

Special Select Standing Committee on Members' Services

Monday, May 16, 1983

Acting Chairman: Mr. Appleby

10:10 a.m.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: We have two sets of minutes to approve, the ones that are in the book. Could we have a motion or comment? Moved by Mr. Kowalski that the minutes for May 2 be approved. All in favor?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: May 9?

MRS. EMBURY: I so move, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Is there anything arising from those minutes that should be discussed that would not be on the agenda as a separate item? The only thing I noted was that under G, Ian had suggested that a proposal relating to travel and car allowance come up at a future meeting. If there's nothing else, we can go on to item 4, MLA indemnity and tax-free allowance.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I can get into this, because I think I was the one who suggested certain items be put off to the future. But we now have the Committee on Privileges and Elections looking at the white paper. They are well through the study of this document and are very rapidly getting into this area that essentially comes under this committee. If you'll notice, the items that are on the agenda are largely items which are involved in one way or another with the Legislative Assembly Act, as opposed to some other members' expenses which do not directly require amendments to the Act. I think there are five items -- nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 -- all of which to some extent are involved with the Legislative Assembly Act.

I feel this committee should address these issues; in fact, we were more or less asked to in an unofficial way at the last meeting of the committee on privileges and elections, and to go back to them with some ideas. One committee cannot be asked to do something by another committee; they cannot officially report back. It is my understanding at the last meeting of the privileges and elections committee that these items should be addressed in this committee, being essentially a responsibility of this Committee on Members' Services, and that we should make some suggestions to the next meeting of the committee on privileges and elections. That meeting is scheduled for this evening, so perhaps what we should do just now is concentrate our efforts on the five items -- nos. 4 through 8 -- so we can give some input this evening.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That will mean that the people who are on this committee and on privileges and elections will bring the recommendations to privileges and elections. Is that the idea?

DR. REID: That's the idea, Mr. Chairman. I think there are three or four of us who are on both committees and could thereby transmit the ideas of this

committee to that one, so they can ensure that the necessary things are incorporated in that legislation.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Do you want comments or discussion on item 4?

DR. REID: This is a difficult one, Mr. Chairman, because traditionally the MLA indemnity and tax-free expense allowance has been looked at by a commission. Thus far, there hasn't been time to appoint that commission this year. It's my understanding that after each election, we have a commission which addresses these issues on the recommendation of either the Legislative Assembly or Executive Council; I'm not sure which.

Looking through the history of what has happened recently and having been the one who pretty well insisted that we address some principles in relation to some other allowances, expenses, and caucus projects, I don't feel we should look at the actual indemnities just now, either the taxable or the non-taxable indemnities. But there are several allowances that I think should be looked at as matters of principle. They include the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chairman of Committees, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the leader of minority parties. At the moment, in the Legislative Assembly Act they are in there as dollar amounts. I'm not sure I can find any particular logic to the dollar amounts; presumably there is one, but I haven't been able to trace it. Perhaps what we should do is establish as a matter of principle that indemnities or salaries for those particular people who have a parliamentary function be established in the Act in relation to, say, ministers or some other salary that is established, rather than have them all listed as independent items by dollar amounts. Sometimes they get addressed by commissions and sometimes they do not; rather than having the commissions looking at the dollar amounts of those positions, they somehow be put into the statute as being equivalent to ministers on some percentage basis.

MR. BLAIN: Mr. Chairman, I presume Dr. Reid is talking about the salaries for the Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees. The salaries are established in dollar amounts by the same committee which establishes the indemnity allowances for members and the salaries for ministers. The rationale, for lack of a better expression, in reaching the dollar amounts was after the positions were carefully examined by the committee -- in the last instance, by the committee which was chaired by Justice Miller -- and examining the duties of the positions in relation to the duties of ministers of the Crown. It was on the basis of the committee's decision that those dollar amounts were established.

DR. REID: If that's the problem, then let's fix the problem. With all respect to Judge Tevie Miller and the other two gentlemen who worked with him, I'm not at all sure that a commission should be making what are in essence parliamentary decisions. In a parliament, there is no way the Speaker has a lesser responsibility to that parliament than the Leader of the Official Opposition. Currently the salary would seem to indicate that the Speaker's responsibilities are considerably less than the Leader of the Official Opposition. I find that difficult to accept. I think likewise of the position of Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees. These are parliamentary functions. The leaders of minority parties -- I have some difficulty in having an outside commission given so much latitude that the resultant salaries can indicate what would appear, by the salary, to be a very minor position in the function of the parliament. That's why I'm talking about principles. I would like to see them incorporated in the new Legislative Assembly Act.

MR. BLAIN: Mr. Chairman, may I carry my remarks one step further and say that the committee does not under any circumstances make parliamentary decisions. The committee makes a report, and the legislation which makes the decisions is built on the committee report.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I have empathy with the comments put forward by the Member for Edson with respect to these allowances. I believe we are now talking about the allowances for the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees, and the Deputy Chairman of Committees, all of whom are officers of the Legislature. I think it's important that this committee, the Members' Services Committee, have in place a recommendation that can be put forward to the committee on privileges, which is meeting at this time, looking at proposed changes to the Legislative Assembly Act. I believe it's important because the three officers that we're talking about serve the Legislative Assembly *per se*.

In that regard, I'd like to make three recommendations for the benefit of all members of this committee. I would like to make those recommendations by way of a motion. I move that the allowance for the Speaker become that which is equal to that provided to a minister with portfolio, that the allowance for the Deputy Speaker become equal to 50 per cent of that provided to a minister with portfolio, and that the allowance for the Deputy Chairman of Committees become equal to 25 per cent of that which is provided to a minister with portfolio. I would further recommend that those stipends become effective in the current fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, I might just add that these allowances have to be based on some type of principle which is very easily identified, rather than prescribed as a dollar figure. There are changes that are provided on an annual basis to an individual who does serve as a minister with portfolio. As I understand the rules, the annual stipend which is provided to a minister with portfolio may increase from year to year but also may decrease year to year, depending on the economic situation and the inflation figure that is used as a criterion for allocating stipends for all members.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any comments or discussion?

MR. BLAIN: I would like to make only one comment. I don't think there's any question of a minister's salary decreasing. It may not increase in the remote event that the inflationary increase in that particular year is not 5 per cent. At the present time, the salary for ministers is established by the present Legislative Assembly Act.

The other comment I would like to make -- I didn't catch every word of Mr. Kowalski's motion, but I suggest to you that the motion can only recommend these salaries.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That was understood.

MR. KOWALSKI: That was very clear, Mr. Chairman. In essence, my previous remarks indicated that I thought it was a responsibility of the Members' Services Committee to make the recommendation.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: The motion would read that "this committee recommends . . .". Is there any other discussion on that?

