

[Chairman: Mr. Amerongen]

[8:10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Might I begin by welcoming our guests from New Brunswick. Mr. Speaker Tucker had to catch a plane this morning, and he isn't here. But we have the Hon. John Baxter, Minister of Finance and Housing for New Brunswick, Mr. Alan Graham, Mr. Hazen Myers, and Mr. Bev Harrison, who are all members of the parliament of New Brunswick.

So now, if we could get away from Barrhead and Stony Plain and go to the first item of business, could we deal with the minutes of the meeting of October 26? That's item 2 of your support material.

If there are no other comments, I'd like to make one. There's a little typo in minute 83-331 of those minutes, which changes the meaning. It reads "Mr. Blain asked if the Committee's budget could be dealt last with as it was not yet possible . . ." That looks as if it refers to this committee. What that should be is a lowercase 'c' and an 's' apostrophe, instead of apostrophe 's'. It changes the meaning around totally. If the committee agrees, we'll make that change.

Are there any other comments about the minutes? Is there a motion from Cypress to adopt the minutes? Yes? All agreed — that is, with that slight change? Okay.

Business arising: I think it's pretty well been covered in the agenda items except for one thing, and that's the classification of the Hansard Editor. That was tabled pursuant to a motion at the last meeting, and the question is whether the committee wishes to deal with it now. Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder if we should go ahead, Mr. Chairman. I thought we were going to deal with budgets, because we do have a time constraint with budgets. As I remember, when we set the budget for Hansard — somebody can help me, but I think we set that budget as that rate being adjusted somewhat. So I think it's more important to get the budgets done, at least today. We've got to be through at ten o'clock for Public Accounts. Maybe we should handle the stuff we can get done today and leave that. I know it sounds like procrastination, but leave it for a time when we can . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose we put it over to the end of the meeting, and then decide whether we want to deal with it or put it over to the next meeting. Is that satisfactory?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, concerns of visitors. We have Mr. Mandelbaum here from — incidentally, in that regard, the committee may remember having passed a motion at our October 26 meeting accepting the resignations of Dr. Buck and Mr. Martin from the committee. I believe there was a noticeable reluctance on my part to put that motion. I have since done a little bit of further research — or at least Mr. Blain has — and there's just no question about it: this committee does not have authority to overrule the House. The House set up this committee with a certain membership, and the only way that can be changed is by a resolution of the House. I had not realized, but there is a reference in Erskine May which is very clear on the point. I sent a copy of it to Mr. Purdy; it was his motion. As I mentioned to you previously, the only other precedent we could find was in Ontario.

Anyway, those members are not here, but Mr. Mandelbaum wants to ask a question about the budget for the Official Opposition. So if the committee agrees, perhaps we could hear the question.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I think the question should come up when the budget is

being discussed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we've dealt with it.

MR. PURDY: Right. And, with all due respect, they had the opportunity to be at that meeting at that particular time to ask those questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's still going to come up in the House, and members — including members who don't belong to the committee at all — may want to have information to assist them in dealing with it in the House.

MR. PURDY: I would then submit, Mr. Chairman, that we should allow the question. But I still maintain that as far as I'm concerned, we have a member of that particular party on this committee, and you maintain that he is a member of this committee until such time as a resolution of the Legislature is passed. As far as I'm concerned, that member has the responsibility to attend this meeting in his own person, instead of sending someone else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There could be a question — I'm not suggesting we make an issue of it — of contempt of the House, because an accidental absence from a committee meeting is one thing, but a deliberate boycott of the committee is another.

MR. PURDY: That's why [inaudible] hear the question.

MR. MANDELBAUM: Actually it was just one area I wanted to bring up. The Official Opposition budget is different from the other caucus budgets in one respect. We do have a statutory increase involved in our budget, and that's in Code 900, that is dependent on the rate of inflation. If I understand it correctly, the Leader of the Official Opposition is a cabinet minister equivalent. His rate of pay would go up by an amount defined by statute. Assuming that inflation will be at 5 per cent on January 1, it will be going up by 5 per cent.

So the only item I would bring up and ask the committee to consider is an adjustment of that Code 900 item, to take that into account. Rather than a .96 per cent increase, the item be left open-ended and the amount that is determined by statute — assuming there is the possibility that the rate of inflation will be less than 5 per cent, or that it be fixed at 5 per cent.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, the same thing applies to the item under members' indemnities, that's also included in this total budget. So it's really irrelevant to the discussions we've been having, because there is always an adjustment made for statutory increases, either in the other people's incomes — I forget. Perhaps the Clerk remembers the exact . . .

[Several seconds were not recorded]

If we have to do it to that particular item, we will have to do it to members' indemnities, which are also covered by statute, under the same percentage. If we have to do it to one, we'll have to do it to the other. So it really doesn't change the discussions at the moment.

