of course as a problem develops, there would be a bulletin, perhaps one page saying that in this situation there seems to be some lack of clarity on what to do, so this is what you are to do. During the federal election they issued 98. This happens when you're operating elections today because of the technology that's involved, because people are concerned or interested. I read three dealing just with checking the maps, and none of them were very long. Now, some were complicated – I will say that; it was frustrating – related to the revisions of the list. As problems emerged, they would be responded to by a directive saying: "This is what you will do. Please add this directive to your policy manual." I read the first two earlier relating to the enumeration.

I'm just going to tell you that with respect to Calgary-*Buffalo*, 54.3 percent of the people gave their telephone numbers during the enumeration and about 70 percent gave their dates of birth.

MR. DICKSON: The final question I have, Mr. Chairman and Derm, is the business of compensation. I know that there was certainly a very strong sense from the returning officers and from reading through the summary you kindly provided to us from the Red Deer and the Edmonton debriefing sessions, the two sessions, that the compensation was really inadequate, particularly given the huge number of callbacks and that sort of thing. People were making pennies per name on the list. I'm interested in what plans you have in terms of addressing that, if in fact you agree that there was inadequate compensation, and that may have even been a factor in some of the problems that existed.

MR. WHELAN: Well, in the handouts that Mr. Chairman circulated there's a letter dated September 25 from me to the chairman indicating that I would like a change in the fee schedule, and further that with respect to returning officers and election clerks, if it's possible to make that retroactive because they certainly were not adequately compensated in my view. We didn't have time, really, to make the appropriate changes in the tariff of fees. That's the second last section.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we all got one of those in our package.

MR. DICKSON: Okay. I didn't see it in mine, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much.

MR. WHELAN: I've made a recommendation. The retroactivity may be an issue, but hindsight would indicate to me that we should have recommended the change in the fee structure prior to the election, but time didn't permit it. Furthermore, I'm not sure that the committee would have been able to meet.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's it? Okay.

Thank you, Pam; I appreciate your being able to come. I know you had indicated you'd be late. Just to brief you, we started the meeting about a quarter to 9. We firstly went through the approval of minutes, just the routine work. Then we started with Mr. Whelan, and we looked at the budget, and you have my letter. We're on the items of enumeration and operation of office and review of election process. If you want to be briefed on this, I could do it after the meeting, or Diane or somebody could help you.

MS BARRETT: That's fine. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Gary, that was it for your questions?

MR. DICKSON: Yes. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mary, did you indicate . . .

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes. I do have two questions, one that's following on this question that Gary just asked, and that is: I noticed in the summaries of the meetings that you had a comment from Edmonton speaking of the inequity of the fee payment or at least the remuneration payment. Is that so, or was that just an aberration?

MR. WHELAN: Can you give me the reference?

MR. DICKSON: I saw that, yeah. It's about differential; right?

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes. They indicated that some then chose to go elsewhere or whatever. I'm on "Discussion on Tariff and Fees," page 6, the lower left-hand corner.

MR. WHELAN: Page 6, number 8.

MRS. O'NEILL: Yes, the first bullet. "Returning officers felt strongly that rates of pay for office staff should be the same in all electoral divisions." Now, that's obviously not in the act, what the office staff does. Is there any will to address this inequity?

MR. WHELAN: Yeah, there certainly is. What occurred was that people were told not to pay more than a certain maximum. So individual returning officers negotiated a range of different rates, and that created the perception of inequity. In hindsight I think I would have told the director of financing to establish a rate, period, and pay it, and that's what will happen before the next election.

10:25

MRS. O'NEILL: Okay. Thank you.