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, my memory of Judge Miller's decision is that the maximum increase be 5 per cent if the increase in CPI was 5 per cent or more. But I think there was also a rider that if the cost of living went down by more than 5 per cent, the indemnities and salaries he suggested would also go

down by 5 per cent. There would not be an increase if the cost of living increase were less than 5 per cent, but I think there's a rider in there that if the cost of living goes down by more than 5 per cent, there will be a decrease of 5 per cent.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the committee, members may wish to refer to the background document which is labelled 4-4, under tab 4, and section 58(2) in the present Act covers that.

MR. KOWALSKI: And that Act, Mr. Stefaniuk, provides for a decrease as well as an increase.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak in support of the motion, primarily from one of the concepts we've tried to put forth this year; that is, establishing a principle and then following through on it. I'll call for the question.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I have just one comment I'd like to put out. If we go to section 4, the blue page, the minister without portfolio and Leader of the Official Opposition salaries are stated there. Would you wish to group the Speaker in with those other two? That's one comment, and the other one is that if you're making these percentages, would you put them down as percentage of a minister without portfolio or a percentage of the Speaker's salary?

MR. STEFANIUK: I think it's minister with portfolio.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Would you put that in those criteria as based on the minister with portfolio, as the Speaker would be, or as the Speaker? Those functions are interrelated.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I understood the member's motion to relate it directly to cabinet ministers' salaries. For clarity, if we're establishing principle, that's the way it should be maintained. I'm not sure that in the Act, the Leader of the Official Opposition is defined as the same as a cabinet minister with portfolio. I think they give him the salary, but that is a clarification that should be made.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's shown as a separate item.

MRS. CRIPPS: I think the blue paper is lumping it.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's just a summary for reference purposes. That is not an extract from the Act. Extracts from the Act are reproduced on white paper in your support document.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, in order to establish the principle, I would rather see it remain as a comparison with a minister with portfolio.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, for clarification on the page labelled 4-2, at the very top, section 53(4):

There shall be paid to the member of the Legislative Assembly who is the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition . . . a salary at the rate of . . .

So that is defined as an exact dollar value, which in fact corresponds to the amount paid to ministers with portfolio. Similarly you will note, in the

preceding subsections (1), (2), and (3), there is a dollar value defined in favor of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? All in favor of Ken's motion that the recommendation should be as he worded it? Opposed? It's carried.

I might mention that this would take us back -- prior to 1975, the Speaker got \$3,200 a year and the Deputy got \$1,600; it was 50 per cent in those days.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, in the event that members of the committee are not familiar with this document, may I make them aware of it. It's probably a worth-while reference, in the event that anyone would like to avail themselves of the information. It was compiled by our colleagues in the province of Ontario, who conducted the survey. There is a section in it dealing exclusively with indemnities, salaries, allowances, and benefits. For the purposes of considering any recommendation here, comparisons can be made to precedents which may have been established in other jurisdictions throughout the country.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, is it necessary for a recommendation to come from this committee that the salary of the Leader of the Official Opposition be the same as a cabinet minister with portfolio, in keeping with the motion that Ken made, which sets the other salaries as a comparison with that figure rather than the dollar figure?

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Instead of having it as a separate item in the Legislative Assembly Act.

MRS. CRIPPS: At the present time it's set at \$32,000 a year, which is a dollar figure. If we're keeping these things equivalent -- and I understood from the blue paper that . . .

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: What is the minister without portfolio's salary?

MR. STEFANIUK: The minister without portfolio is set out on 4-4, Mr. Chairman, and the salaries of Executive Council.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: In 57(1)(b), the minister with portfolio is also set at \$32,000 a year.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, what we are doing here is relating existing officers to a minister with portfolio, or we could have done it to a minister without portfolio. But those salaries themselves are properly an area for the commission to look at, rather than this committee.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's not what my question was. My question is: is it necessary to change the Act when we make that change to relate these positions to a cabinet minister with portfolio, to make the same kind of recommendation regarding the Leader of the Official Opposition so that we get away from the dollar figure there?

DR. REID: I was essentially saying that at the beginning. The other one I mentioned was the leader of a minority party. I think that's defined as a party that gains 5 per cent of the vote at a general election and elects at least four members to the Assembly. Again, that is just a rounded out dollar amount of \$5,000. If we're going to make a motion regarding the Leader of the Official Opposition, perhaps we could tie the salary of the leader of a

minority party, by that definition, to 25 per cent, say, of the salary of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Actually the implementing of these things in statute, the drafting of where they go and whatnot, would be done by the committee working on the Act. The recommendation from this committee is what we think they should be, and then they have to fit them in, in the proper manner. Is that not correct?

DR. REID: I think the Member for Drayton Valley is making a motion that we tie the salary of the Leader of the Official Opposition to the salary of a minister with portfolio. Perhaps she could tag on the other, which is the minority party situation.

MR. STEFANIUK: The present situation with respect to minority parties is defined in section 60, on page 4-5.

DR. REID: I believe there is a fixed dollar amount.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's a fixed dollar amount of \$5,000, which can be paid contingent on the leader of that party holding at least four seats in the Assembly and having received at least 5 per cent of the popular vote.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to make a motion that the Leader of the Official Opposition's salary position be tied to that of a cabinet minister with portfolio, and that the leader of a minority party as defined in section 60 of the old Act -- that means 5 per cent and four seats -- be 25 per cent of a cabinet minister with portfolio's salary.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any discussion on that? All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That takes care of 4. Is that the feeling of the committee? We can then go to 5, deductions when absent from the session.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, would it be helpful for the committee to know what special salaries are paid in other jurisdictions? I could quickly recite the list.

DR. REID: Did Alan not circulate that list?

MR. HYLAND: I don't know; I circulated a bunch of stuff. Some of my stuff came out of that book.

MR. STEFANIUK: In addition to those salaries which are defined in our statute, in other jurisdictions there are special salaries or allowances paid to the standing committee chairman, opposition House leader, third party House leader, chief government Whip, assistant government Whip, chief opposition Whip, assistant opposition Whip, chief third party Whip, and assistant third party Whip.

DR. REID: Perhaps I should put on the record that in this particular parliament, because of the co-operation of the members, the job of government Whip is so easy that no salary is required.

MRS. CRIPPS: Regardless of whether or not it's required, it's not paid.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Deductions when absent from the session. What's the situation right now? We're in section 56, on 5-1.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think section 56 is quite good for the most part, except there is one thing missing from it which has always caused me concern. From time to time, all Members of the Legislative Assembly have to be away from the Legislative Assembly during a sitting, to attend a function or a duty that relates directly to that member's role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. What 56 really looks at is absence as a result of an illness or attendance as a government member or a member of an opposition party at -- and then it lists several specifics -- and at "a meeting or event as a representative of the Assembly, the Speaker, the Crown or the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association." But section 56 does not seem to permit absence from the Legislative Assembly to deal with a function directly related to that man's or woman's responsibility as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

It would seem to me that we could improve the wording and intent of section 56 so as to contain a provision that would permit absence from the Legislative Assembly by a member who is involved in a duty related to his role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. I don't have the exact wording in mind. Perhaps I could just throw out that concept, and my colleagues on this committee might react to the concept I'm proposing.