MR. MANDELBAUM: If I understand correctly then, that item will be covered as would the secretaries' items, for example.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I'm looking at the Official Opposition budget, at the

code relative to payments to MLAs and Executive Council. I see that the budget projection shows an increase of 14.3 per cent.

MR. MANDELBAUM: That was a calculation error.

MR. STEFANIUK: I just wonder what in fact was passed. Was it the total dollar figure which appears at the bottom of the page?

MISS BLANEY: They passed it globally.

MR. MANDELBAUM: The reason they chose 14.3 per cent, I think — if you take a look, the total estimate includes the benefits plus salary, and the \$37,044 is only salaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I understand Mr. Mandelbaum's query, he's not including the increase in salary for the Leader of the Official Opposition. He's referring to the ancillary support payments that are made since the Leader of the Opposition is given equivalent support to that of a cabinet minister. That automatically, by reason of his achieving the status of Leader of the Opposition, results in these ancillary payments, and hence increases the total budget and makes it appear as if the increase were attributable to other items in the budget. Is that right?

MR. MANDELBAUM: Actually I was only interested in the benefits and the salary of the leader. The reason it shows that large an increase is that the base item accidentally included only the salary of the leader, not the salary plus expenses, while the total estimate includes the projected salary plus expenses. But it's only Code 900 that I'm interested in, so that will be benefits plus salary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there anything further to be said or asked on that topic?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it's not specifically with respect to the code item, and it's not specifically with respect to matters arising out of the last meeting, but it does deal with the opposition budget. I'm not sure if this is the appropriate time to raise it or not. I guess I'd have to give you a little more explanation to find out if it would be appropriate to raise it at this time. It's really with the usage of government letterhead and, presumably, staff, paper, and stamps, by the opposition to circulate documents and information on behalf of the NDP. A document was recently circulated, I understand — this came to my attention from a constituent or two of mine who wondered whether or not caucuses should be using Legislative Assembly letterhead to promote political activities. The document that was brought to my attention was issued October 1983. It is on Legislative Assembly of Alberta letterhead. It basically says: the Official Opposition of Alberta invites . . . Yet in one part of the document it says: schedule of NDP task force sittings.

I guess it's a clarification that I would like to raise with you as chairman of this committee. I would like to seek an explanation from the Leader of the Opposition or have the opposition's representative on this committee explain to me if in fact the document in question was paid for by the NDP and they simply used a letterhead from the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and then did the duplicating, typing, circulation, and mailing through the NDP budget, which is of course totally different from the budget of the Leader of the Opposition or the NDP caucus.

At this point in time, until I get that explanation, I'm not going to suggest for a moment that there is perhaps any wrongdoing in what has happened. I wonder, sir, if I might just provide you with a copy of this document. Then you might take it up with the Leader of the Opposition and ask for an explanation before we have a further discussion on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There have been instances when it has appeared — and I think it has usually been inadvertent — that stationery, and possibly postage as well, provided at public expense have referred to party purposes. My suggestion would be that the matter might be referred to the Clerk for inquiry and report back to the committee, either by means of memo or at the next meeting.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps that would be the appropriate response.

MR. MANDELBAUM: I can give an initial . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: I would like the response to come from the Leader of the Opposition or the opposition's representative on the Members' Services Committee, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mandelbaum says that he can give a preliminary explanation.

MR. KOWALSKI: I would prefer to receive it from a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's the wish of the committee? Do you want to hear Mr. Mandelbaum's preliminary explanation? Is there any objection, apart from Mr. Kowalski?

DR. REID: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, your suggestion is the better one, that the Clerk, in his capacity of being responsible for the budgets . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It seems to me, though, that . . .

DR. REID: It may well be inadvertent, and I'm sure those things happen. But seeing as it has been brought up in the committee, in a more or less formal manner . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I respectfully suggest to the committee that it would perhaps assist the Clerk in his inquiries if he could hear Mr. Mandelbaum's preliminary explanation.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I concur with Ken Kowalski.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I thought that was why the committee was set up with members from various caucuses, so if things like this come forward, those members would be prepared to respond.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I gather there's a consensus that we not deal with it further until the Clerk has made his inquiry. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we now go to the remainder of the estimates for 1984-85? I believe you all have your estimate books.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, which one are we starting with?

MR. CHAIRMAN: General administration, is my understanding. Is there anyone who has a different understanding of it?

MR. HYLAND: This time we're starting at the front of the book.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members may recall that we decided to leave that one and that we deal with other items. I think our guests from New Brunswick have the particulars under general administration, in case they wish to follow. Are you with me?

First we have the overview. Any comments on that?