One other comment. My concern is – and I'll put it in general terms – that so much of this is being driven by federal data. I understand, too, that there's a lot provincially with regard to licences, but I always think of who – there are lots of people who don't drive, amazingly enough, and there are seniors, et cetera. I sensed as I read all of the comments that there was a request underlying all of their comments. "Please give us more hands-on determination, the ability to determine, to direct, to input, to adjust at the very, very local

level.” You referenced it a couple of times in your comments, Derm, but I'd like to re-emphasize that. If I heard anything, it was: “We know our community. We can assist with it. Why are we having to phone outside of the community in order to get someone who doesn't really know X number of streets or where the flow of traffic lies or all that?” Now, I know you said that you had requested that; however, I just want to emphasize that because returning officers or whoever is involved usually knows the community very, very well. That's a concern. They know who has died and who hasn't died, and if there is the opportunity that they can have more of a role in this registration or whatever – it's a comment I want to make more than a question.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WHELAN: Well, if I might just also comment. The debriefing process with the very keen reporting was the beginning of the consultation with respect to the last election, and certainly we heard returning officers say that there ought to be more local input. We're committed to that. Elections Canada will debrief the federal returning officers probably in January and February of 1998, and we will be consulting them with respect to the maps, the location of polling stations and so on. But today we have 18,000 to 20,000 people in the district. Returning officers won't often always know how many people have died or moved. You know, it takes much more input than that. So during the revision process, which really goes on pretty well through the whole election, they're going to have to be very astute in managing and verifying their lists. That's a big change. Revision before this election was a matter of sitting in your office for three or four hours and that was it. If you had one name change, that was the end of it. But with this process the revision takes intense work, and returning officers will need assistance from support staff to complete it properly. As I said, I believe that you have to devolve responsibility for running elections away from the central office to returning officers, and that is what we intend to do. So they will be consulted.

I also have concerns about the people who get lost in the cracks in this plan. In our plan we have ongoing studies for new data sources. I can tell you immediately about two or three. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind. We will have a campaign to ask, you know: “Are you registered? Because we know you don't drive.” We have lists of all the seniors' homes and so on in Alberta. We can be proactive about following that up. I'm very concerned about aboriginal peoples, ethnocultural groups in Alberta. We have to get proactive about dealing with them. The Chinese and Asian communities both in Edmonton and Calgary: somebody has to go and work with them. If they don't understand the process, they can be persuaded to get on the bus in multitudes. Some are not Canadian citizens. It will take a major educational effort to deal with problems like that. One of the areas where I intend to do that almost immediately is at the Blood and Peigan reserves and in Livingstone-Macleod because of a problem that was basically caused by the aboriginal populations. You had a similar problem in your division, Mr. Chairman. You know, we won't lose these other opportunities. In the United States they have put registration processes in place in all the social agencies. The yield is about 30 percent of the population that is using those services. So it's not a high yield, but it's something.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you.

One last comment, Mr. Chairman, and that is because I happen to deal with it both within my own household and with our kids' friends. From those who were voting for the first time, the comment that I heard a lot was, “We were not asked for our ID.” They are asked for their ID everywhere else they go. They found that quite

offensive, quite frankly, that they weren't asked for ID, even if they were registered or not – well, not, because then they had to be sworn in, but if they were registered. Because they felt that something as important as that – and of course they said, “Somebody else could have gone in and said they were me.” There were enough comments coming from the younger people who said they felt it kind of diminished, if you will, not only the integrity but the solemnity or the privilege, or whatever it is, that they weren't asked for ID. I make that comment only because it's something that I heard frequently.

MR. WHELAN: Well, it's interesting because, really, to tighten the electoral system so that you're fairly certain that the person coming to vote is the person they say they are – I suppose it's a reasonable thing to say, “Well, at least let me see some identification.” But look what happens when people are not on the list and they have to produce identification. The howls are loud and furious. “Well, why do you want to see that?” or “I don't have two pieces; I've got to go home now to get it.” So we have an honour system. When an enumerator goes to the door and asks for the names of eligible electors, no one says, “Let me see their identification and birth certificate.” Now, it really is an honour system, to the point where a minister of the Crown could illegally vote in the province of Quebec and get fired. That's how much of an honour system it is. I'm sure that that lady probably didn't realize that she wasn't eligible to vote, but under the law ignorance is not an excuse. She should have known.