I strongly believe we have to have some additional allowance there for a member to be absent from the House when he is in fact involved in business that directly relates to his responsibilities as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. STEFANIUK: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express, on behalf of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, some concern with this section of the Act, a concern that he has expressed to me and to others in the course of dealing with the application of this particular section. His first concern is for the fact that there is a provision in the *Standing Orders* of the Assembly which requires that every member be in the service of the Assembly unless excused by Mr. Speaker. It would seem, then, that we have coverage of this particular concern, or subject, in two places: in the Act and in the *Standing Orders*. Mr. Speaker is of the opinion that this particular question of absenteeism should be covered by *Standing Orders* rather than by legislation.

Notwithstanding that opinion, there is an additional concern for a problem which we have encountered already in one or two instances this year; that is, any provision lacking for bereavement leave. From an administrator's point of view, quite frankly it's somewhat unpleasant, very difficult indeed, when an hon. member has taken time away from the House because of a bereavement in the family, to have to approach him and finally say, we're going to charge you at the rate of \$100 a day because someone in your family died.

Perhaps those two questions could be addressed in the course of this discussion.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I've had some discussions with the Speaker of the Assembly as well. In my position as government Whip, I have had to pass on to him absences of various types by members of the government caucus. I back up what Mr. Stefaniuk just said. He's in a very difficult position because there is an apparent conflict between the Act and the *Standing Orders*. There is a further difficulty, however. The allowances and the penalties are not in *Standing Orders*, and it's very difficult to put them in since, by their very nature, they are statutory. What we really need is something in the statute

which will set the penalty for unexcused absences exceeding five days. We're looking at things like vacations, ski trips, and things like that.

We really need two provisions. We need the power for the Speaker to excuse, but we need some guidelines within the Act. We need in the Act the amount of the penalty if the absences exceed that limit. I think that's what the situation really comes down to. This is the difficulty the Speaker is having, and the bereavement one is the most ridiculous that we have at the moment. It doesn't matter how close the relationship is, there is no provision. Because of the statute, the Speaker cannot excuse for bereavement.

There is some wording -- I don't know if the Clerk has it -- that they use in the House of Commons in Ottawa. As has already been pointed out, we're not writing the legislation; we're making recommendations or giving advice to the committee on privileges and elections. I think it's up to the draftsmen of the legislation to put it into legalese, as long as we can get across to the committee on privileges and elections the concept that is intended by remarks such as those of the Member for Barrhead.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, we have an additional difficulty with the Auditor General in respect of this subject. On one hand, we do have the provision in *Standing Orders* which enables the Speaker to excuse a member from attendance at the Assembly. In light of the provision in the Act, the Auditor General is saying, show me what his excuse was. My position with the Auditor General has been: that's none of your business; if the Speaker is satisfied, then he is excused. The reason for the absence may well be confidential to the extent that you should not be aware of it. Notwithstanding that, he has elected to make a statement in his last management letter to me, to the effect that he is dissatisfied.

DR. REID: We'd better fix it.

MR. STEFANIUK: So I suggest that the section deserves some careful attention.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think we've probably identified the areas of concern here, but how we're going to come up with the solution is the next question.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I think all we around this table need is to be satisfied that there is a problem and that the problem should be corrected in the Legislative Assembly Act so that it will correspond to the Speaker's authority in *Standing Orders*. I think we can leave it to the legislative draftsmen.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: As long as we get something in to cover Ken's concern, when you're on constituency business which is necessary for your duty as MLA for that constituency.

MR. HYLAND: It's just as necessary to attend the death of a mayor of a town.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, following what other members have mentioned, I wonder if there could be an addition to section 56 that would state: when the cause of the absence is illness, bereavement, and then the others.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I attempt to make a perhaps naive suggestion that the authority for excusing the member rest with Mr. Speaker and that the Act simply define the penalty which would be imposed in the event the absence is not excused.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Not approved by the Speaker. How would the Auditor General react to that?

DR. REID: It might not correct the problem.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, in some ways I guess I support what was just said. I think we have to very clearly identify what we want to see included. I think we can make it just as difficult by trying to word it.

I really have some concern. This almost takes me back to school, when it's automatically assumed that everybody is going to take advantage of a situation. If we're really making a law here that is for a minority -- and I assume that it has to be a minority. I gather from the conversation that there have been some problems, so I will certainly listen to that. But if you're really saying that many members try to take advantage of this in some way, then I really have a concern about it. I think it's very difficult to legislate it, so the simpler we can make it -- if we really believe we can leave it to the discretion of the Speaker for his final decision, that certainly suits me. I guess the other problem is also to satisfy the Auditor General.

MR. HYLAND: I think when it comes in is especially one or two days over the five days.

MR. STEFANIUK: The difficulty I have with the Auditor General at the moment is that he is looking at the statutory authority, as the statute very clearly defines the purposes for which a member may be excused.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: So if you had in there "an absence approved by the Speaker", that would be in statute and he should accept it.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right. Mr. Chairman, I'm suggesting that the statute might simply define the penalty which might be imposed if it is deemed necessary to cover the item in the statute, whereas *Standing Orders* would provide the Speaker with the discretionary authority to excuse.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Going back to Ian's comment of a moment ago, could we identify the problem and leave it with the other committee?

DR. REID: That's what I'm wondering, Mr. Chairman. We're not drafting the new legislation, and we don't have the benefit of Mr. Acorn's and Mr. Clegg's wisdom on this. The problem has been elucidated very well by the Clerk of the Assembly. Since we're only going to be making suggestions to the committee on privileges and elections -- they don't have to follow them in any event -- among the suggestions we make, perhaps rather than having a formal motion, we can draw the matter to the attention of the committee on privileges and elections. The way that committee has been working is that they are making notations which are going to the drafting people for incorporation into draft two of the proposed Act. Perhaps we can do it that way, rather than attempting to really define the answer. We've defined the problem; let's throw it to those people.

MR. HYLAND: If you go that way, that answers my comment.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are we agreed to go that route, then?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Shall we go to number six?

MRS. CRIPPS: Before you go to number six, I have a question. Is this the latest draft of the Legislative Assembly Act? We're trying to work toward making recommendations for the committee tonight. When I go back and forth between these two documents . . .

MR. HYLAND: You have the draft Act here. This is the draft, and the other is the original.

MRS. CRIPPS: I know. But they're referring to -- it says here: salary of the Leader of the Opposition, see section 22 of the present Act. It's not; it's 53.

DR. REID: That's the note from the previous paragraph, Shirley. Where it says note, it's following the section. If you look at where it says note after that, it will say, see section so-and-so.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, the notes follow instead of precede.

MR. STEFANIUK: Just to clarify, the portions of the Act which have been reproduced here for reference, have been extracted from the latest office consolidation, which was printed last September.

MRS. CRIPPS: My error is in reading the note in the white paper in front of the section instead of after. Fair enough.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we'll go that route on number five. We can go to six, the *per diem* allowance. This is for attendance at sessions.

MR. STEFANIUK: This is for serving on boards and commissions. The living expenses are defined on page 6-3, if that's the concern of the committee. Section 61, reimbursement for living expenses, and section 62, allowances and disbursements for committee work.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's not the *per diem* for the Legislative Assembly, though, is it?

MR. STEFANIUK: Section 61, page 6-3.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That's temporary residence to attend a session.

MR. HYLAND: I think that should go up to at least \$75. It seems a little ridiculous that MLAs have to stay in certain hotels, and government people come in from your constituency, your own home town, and can stay in a hotel that costs twice as much and not think anything of it.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: On committee or commission work?

MR. HYLAND: No, I'm relating to the *per diem* allowance. On commission work, living expenses are paid according to bills submitted.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: No, but these people coming in.

MR. HYLAND: No, I don't mean just commission; I mean ordinary government employees who may be coming in on a short course or whatever. I think it should be raised to \$75 per day.

Second, just a question. I don't know if it works in or not. Last time, that was set for four years, and a lot of things happened in four years. Is there a way that that can rise according to costs, other than having it in statute?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, I remember that the committee work and the *per diem* allowance were raised by Walter Buck at the first or second meeting we had.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Did he have a suggestion at that time?

MRS. CRIPPS: Yes, his suggestion was that it be increased. I couldn't find my Blues this morning. I thought he had a suggestion, but that's the only one I can't find.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I draw the attention of the committee to the pink sheet under section 6, which contains a recommendation from the Member for Wainwright.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I think we're getting two things mixed up here. My interpretation of Mr. Fischer's comment was to do with the *per diem* allowance for expenses during sittings of the Assembly.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That's what we're talking about.

DR. REID: I think Mr. Stefaniuk was referring more to the taxable allowance for attending sittings of legislative committees between sittings.

MR. STEFANIUK: I had no idea what the agenda item was intended to cover, Mr. Chairman. I simply saw the three or so words defining it, so I took a stab at it. By way of reference, I have provided sections 61 and 62 of the Act, as well as section 12, simply because I was stabbing in the dark when I received the agenda.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: We made it very brief.

MR. STEFANIUK: In any event, if we are dealing with the subsistence allowance -- that is, the daily rate while the House is in session -- the first paragraph of Mr. Fischer's memo refers to that.

DR. REID: That's right. I think actually we're dealing with both items.

MR. HYLAND: But there are about three items under that one.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Nigel has been trying to get in here for some time; maybe we should let him in.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, as one of the rural members who has to live in hotels, apartments, or whatnot, I think this is very timely. I certainly support it and hope it is our recommendation. I only add that the raise from \$50 to \$75 be effective during the current fiscal year.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: So the recommendation is that the *per diem* allowance for subsistence during session goes from \$50 to \$75 a day. Is that it?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm supportive of this motion that has just been put forward. I would throw out one idea that all members of the committee might want to consider. Section 58 of the Legislative Assembly Act makes

provision for adjustment. I guess one of the difficulties is that this \$50 has now been in effect for some four years. Section 58 has this little formula that if there has been an increase in the previous year in the so-called cost of living, then there can be a modest adjustment of 5 per cent. On the other hand, it also says that if there has been a decrease in the cost of living according to statistics published by Statistics Canada, there can also be a decrease of 5 per cent. I wonder if members feel it would be worth while having that formula outlined in 58 attached to this adjustment of the *per diem* thing of \$75. I throw it out as an idea for discussion purposes.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I have another thing that goes with the *per diem*. Perhaps we should look at that at the same time. In response to the Member for Barrhead, the cost of living index itself is made up of many items. I'm quite sure that if one were to look at what has happened to hotel rates over the last five years, there's been a bit of a roller coaster. Perhaps the statute would be better to say that for each fiscal year, the *per diem* allowance for members during sittings of the Assembly be referred to the Standing Committee on Members' Services for review. Certainly hotel rates and meal costs do not necessarily follow the CPI. The CPI may go up or down disproportionately because of something like housing or transportation costs, and certainly not necessarily in tandem with hotel and meal costs. For that reason, I would prefer to see in the new Legislative Assembly Act that the *per diem* be addressed not by the commission or any other group -- because that's on a long-term basis -- but by the Members' Services Committee on an annual basis.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any more discussion on this? Did somebody make a motion on this?

MRS. CRIPPS: Nigel made a motion.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That that recommendation be carried forward to the privileges and elections committee.

MR. PENGELLY: I so move, Mr. Chairman.

DR. REID: For this fiscal year.

MR. PENGELLY: Effective for the current fiscal year.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think all these items would be that way, would they not?

MR. HYLAND: According to the suggestion that I first made when I opened the discussion and what Ian made, do we need another motion to suggest that, or just take that along as a notation?

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Maybe we could deal with the motion, then make a further recommendation regarding the increases. Any other discussion on the motion? All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, discussing the manner the annual increase, decrease, or whatever might come about, is to be handled.

MR. HYLAND: I think the suggestion that Ian has. For back-up material, personnel or somebody keeps pretty close tabs on what the average hotel bill is and what the average meal costs. There's a book that's published about it all the time. So I think that would be pretty easy for Members' Services to access and probably set fairly close to that.

MR. PENGELLY: I just remind members of the committee that within the last four years, it was raised from \$40 to \$50. I don't know how or who did it.

MR. HYLAND: That was done when the Act was changed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I wonder if it's necessary to deal with that item at this time.

MR. HYLAND: If we don't, it will stay in legislation, and it could be there for another four years.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Maybe a year or two down the road there'll be another committee or commission to review indemnities.

MR. HYLAND: It seems to me that the living allowance -- I even wondered before when it was included in the review of the indemnities, because that's something that fluctuates. Look how quickly it moved in the last four years. I think that's something that we should take control of ourselves. Even during the negotiation of wages, indemnities are included in that. They're a figure that's arrived at afterward.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I wonder how this would be implemented into statute.

MR. HYLAND: What if we said, according to the suggestion that Ian had, that the amount be set from time to time, or yearly, by the Members' Services Committee?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, in a way I don't really feel strongly about the item proposed. But in view of our process here today, I certainly move that we make the recommendation to the committee, as we are with these others, and that it would cover the point that it would be reviewed annually by the Members' Services Committee.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Would that be agreeable?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I can get onto the other item that I had about *per diems*. It's quite obvious, even in the four years that I've sat in the Assembly, that the role of a member has been changing, partly of our own volition and partly because of the expectations -- and they're valid expectations -- of our constituents. On many occasions, I have had to come into the city with delegations from the various communities or various groups to meet with ministers between sittings of the Assembly. This item applies in particular to those who have to travel from a distance, but it often applies also when you have a meeting with one delegation with a minister on Tuesday and another meeting with another minister with another delegation on Wednesday. It's absolutely ridiculous to travel all the way back to the constituency overnight. This is an increasingly frequent part of an MLA's duties.