So it's a conundrum. Do you want to have an honour system, or do you want to have every single voter produce identification and sign something? I mean, either is acceptable. In many democracies you do have to do that. Certainly in ours the agents for each candidate have the right to challenge a voter and say, “I'd like to see identification,” but it is very loose.

MRS. O'NEILL: I just identify it because it's a comment coming from the youth, who are asked at every bar they go into, everywhere else. I just make that comment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Howard has a question.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. You have shared with us some pretty candid observations about the number of problems emerging right through to polling day: new people, the appointment, weather; you know, the whole thing. Plus earlier when we were discussing the budget, you were talking about the impact of the financial restraint that was placed on your office, and now we're talking about a number of relatively specific concerns and problems that came up during the election process. I don't have anything to compare this experience to, and I don't know whether or not you've reviewed the files to determine whether or not these complaints and concerns are dramatically different compared to the last election and also the volume. Are we looking at a much higher number of concerns? It's very hard for me to say if all of the problems that you listed before are related to these issues or not.

MR. WHELAN: Well, I'm told that federally they have just as many, if not more, complaints as we have. With respect to previous elections in Alberta, I would say there were probably more this time. I think it really was the first dead-of-winter election where the election fell on a day with extremely bad weather. I mean, people fell and broke hips and legs outside polling stations. Our mobile poll vehicles went off the road. Our election staff were in accidents. It was a brutal winter day and in my view probably accounted for a lot of the complaints, and of course the change in the process accounted

for a part of them as well.

But a benchmark? I'm not even sure I have one. My feeling is that, yeah, there were probably more complaints than I would have expected. But I attribute a lot of them to the weather and to the change in the process, where people had to get out on a late-winter day and vote.

10:35

I don't think in any other jurisdiction I've ever had as many complaints. People have said to me, "Now, what that really means is that the voters are more informed; they're more astute." But some of the complaints – like, you have to try and measure whether or not this is significant. If a person in the city phones and says, "Well, I had to walk an extra block because you changed the location of the polling station," how do you measure that against a complaint from someone in a rural constituency that says, "Well, because I had to go across a bridge, I had to drive 20 or 25 kilometres, and on the way I passed three polling stations," which might have been actually in another district? I don't know.

So those kinds of things on a winter day that people encountered, they're going to complain about. Often they won't complain to you; they'll phone the press first. That happened. So hopefully we won't have more winter elections; I don't know. But that's par for the course for a rough day, when the older people in particular are trying to get out and vote, where it's slippery driving, where people are having accidents. Voters actually phoned and said: "Are you going to pay for this accident? Do you have medical insurance on these premises?" Well, we don't. I mean, we don't insure polling stations.

So those kinds of things occurred, Howard, then. It's very hard for me to measure them because I haven't empirically studied them. I haven't set up any benchmarks to measure, you know. Then I rely on the input from the returning officers. By and large, the number of people that voted without comment, and 95 or more percent of the people that voted didn't have any problems. That's the fact of the matter.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks. That's all.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know if the committee would be prepared to move on to the next item. Are we done with reviewing elections, enumerations, and operations of office?

Yes, Pam.

MS BARRETT: I have one question. I probably should have given notice, but if you can't answer it right now, maybe you could get back to me. I don't understand why the enumeration of the riding in which I reside and now represent came in 4,000 people fewer than it did in 1993. I live in the riding. I ain't moved in a long time. I know that people have not moved out in droves. My returning officers – well, all of them were scrambling. At the end of the day they didn't know; they could not confirm that everybody potential had been enumerated. Now, the importance of this issue, Derm, is related to the funding of constituency offices.

MR. WHELAN: Yes, I understand. Yeah.

MS BARRETT: Okay; good. Thanks.

MR. WHELAN: Well, I'll have to, you know . . .

MS BARRETT: Sure. I should have given notice. Okay.

MR. WHELAN: I can't answer you, but I'm amazed at 4,000.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, it's 4,000. And I know the riding. I haven't moved in a long, long time.