Having thought about this at some length, at this time I want to make a motion to this committee that a recommendation be made to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing that in the review of the Legislative Assembly Act that is currently under way, provision be made for up to 24 *per diem* allowances per year for visits to the capital.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That would be two a month.

DR. REID: I'm not putting it per month.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: It would work out to an average.

DR. REID: That's what I'm trying to steer away from because of the way it works out.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That probably wouldn't cover it all, but it would be a help.

DR. REID: A maximum of 24 *per diem* per year be allowed for necessary visits to the capital in the performance of the duties of an MLA. I have intentionally not defined it too closely and just put in the word "necessary" because the circumstances are so varied that if we make it any more rigid than that, we'll probably be back into the same problem with the Auditor General. I suggest that the *per diem* be paid on the basis of a declaration by the member that on such-and-such a date, the member was in the capital for constituency business.

MR. KOWALSKI: For clarification, this would be outside the sitting period for the Legislative Assembly.

DR. REID: Yes. These are outside the sitting period.

MR. HYLAND: And outside committee days.

DR. REID: This is constituency business, not Legislative Assembly. This is not for attending standing committees of the Legislature or party fund-raising dinners. This is for constituency business. It would be paid on the basis of the same type of declaration as we sign for the *per diem* allowance during the sittings.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Certain costs related to travelling between constituencies, being in Edmonton for certain reasons, and so on, were commented on by the Auditor General. Maybe you'd like to explain what it was, Bo.

MR. STEFANIUK: There's no question that provision is made in the estimates and approval is received from the Assembly for transportation costs provided to members for travel between the constituency and the capital. However, the auditors are a little concerned that there is no statutory provision for those expenses. Rather, it is handled only as an approval of the estimates. I'm talking about transportation, whether it be by surface or by air. As committee members are aware, we have established methods which have been in effect for years for payment of those transportation expenses. But there is a concern that there isn't a statutory provision for payment of them.

In Dr. Reid's recommendation, I note that he deals with the *per diem* expenses; in other words, the expenses which are incurred in the capital for accommodation and meals. I wonder if he would not wish to take this

particular problem into consideration and perhaps that can be referred to the committee on privileges and elections as well, so this might finally be covered to the Auditor's satisfaction.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: He makes a recommendation regarding that, does he not?

DR. REID: But frequently the Auditor General isn't aware of the facts he's dealing with, by the recommendations I've seen. That's quite a statement for a member to make. There are so many different ways that transportation is allowed for. First of all, my recommendation was subsistence in the capital, the same as the subsistence allowance during sittings, to a maximum of 24 a year. On transportation, if it's a committee of the Legislative Assembly we are paid on a mileage basis. For any other purpose, the payment is only for the gasoline costs, and that's a sore point with rural members which will have to be addressed at some length over this summer.

MR. STEFANIUK: But there is not even a statutory provision for the payment of those gasoline costs, and that's the concern that is raised.

DR. REID: I have made a note, and we will make sure there is statutory provision for the payment of transportation costs.

MR. STEFANIUK: For transportation costs incurred when providing that kind of representation for a constituent or, for that matter, for purposes of commuting back and forth between the constituency and the capital when the House is in session.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the Clerk, we obviously have to address the whole matter of transportation costs. I prefer that all we do in the new Legislative Assembly Act is make statutory provisions for the payment of such transportation costs as may be authorized, and leave it at that. The whole issue is up in the air, as we know.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: The recommendation now is that there be provision for 24 *per diem* subsistence allowances during the year, in addition to the sessional period.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the Clerk what this might do to bookkeeping, as one who has spoken, particularly in this time of recession, about having to increase staff. I'm just a little worried about this item. There may be a fair amount of bookkeeping involved with 79 members. Would it make much difference?

MR. STEFANIUK: No. As you know, we requested your approval when the estimates were under consideration for the installation of a stand-alone computer system. We have difficulty keeping up with the accounts now on a manual system. When that facility is in place, I don't anticipate we will have a serious additional workload. We maintain individual accounts now for the purposes of the communications allowance, the presentation allowance, and constituency offices. If it is established, it will just follow that same format.

MRS. EMBURY: Thank you.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we could go on to 7, constituency office allowance.

MR. HYLAND: Did we deal with raising the allowance you get on committees? That's all part of item 6. I'd like to move that that be increased to \$100 a day.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's only standing committees of the Legislature.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Meeting while we're not in session.

DR. REID: It's not just standing committees. There are select committees, like the one on surface rights and the one on worker's compensation; the one on the constitution would be covered as well.

MR. HYLAND: Standing and select standing.

MRS. CRIPPS: That includes all parties of the Legislature.

DR. REID: Any standing committee or any committee appointed by resolution of the Assembly.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Yes, that would be better.

MR. KOWALSKI: That would be under section 62(1).

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Doug, did you have something to say about that?

MR. BLAIN: I was just saying it was any committee of the Legislative Assembly, standing and select.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Meeting while it's not in session. Any committee appointed by the Assembly.

MR. HYLAND: The living allowance part of that is covered by part (b), reasonable disbursements.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, who made this motion?

MR. HYLAND: I did.

MR. KOWALSKI: The intent basically is that section 62 would see that allowance change from \$75 to \$100 a day for committees of the Legislature. Well, I recall the farewell speech given by the former Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Clark, in the Assembly in the fall of 1981. He talked about a number of things, one of which was these allowances for committee work. He spent a considerable amount of time in his discussion. Do I take it, Alan, that basically the intent is that the chairman and members would be treated in exactly the same way? At that time, Mr. Clark indicated that there should be a discrepancy provided for a chairman, as compared to members of a committee.

MRS. CRIPPS: We don't want any discrepancies.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'm wondering if the intent of your motion is that all basically receive the same stipulation.

MR. HYLAND: I was following the old Act, as we have it here. I do note, from spending some time on municipal council, that there was a difference between mayor and councillor, not only in your regular meetings but special meetings, which would be equivalent to this -- there was still a difference in the payment to both. You may well have a point, and I guess there's nothing wrong with changing the motion to include that. I followed in line with this, and it doesn't break it down; that's all.

MR. KOWALSKI: I just wanted to find out the rationale behind your motion. I'm not up tight about it at all.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, having served on a fair number of committees, both standing and select, and having chaired one, the payment of this amount -- and I'm thinking of the constitution committee where, because of the distance from the capital, I had to travel in here to work on the briefing material we had. I also sometimes had an extra day's travelling because there is no air service to Hinton. If you got in on the people's airline, Air Canada, from the east coast, there was no way you were going to drive three hours out Highway 16. I always charged for the additional day where it was needed on that committee. As chairman of the Standing Committee on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, I also put in a *per diem* for the additional days I did preparatory to the meetings of the committee.

I think that perhaps covered the concern the Member for Barrhead has. There is no problem about the chairman of these committees putting in for the extra days of work that are required in order to prepare for the meetings, to get documents prepared, to discuss things on the telephone with members of the committee, or whatever it may be. Perhaps that looks after the member's concern. I never felt that I had been put into such a position on the totem pole that as chairman of the committee, I was worth more than a member of it. But that's just a personal view of the matter.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any other comments?