MR. WHELAN: That's the first time I've heard of this. Maybe you could be in touch, and we'll try and get to the bottom of it.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now maybe we'd like to discuss, Mr. Whelan, the travel undertaken on behalf of the office. You, I know, attend conventions and different things during the year. If you could give us a summation of that.

MR. WHELAN: Well, with respect to travel I'd like to refer you to a meeting on May 31, 1995. I brought before the former committee an invitation that we had received at Elections Alberta to send people to the Lester Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in Nova Scotia. It was a scholarship. Board and lodging was free and the course was free, so I brought it before the committee to have it approved. I want to tell you what happened. The present Speaker said:

So we've got a request here on a piece of paper to send somebody on some little educational process. As far as I'm concerned, you're supposed to be the chief administrator in that office; you make that decision. I don't want to waste my time discussing it in here.

He went on to say, "So you make the decision if you want to send somebody to a course, but I don't I think we have to tell you" about that. Then he goes on. Mr. Brassard made a comment to the same effect, and then the chairman asked: "Is that the general feeling of the committee?" Mr. Dickson, you said, "Do you need a motion?" and the answer was no. So I said: does this consensus mean that, generally, affairs of this nature ought not to be brought before the committee? The answer was yes. Then Mr. Kowalski, the present Speaker, said:

Yeah. We have the opportunity to evaluate you on an annual basis. So if I change my view and say that you've misbehaved, I'll get you when you come back for the annual assessment.

So most of the decisions with respect to traveling I've sort of made on my own without referring to the committee. But I was keenly aware of the caution that Mr. Kowalski had given me, and indeed some other members of the committee and I had pretty frank discussions about that.

First of all, with respect to travel I've got a few general rules. I only travel if it will result in cost avoidance for the taxpayers of Alberta or will further the partnering process with Elections Canada or any other jurisdiction, for that matter, as we exchange personnel from time to time to help us with projects. We did that with respect to the Electoral Boundaries Commission review of districts in Alberta. We had two people, one from Elections Canada and one from Elections Alberta, assist with that process.

Secondly, there is a certain amount of traveling for educational and professional development, and I think – I have the cabinet directive here – the cabinet very strongly supports the development of competencies in staff. I support that also. I get people involved in doing courses and things of that sort.

Recently, especially in the '96-97 fiscal year, a lot of the travel that I've done had to do with the development of the register and also the development of a request for proposals. The traveling actually made it possible for us to obtain that free of charge from another jurisdiction, and it would have cost Elections Alberta, in my view, anywhere from \$75,000 to \$100,000 to contract that out and have a consultant do it. Again, some of the traveling is related to Elections Canada and our partnership. You know that we've gained \$1.5 million. The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada was here six times,

and you know I had to reciprocate. I just can't expect him to come here every time.

So having said that, I want to tell you also that I don't enjoy traveling. They're not pleasure junkets for me. I only fly economy. Generally I work Saturdays and fly on Sundays.

So what are the results? I've told you about the Elections Canada credits, the \$1.5 million. We've had one successful conference here in Alberta, the COGEL conference. In 1998 the international association of election officials will be in Calgary, about 400 people, and in the year 2003 there will be 1,500 people coming from all over the world to Calgary for an election conference. So part of the ongoing relationships with the associations we're connected with results in things like that. And as I've said, I think we've avoided at least a \$75,000 development expenditure with respect to the RFP.

The traveling that I do is the same as it has always been. It's the meeting of chief election officers once each year with respect to the electoral process and, secondly, the meeting with COGEL, which is the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws, that primarily deal not only with conflict of interest and lobbying but deal with election finance laws. At these meetings you generally get an overview of the ongoing litigation with respect to political money all through North America. Not so much from Europe, but some. Very few European countries have political money controls. Britain doesn't. So you get an overview of the litigation and also updates and changes in legislation, the policies and so on.