DR. REID: We're at loggerheads again, Mr. Barrhead.

MRS. EMBURY: Did you suggest how much more?

MR. KOWALSKI: No, I might be accused of being biassed. I leave it to the discretion of my colleagues.

MRS. CRIPPS: Besides that, he knows from the select committee on surface rights . . .

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: In some jurisdictions, in four or five other provinces, the chairman of committees gets paid an annual salary.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's part of indemnities, salaries, allowances, and benefits. Standing committee chairmen in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, and Saskatchewan are paid a salary.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Anyway, we have Alan's motion. Are you all agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think we're covering 8 under 6, are we not?

MR. HYLAND: It's included in 6.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I don't think I'm entirely ready to let drop that matter that the Member for Barrhead raised. I'm wondering if the committee would support making a recommendation to the committee on privileges to consider an additional stipend or salary for chairmen. I'll make that a motion.

DR. REID: Can I speak to the motion by the Member for Calgary North West, Mr. Chairman? It's a completely new item. Perhaps it's one that should be referred to the next commission on indemnities and salaries to review, as a specific that they should address. Perhaps that's a better way than for this committee or the committee on privileges and elections to address it on an *ad hoc* basis. Perhaps it's something that should be put into the items to be addressed by the next commission.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Any other discussion? Sheila has made a motion. If there's no more discussion, I'll take a vote on it. All in favor? Two. Opposed? Three. One abstention. The motion is lost. Anything else?

MRS. CRIPPS: What number are we under?

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think we're under 6-8. We'll go to 7, constituency office allowance. If there is something else you want under 8, we can include it there.

MRS. CRIPPS: In Members' Services we've also said that those three items in that particular area can be allocated, because they're within a vote.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: But that would have to go in a statute.

MRS. CRIPPS: Yes. I'll so move.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That your constituency office allowance, your promotion allowance, and communication allowance be interchangeable, or something to that effect -- however they want to word it in statute.

MRS. CRIPPS: It has also come to our attention by some members that their number of voters is far different from their actual number of postal deliveries. It was suggested that maybe that allocation doesn't cover there.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's communication allowance.

MRS. CRIPPS: I thought communications was one of those three.

MR. STEFANIUK: It is.

DR. REID: They're two separate items, I think, Shirley.

MR. HYLAND: Let's deal with that after we get the other one.

DR. REID: It's the interchangeability that has to be in the statute.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Global funding, that they be grouped.

MRS. CRIPPS: All right.

DR. REID: The other item is to do with the communications allowance specifically, which is the only variable one between the constituencies. Promotion and constituency office allocations are identical.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: You mean how the communications allowance is arrived at?

DR. REID: Yes.

MRS. CRIPPS: All right. I'll just move that the constituency office allowance for funding purposes be global.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Including the promotion and communications allowances.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's right.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder if you should say global, Shirley. You could just say that the restriction . . .

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: They will draft it. Getting back to your other point . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: That that recommendation be made to the privileges and elections committee.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Okay. You had something else.

MRS. CRIPPS: The only variable part of that allowance is based on the number of electors in a constituency for the communications allowance purposes.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: On the latest list.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's right. It has been drawn to our attention by some members that the postal addresses which they must deliver to far exceed, in some cases, the number of listed electors, because we based it -- I'm not exactly sure.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Because you have a lot of people who are not qualified electors.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's right. I suggest that that allowance go to the number of postal addresses.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to support that and give you some rationale for it, particularly for those members who have a large proportion of senior citizens living in their constituencies. I think the formula that is currently in place deals with the number of -- well, there's a formula there. But in terms of taking the total number of voters and then dividing them by two -- as an example, in the town of Barrhead 23 or 24 per cent of the residents of that one town are senior citizens. They are not two individuals living per residence; for the most part there is only one. As a result, it causes me a problem. Perhaps it's only my own, but I think it's viewed by other members as well. Where there are a lot of single people, whether senior

citizens or young people -- perhaps the proposal put forward by the Member for Drayton Valley would assist us in providing that full, complete coverage.

I have a little concern about how it would really work, but I imagine it would be basically going down to the local post office and getting the number of postal boxes in each postal area. That would be the figure that would be used in the calculation of the formula.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Not even boxes. They have general delivery. If you go into a post office and say, how many people do you give mail to?

MR. KOWALSKI: You're right. You have to have general delivery, because we can't get post boxes anymore.

MRS. CRIPPS: If I can add, Mr. Chairman, that isn't only a problem in your constituency, Ken. I understand in some of the urban constituencies, it's even more politic because of the single people living within an urban constituency.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: What we're saying is that dividing by two isn't a true picture of what we have.

MRS. CRIPPS: Not at all.

DR. REID: There are many different factors involved in this. There are the number of singles in apartments, the number of new Albertans who are not voters but are constituents, senior citizens: there are so many variables that probably all of us have different reasons.

MR. HYLAND: I don't think the figure is that hard to get, because you know the communities. You can pull that out of that postal book. Every MLA does it if he does bulk mailing in the rural areas. There are some overlaps, granted. But take me, for example. I have to mail into Medicine Hat rural to get the people around the Hat and some of the areas that go into the Hat. I would have an overlap in Milk River; Bob Bogle and I would overlap. But you still have to mail that to get that portion.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: How would you arrive at this list in a large urban centre, Calgary or Edmonton?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, it works the same way. I've had my brochure drops. We have to go to three postal stations, and it's done by postal code. They call them the walks; they will pull out your walks in your constituency.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Oh, they would.

MRS. EMBURY: It's not as many as it sounds like in the rural -- I thought this was only an urban problem, but I do overlap. One of the walks takes in two streets in another constituency, and they won't split it off. We've tried to get them to. But it's not a substantial number in the city.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: What kind of formula could we suggest, then?

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that even in the urban areas you can get from the post office the number of postal drops, I think is the term they have, for each postal code. It's a matter of getting a postal code map for the urban constituencies. Although there may be some overlap, it wouldn't be considerable and the cost would be miniscule. I think urban members can do

it by the postal codes that are included in their constituency borders. In the rural areas, we can do it by the actual post office locations. Although there may be some small overlaps in some places, like half-way between Westlock and Barrhead -- this is not really a member benefit; this is a constituent benefit, the communication to constituents.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: So what is your recommendation going to be?

DR. REID: That the constituency allowance be based on the number of postal drops in a constituency.

MRS. EMBURY: Postal code.

MRS. CRIPPS: I think Dave King sent us a memo on this.

DR. REID: I don't remember his sending us one.

MR. KOWALSKI: You don't have postal codes in general delivery.

DR. REID: Yes, general delivery does have a postal code. It's the postal code of that post office.