10:45

Now, I've gotten involved with this third election group because six out of the jurisdictions in Canada are involved, and that's the international election officers group – the acronym is IACREOT – the group that will be coming here. It's from networking with that group that we really had in view the type of register system we wanted, and because of the networking, we obtained the request for proposals, the evaluation methodologies and so on. What I'm saying is that when I travel, it's for a purpose. I'm either negotiating to get something done related to the business, or I'm trying to avoid spending money. You can't operate at an executive level in this environment without networking with others who've gone down this path before. You have to have some idea of where you're going, and when possible you have to build on the strengths they're prepared to offer you, because they're a peer in the same profession.

IACREOT is a little bit new, so for that reason I want to tell you what has happened with them. First, I'm a director of the association. I am the chairman of their resolutions committee and the vice-chairman of the long-range planning committee. I'm a member of the election committee and of their education committee. That's my involvement on behalf of this province with that association.

The members. Canada is a member. British Columbia is a member. Manitoba is a member. Ontario is a member. Quebec is a member. All Chief Electoral Officers are directors. The city of Toronto, the city of Ottawa, and many other cities now are also involved. This association has had a conference every year since 1972, and as I've told you, in 2003 we will have it in Calgary. They're associated in their educational package with the University of Missouri at St. Louis, and you obtain university credits for the courses that one takes with them.

At the annual conferences that they hold – and there's only one each year – they have vendors that sell computer equipment and all the other paraphernalia connected with elections, from seals to ballot boxes to computer systems. So it's an opportunity to see what's available in the market and to discuss with vendors what they have. Indeed, there are two companies that attend from Calgary, both in the computer business. They have a great display of election

software and hardware related to registers and voting systems.

I mentioned the networking with other professionals and the cost avoidance that's resulted. They have scholarships available. There is \$10,000 U.S. available to any child of an election worker in Alberta. So any returning officer or election clerk can obtain a scholarship. There are three of them in various amounts, but the total is \$10,000 U.S.

I'm working on a project with one of the election directors from the state of Florida. In the United States about 70 percent of the states are involved in an organization called Kids Voting U.S.A. When people go to vote, they actually bring their children with them, and they can do voting too. It's a long-term effort to get the number of people who are voting up, because you realize, you know, the turnout we had in the last election was low. Not the lowest in Alberta's history but federally, as I understand it, it was the lowest turnout ever in a federal election. That's serious. Are we going to get to 35 percent of the people electing the Legislature? Well, if we're not, somebody has to take a long-term view and try and do something about it. I've talked to people in Canada, and I'm trying to find a sponsor for what will be called Kids Voting Canada. So that's another effort with them.

I told you about the conferences in May of '98 or '99 and the big one in the year 2003. I have added that to our itinerary of travel. That is, I think, a meaningful involvement that saves the people of Alberta money, that provides good educational opportunities and solid support for what we're doing with the register. The Americans in particular all have electronic registers, way ahead of us. So we have a lot to learn.

The other group that I have become involved with is the Election Center. I was given really a scholarship to do half the courses. They have the only professional accreditation for election workers that's available anywhere in the world. It's known as the CERA accreditation, certified election and registration administrator. They gave me five of the courses free of charge because they wanted to get someone from Canada involved, and I'm halfway through the certification program. They've agreed that I can spearhead an effort to involve the University of Alberta so that their work becomes both a Canadian and American joint venture. So I'll be doing that. That's my own personal development, I would think, my connection with the Election Center. It's in line with the cabinet directive on public service development. They only have one annual meeting, and as I've said, I am attempting to get the University of Alberta involved. So that's an outline of what money I've been able to save and how much money has been spent.

I want to review with you, if I might, the travel in terms of dollars. I keep a travel journal. I can tell you at any given time how much money I've spent for whatever trip. I haven't formalized it, but generally I consider it to be a useful document. In 1997-1998 the cost of my travel was \$8,800: out of the province, \$2,913; out of the country, which would take me mainly to the Election Center and to the IACREOT conference, \$5,723. I think that money is well spent. To give you an example, between October 8 and 10 I was in Portland, Maine, meeting with the Election Center, with the IACREOT people. The result is that we have the conference for 2003, which will bring 1,500 people to Calgary to talk about elections, and we have the educational conference earlier, either in '98 or '99.