MR. HYLAND: When you get 700 boxes in the post office, they include general delivery in those 700. Or if you ask them how many bulk mailings you need for the post office, it's included.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Right. They have a book with it all in for all the post offices in the provinces.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I know what process the member is looking at. Perhaps there is an element of bureaucracy here that might entail some additional work for somebody in getting these lists. I don't know. Is it the intent of the Member for Drayton Valley that each MLA would provide a list of all these postal codes to the Clerk, I guess once a year, to determine what that communications allowance would be? Or would it be the Clerk and his officials who would be ascertaining all these numbers? Right now we have a very, very clean formula, based on the number of people on the voters' list divided by two. Perhaps we might be able to catch it all if, instead of using divided by two, we use a figure like 1.5 or 1.2. In essence, it's very clean that way. I would not want to see some poor little person having to raise 700 voters' lists and then there could be some debate, as for example between the Member for Athabasca and the Member for Barrhead -- there's a little overlap of 40, 50, or 60 homes along the Pembina River.

MRS. CRIPPS: I'm only reacting to a criticism of the constituency communications allowance that I've heard from other members. It happens in my constituency too, but I know it well enough that I can say to the postmaster, begin at such and such a house and deliver from there on. That takes care of the southeast side of the constituency. The northeast side is far more difficult. But I know that in the urban centres, it does provide a major problem because of the continuously changing voters or constituents in the constituency.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think Ken has a pretty good suggestion. I'd like to hear some more comment about it. How would that affect you, Sheila?

MRS. EMBURY: We've just had another issue raised over here, one I haven't got the answer to. I'd have to go back to my people who did my drops. It's true that if you have a postal code and it's for an apartment of 300 people, that really is a detriment. So basically, that's a question with the postal code, because I have a fast-growing -- it was fast-growing; it's slow-growing now. But there are a lot of apartments in it, so that does make quite a difference to the allowance if you only get the equalization payment for one or two and you have 300 people there.

So for that reason, I think the formula would be better.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: A different divisor.

MRS. EMBURY: Yes. I haven't got the other ridings that have really grown very, very quickly. That's the tough one to balance out: how you make it so it really helps those people. I'm just questioning Ken's formula. That's the tough thing, that we have to take an arbitrary figure, don't we?

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure this matter of the percentage has to be in statute. Perhaps what we should do is that the Clerk or somebody on his staff could check with the postal authorities in the near future, as to how feasible it is for them to give us a list once a year on a given date of the number of postal addresses. Because of the difficulties of the large apartment block which may be one street address, can they give us the number of addresses?

MR. STEFANIUK: They can break them down, Mr. Chairman, or they can identify for us the number of addresses, but within postal codes. So if there is an overlap between two constituencies, we cannot receive a breakdown that's that fine.

DR. REID: So a given postal code might have to be included in two constituencies.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

DR. REID: But that amount is not going to be large on the total.

MR. STEFANIUK: I don't know.

MR. HYLAND: We have it at what? Fifty per cent of the number of electors, divided by two. What if we went to Ken's suggestion and tried that for a year?

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Using what figure?

MR. HYLAND: For example, 1.2.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: 1.5.

MR. HYLAND: But decide on a figure, use it for a year, and ask members to watch it very closely to see if that is close enough in comparison to what the addresses would be. Then if it's close enough, it would make the formula a lot easier to do than to have to find all the addresses. I know I can provide them quickly, because you have to have them when you do your bulk mailings in the rural area. The cities are a little different.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, on that subject, if some members are dealing with bulk mailings now and have dealt with the post offices in their constituencies, they would have ready access perhaps to that type of information. Other members have resorted to other forms of distribution and consequently will not have ready access to the information. For example, there are members who have employed Boy Scouts to handle door-to-door distribution for them, in a given area. If they have a cub or scout pack or Girl Guides or other charitable organizations that they have been able to support through this -- in some instances, I think they may be using still others. In any event, what is probably worthy of note is the observation of the hon. Member for Barrhead, who suggests that as soon as we enter into a scheme whereby the secretariat is going to have to determine boundaries and dealing with the post office, we're into an administrative cost; there is no question about it. That is one we can't put on the computer.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: If you can keep it simple, it's going to be better. Probably we had better resolve this.

MR. STEFANIUK: I think the question of identifying the exact number of addresses was considered when the communications allowance program was brought into effect. It was found that that was becoming so complex and that the information forthcoming from the post office was not as finely broken down as was needed. For that reason, the simpler formula, which is in effect at the moment, was accepted.

MRS. CRIPPS: Are we making a four-year decision here, or do we have the flexibility to change the decision if it doesn't -- is it in the statute?

MR. STEFANIUK: No, although the auditors are saying to us: put it in there, because it's another allowance you're paying without statutory authority.

MRS. CRIPPS: It's part of the Legislative Assembly Act.

DR. REID: It's part of the estimates for the Assembly.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's covered by the Appropriation Act in effect, but they're seeing it perhaps a little differently. In any event, the simpler method for administration would be to use a common divisor for members across the board.

MRS. CRIPPS: What's a good common divisor, Ken? Since I brought it up, I'll make a motion on it.

MR. KOWALSKI: The suggestion I made was 1.5.

MRS. CRIPPS: That gives you 75 per cent?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, it would.

MRS. CRIPPS: I'll move that the communications allowance be arrived at by dividing the total number of electors on the most recent list by 1.5.

MR. HYLAND: Has the budget been put in already, Bo?

MR. STEFANIUK: The budget is ready to go, and that was the question I was going to ask. The figures have all been compiled. Is this a decision that this committee is taking now and wishes put into effect immediately? If that is so, how do you suggest we provide the funding? Do we revise the budget

once again before it goes in? It's presently awaiting the Speaker's signature for transmittal.

MRS. CRIPPS: I thought we left that particular item open when we did the budgetary estimate on it.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: We said that if those were dealt with at a later date, we'd have to go with a special warrant.

MR. STEFANIUK: Or do you want us to go ahead with the budget and look at the warrant?

MRS. CRIPPS: I think it should come in on the budget.

MR. KOWALSKI: First of all, if members of this committee agree to the concept, my preference would be to have it in the budget rather than go with a special warrant. I think we still have some time.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: You've heard the motion by Shirley. Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYLAND: This isn't with the same one, but it may be dealt with and then we can deal with how Shirley's goes in. Is the constituency office allowance tied to a factor that moves up, or is that just set? It has changed once.

MR. STEFANIUK: The constituency office allowance is a prescribed figure which can be altered by the Speaker on the recommendation of this committee.

MR. HYLAND: Okay. When was the last time it was raised?

MR. STEFANIUK: Last year.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: It can be raised on the recommendation of this committee, so I don't think we're dealing with that point right now. The point now is how much difficulty would it be to get it into the budget?

MR. STEFANIUK: We'd have to rework the figures. We'd have to work a subprogram breakdown and the overall summary sheets.

DR. REID: It's just a percentage.

MR. STEFANIUK: We'd have to make provision for the additional dollar figures, alter the subprogram, alter the totals, and recalculate the percentages.