I spent two days in Ottawa on the same trip, and I looked at the possibility of configuring. I'm thinking that after the year 2000 there may be an effort again to reconfigure electoral divisions in Alberta, and I know that in the Premier's mind at least the number of members should be reduced. So I wanted to look at what Ontario did. Ontario took the federal divisions – there are 101 in Ontario – and they said: these will be the provincial divisions. Right now there

are 123 provincial seats, so they've cut them by 22 seats. We have 26 federal districts in Alberta, so what I was looking at was the possibility of a configuration where one division in Alberta would be three, and we'd have a total of 78 seats as opposed to 83. So it's really a study of possibilities more than anything other than that, because of the duty that I have to assist whatever boundaries commissions are appointed. I might say that up until that last exercise the Chief Electoral Officer was always a member of the boundaries commission, and with the change and the new law he was removed. He still ended up doing all the work but without a voice. So I've got to be recommending that that get reversed and that we do have something to do with it.

I was in Ottawa for one day on that trip also. The net result was that we signed off on \$350,000 which will come back to the Treasury of Alberta. So that's the kind of traveling I do. I can't do my work behind a desk in Edmonton when I'm trying to get Ottawa to pay for half of everything I do. I can't bring conferences to this province without being involved in the associations that hold them. That particular trip cost about \$2,500. We always look at airfares and get free seats whenever possible. So that's an example.

In 1996-1997, which was the last fiscal year, there was approximately \$10,000 in Canada and \$15,000 outside the country. This mostly had to do with the development of the register of electors and the cost avoidance that resulted in that we did not have to pay someone or contract out the development of an RFP. To get the city of Chicago and their lawyers to let us use their RFP, to take their legal advice free of charge because of the same size of jurisdiction in terms of number of voters – and they probably have the best registry system in the world – I think that was worth every penny that we spent. To get these financial advantages for the province of Alberta, I can't do it from behind a desk in Edmonton. You have to travel, you have to be involved, you have to negotiate, you have to discuss what you're doing, and you have to look at what other people are doing. But that was an unusual expense. I'm quite sure that it'll go back to the regular amounts. In 1995-96, \$6,000 in Canada, approximately \$7,000 outside, in the United States. In 1994-95, \$2,200 in Canada, \$3,900 outside the country. One of those was a COGEL conference that happened to be in Hawaii, and that cost \$2,500.

Anyway, that's a very candid overview of the traveling. It's all in our developmental budget. However, these two associations are new to the committee.

10:55

The only other thing I want to say is that in the key responsibilities outlined in the position of the Chief Electoral Officer there is a section on liaison and traveling. I would like to quote it for you. "The Chief Electoral Officer participates in a number of committees and maintains liaison with a number of groups including . . . Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Activities," which has not been active primarily because of the behaviour of one political party – I can talk about that if you want me to, but I don't think I need to – secondly, "the Conference of Canadian Election Officers and Election Finance Officers." Thirdly, "the Chief Electoral Officer participates annually in an Ethics Conference which studies issues related to governmental ethics, elections, campaign finance," and so on. It goes on to discuss the liaison duties.

So my travel is an open book, and I can fairly demonstrate that it saves the people of Alberta, the taxpayers of Alberta, a lot of money.

THE CHAIRMAN: Derm, thank you for that report. You indicated at the outset that you had that discussion with the previous committee back in '95 or whatever the date was. I did not receive indication from this committee that they wanted to change any policy or any procedure. I was looking for a report like you gave us,

and there may be some questions on that report. I think Howard has one here.

MR. SAPERS: Yeah. Thanks. A couple of comments and a question.

First of all, I had an opportunity to attend the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws conference that was held here in Edmonton and that you had quite a role in, and it was very obvious to me that you have the esteem of your colleagues in that group. They talked to me quite openly about your involvement in some activities in this country and in the United States, and it was very positive. I thought you should hear that report.

Secondly, I think it's noteworthy that the international group is coming to Alberta and to Calgary in the year 2003, and I think that's quite a coup, considering the competition that I saw at that conference for much smaller gatherings and the amount of work that goes into that. I've done some of that myself, so I know that that can be considerable.

Since you've been in the position, you've been responsible for making these travel decisions. My question to you though, Derm, is: either in this fiscal year or in either of the previous two, have you exceeded that line item in the budget?

MR. WHELAN: No. It's always within the budget.

MR. SAPERS: It's always come in within the budget. And you're on target this year within the budget?

MR. WHELAN: Yes, very definitely.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks.

MR. WHELAN: On the COGEL conference I had a beautiful letter from Bob Clark. It quite surprised me, because I really think he had as much to do with organizing that conference as I did. But this is what he said.

I wish to acknowledge the tremendous effort you and your staff put forward in organizing and running the COGEL Conference. From the time you and Lori made the presentation which resulted in Edmonton being chosen to host the '97 conference [in Washington], you and your staff obviously expended a great deal of time and effort in putting together what was by all accounts a hugely successful conference.

I can go on. This letter was from three or four people.

The net result: we have a surplus of \$36,000. When I asked for permission of this committee to have this, I told people then that it would not cost Alberta anything. I want to tell you that that \$36,000 goes back into what we call a Canada fund, which I helped establish when that conference was in Quebec City. What it does is it funds for the conference, bringing international speakers to tell people what – you know, it's an educational opportunity. Only the interest on that is used for that purpose. I was very proud of my stance, but I thought Bob Clark had as much to do with it as I did.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I also had the privilege of attending the governmental ethics conference in Edmonton. I just wanted to acknowledge and just assure the other committee members that it was a terrific opportunity to meet a number of people working in other jurisdictions, not only in Canada but in the U.S. I think Mary had the chance to be there for part of it as well as Howard.

It was interesting to me the sort of respect that people in other

jurisdictions have for what we're doing in Alberta, not only in terms of the way we run elections but also in terms of our ethics office and a number of the experiences here. So I think this kind of conference certainly helps not only the stature of our representatives in terms of what we do, but it's just a terrific way of having them also share information with us because of the leadership role we provided. So I appreciate Derm's role and the other legislative officer Bob Clark and the support of their office staff, too, which I thought made it very successful. I know that people who came from other jurisdictions were very impressed with what's going on in Alberta.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for those comments.

Any further comments or questions to Derm on this issue?

MR. WHELAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to make a concluding remark. I want to be reappointed. Yesterday I was offered a job in the western Sahara. I've been offered other jobs in different jurisdictions in the last two or three years.

THE CHAIRMAN: You wouldn't have to face the winter that's coming.

MR. WHELAN: I want you clearly to know that I would like to be reappointed and that my commitment is to at least the next election, not beyond. I know the practice is two elections and then it's time to move on. So let there be no misunderstanding, for I tell you clearly, and it's on the record.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for those comments.

Any further questions?

MRS. O'NEILL: I don't have any more questions, Mr. Chairman, but it would be my understanding that we have a place on the agenda today to discuss the issue at hand. Is that correct?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we have another half hour scheduled here roughly.

MRS. O'NEILL: Oh, okay. Since the process and the timing is such that, just as you mentioned, Derm, you wish to continue and your appointment concludes at the end of next year, I would like to discuss it, but because of that I would like to go in camera, if we may.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you'd like to make a motion?

MRS. O'NEILL: I'd make a motion, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a motion that we go in camera. Is there any discussion on the motion? All those in favour? Those against? The motion is carried.

[The committee met in camera from 11:05 a.m. to 12:18 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't see any further items on the agenda.

MR. HIERATH: I'll move we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a motion to adjourn. Agreed?
Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 12:20 p.m.]