MRS. CRIPPS: But you have the total based on the old figures. It's no problem to change it.

MR. STEFANIUK: We have the formula. We were able to define the number of voters according to the latest lists, and the formula is based on that. So we'd go back to that figure.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Would the committee then agree that it should be a budgetary item?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Okay. What else?

DR. REID: There's one crucial one that I don't know if we've addressed yet. That is an item that was brought to us some time ago by the Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray, which we deferred. It's the matter of the difficulty that exists in three northern constituencies where there is a need for air transportation within the constituency. There doesn't seem to be any provision in statute or anywhere else for this. We're talking about areas where there is no scheduled air line service or where the air line service may be two days a week. To my understanding, the members of the Assembly who represent Lac La Biche-McMurray, Slave Lake, and Peace River are the only ones to whom it applies.

I think this committee should make a recommendation to the committee on privileges and elections that included in the rewrite of the Legislative Assembly Act be specific provision for those three constituencies for the chartering of air service when necessary, at the discretion of the member, within the constituency boundaries for constituency purposes.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I refer members to pages labelled 8-21, 8-22, and 8-23, which include two memos originated by the Member for Lac La Biche-McMurray and a memorandum prepared for me by the director of administration which deals with the Ontario precedent in dealing with northern members' travel allowances. That might assist members in arriving at some conclusion.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, on that question, I know these three people have a particular problem, but I think of a conversation I had with the Member for Edson last week when he had to go to Jasper for the weekend for a constituency matter. There is no air service. I'm just thinking of the conversation. It seems to me the member drove to Jasper, and back the next day, because he had to be here and there. It's an area that has absolutely no air service.

DR. REID: The suggestion I was putting forward, Mr. Chairman, was not for transportation between here and the constituency or the reverse, where there is no air line service. That's a different situation, and I know we discussed earlier that we have to address transportation costs. I'm talking about the peculiarity of these three very large, northern constituencies. There are communities that have no adequate land transportation facilities; in other words, there is no road. There are communities where at times the road is impassable. There are problems of distance or the highway network not being connected. That's why I'm suggesting "within the constituency" and that it be at the discretion of the member when necessary. The situation varies from time to time during the year.

I'll put it as a motion.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: What would the motion be?

DR. REID: That this committee recommend to the committee on privileges and elections that in their rewrite of the Legislative Assembly Act, specific provision be made for the constituencies of Lac La Biche-McMurray, Slave Lake, and Peace River, for the chartering of air services by the member on a discretionary basis, when necessary, within the constituency for constituency purposes.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: This would be to visit isolated communities that are not accessible by road.

DR. REID: I don't want to make it any more specific because we'll be back to the problem with the Auditor General.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. HYLAND: There is a problem, for example, from McMurray to Lac La Biche and back. That's how many hours on the road for a one-hour meeting?

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I don't think Norm was worried about that so much as his isolated communities. However, that came under that excessive travel which was going to be left for discussion by this committee over the summer, I guess. We have this other motion by Ian. Is there any discussion on it? Are you all agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MRS. CRIPPS: We've had enough representations.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Are there any other items?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think there's one other area this committee should discuss so it can make a recommendation to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. It deals with section 47, I believe, of the current Legislative Assembly Act, dealing with MLAs on boards, commissions, agencies, and directorships. A number of our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly have been appointed to serve on these four different groupings, for which service they receive a modest monthly stipend. It's my understanding that that stipend cannot be recognized for pensionable service.

The recommendation I would like to see this committee make to the other committee is basically that the Act provide that if a member receives such a stipend and wishes to participate in the MLA pension plan, he have the opportunity to participate in that plan, providing he makes the necessary contribution to the pension plan.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I agree whole-heartedly with the suggestion made by the Member for Barrhead -- and I have no vested interest -- with one provision; it should be those members who are reimbursed on a monthly basis, where it can be a fixed amount. I'm not sure if any of them are on a daily basis, but that would be so complex to handle.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Blain very validly points out that those salaries are not paid by the Assembly.

MR. KOWALSKI: No they're not.

MR. STEFANIUK: What would have to be opened up or brought about as a consequential amendment is an amendment to the M.L.A. Pension Act. The change could not be effected by an amendment to this Act.

MR. KOWALSKI: Not to the Legislative Assembly Act?

MR. BLAIN: No.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think it should be clarified someplace in the Act, though, that members who serve on these boards, agencies, directorships, and commissions . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Perhaps the draftsman or the legal counsel dealing with the Legislative Assembly Act could advise on that.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: That could be raised at the privileges and elections meeting.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's basically my whole recommendation. That's all I meant.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: We'll just make a note that that's another item to be raised with privileges and elections. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Anything else?

DR. REID: It's unbelievable; we got through the items.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps the Clerk could advise me on one other item. Is there any provision in the Legislative Assembly Act for usage of an automobile by Members of the Legislative Assembly who might serve on these boards, commissions, agencies, or directorships? Is it provided? I'm not sure if there's anything in the Act which prohibits or condones it. I'm not suggesting that automobiles have to be provided. I'm suggesting that now that the Legislative Assembly Act is under review, we ensure there is something of a permissive nature in it. I really want to emphasize that I'm not advocating that members have automobiles; I'm just saying that because the Act is under major review . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: I can't answer that offhand. I think the proposed draft on the re-enactment should be looked at under the disqualification clauses, which I understand were gone into very extensively. Perhaps counsel to the privileges and elections committee could advise whether that is taken care of.

MRS. CRIPPS: I suggest that we refer that to the committee.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. HYLAND: Who is taking it all to the committee?

MRS. CRIPPS: Ian, Sheila, and I are on it.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: I'm on it.

MRS. CRIPPS: So there are four of us.

MR. HYLAND: Is that it?

DR. REID: There's one small item on page 8-16 of the material provided by the Clerk: "Direct air travel is not available from the following constituencies . . .", and they missed the Edson constituency.

MRS. CRIPPS: I reminded the member of that. Drayton Valley either.

DR. REID: Drayton Valley is on the list, but Edson isn't on the list.

MRS. CRIPPS: I don't have the same problem that Ian has. I can probably drive to the far end of the constituency in three hours. It takes Ian a considerable length.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Is there anything else, or do we adjourn?

MR. STEFANIUK: Just before we do, Mr. Chairman, may I remind the members of the contents of the memorandum of transmittal which went out with these binders. Would they kindly remove from the binders those materials they wish to retain and return the binder to the committee secretary, so they may be prepared with the appropriate materials for the next meeting.

DR. REID: Does the Clerk have a deadline for the return?

MR. STEFANIUK: No.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: When you mention that, what about the next meeting? Is it at the call of the Chair again?

DR. REID: I think it will have to be.

MRS. CRIPPS: It will have to be.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Okay. There's no other business?

MRS. CRIPPS: I think that information is more use to us in here than elsewhere.

MR. HYLAND: I move we adjourn.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you all very much.

The committee adjourned at 11:55 a.m.