MRS. CRIPPS: What accounts for the 9.6 per cent increase on page 2?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I could ask Mr. Stefaniuk to deal with that.

MRS. CRIPPS: The overall increase is 9.6, which . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the increase is attributed to the settlement with public service employees during this past year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that all right?

MRS. CRIPPS: Yes, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 100, salaries, permanent positions. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 120, wages.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 130, payments to contract employees.

MR. PURDY: A question on that, Mr. Chairman. Are the security people paid on a year-round contractual basis or just when the Legislative Assembly is sitting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The ones we use in the Chamber?

MR. PURDY: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe the Clerk could explain that.

MR. STEFANIUK: They're provided, on a contract basis, with a guaranteed earning at the present time of \$10,000, in return for which they must be available, on call, on a year-round basis for all sittings of the Assembly and all committees of the Assembly, as required.

MR. PURDY: Supplementary to the Clerk. What is a systems manager?

MR. STEFANIUK: That is the position we had approval for in the present budget, and it is someone who will co-ordinate all the computer installations throughout the Legislative Assembly.

MR. PURDY: You mean within the Legislative Assembly offices and the ministers' offices?

MR. STEFANIUK: Not the ministers' offices but certainly within organizations such as the Speaker's office, the Clerk's office, the Library, the Library research branch, and the caucus offices, to the extent that we can effect a uniformity of systems and

interchangeability of information among systems.

MR. PURDY: If we buy the same mode of computer, wouldn't the computer company do that for us?

MR. STEFANIUK: Unfortunately, we don't have that situation at the present time, Mr. Chairman. The caucuses have elected to buy or acquire equipment which they have preferred, and the equipment which is being used in the offices here in the building within the Clerk's office, the Speaker's office, and the Library research branch is different. We also now have a further complexity added to that problem, in that certain members have acquired computers out of their communications allowances. We anticipate that in the very near future, those members and caucuses that have equipment will want to communicate with a central data bank in order to retrieve information which is presently contained in that data bank.

MR. PURDY: Thank you.

DR. REID: I was not quite quick enough on wages, on page 2. The 9.6 per cent seems kind of high for just the settlement in the public-service sector last year. Is there any additional part of a person in there? I think that covers the wages of part-time people, doesn't it?

MR. STEFANIUK: Referring back to page 2 of the working papers, Mr. Chairman, there is a note at the bottom of the page: sharing of employee, one half man-year between government members' office and ourselves to provide messenger service between the Annex and the Legislature Building.

DR. REID: So that's part of that trade-off: the half person on the messenger for the half person on the secretarial.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes it is. The person is being shared by the government members' caucus and general administration and the Clerk's office.

DR. REID: If I remember correctly, there were two splits. The messenger was split, and Barbara was split in the other direction.

MISS BLANEY: Yes, with the government members' caucus and the Speaker's office.

DR. REID: We're picking up half of Barbara — oh, so that's in the Speaker's office. That's fine. I was just chasing the halves around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we go back to Code 130. Are there any other questions? Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 140, employer contributions. I think we usually agree that that's pretty well automatic and inescapable, because it's calculated on other approved items. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 150, allowances and supplementary benefits. As far as I know, that's also locked in. I can deal with all the groups in total when we . . .

Code 200, travel expenses. That's page 6 of the support material.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I request that we hold decision-making at this time with respect to Code 200. You'll recall that at the last meeting I indicated that I was undertaking some research and study into this whole question of expenses. I wish I had been able to arrive here this morning with the conclusion of the research I'm undertaking; unfortunately, I have not been able to arrive at that point. So I would ask, with respect and the support of my colleagues, that we defer decision-making on Code 200 until perhaps the next meeting, which I anticipate would be within the next several weeks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. REID: It depends on the gestation period of this animal. Is it going to be related to the mouse or the elephant?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps that depends on the size of the report.

MR. KOWALSKI: The report will be very short, brief, and to the point, and will be more along the lines of a mouse than an elephant.

DR. REID: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So Code 200 is held until the next meeting. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And when we approve overall, it will be understood that that is an exception. Code 260, advertising.

I've been remiss in something. As you know, we have guests here from New Brunswick. With the approval of the members, might I suggest that if there are any questions any of our guests would like to ask about some of these items, I'm sure we'd be glad to deal with these inquiries. They may lead to questions about what goes on in New Brunswick, but I guess that's fair enough. Are there any queries so far? I realize that this is a bit unfair, because different estimates are set up in different ways, and this may appear a little strange.

MR. BAXTER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm certainly envious of the way in which you — at the bottom of each page, I notice the increase and decrease, and you certainly run a tight ship here. The highest increase I've seen is 9.6 per cent. Dr. Reid drew attention to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was one we couldn't avoid.

DR. REID: I think there was a corresponding decrease somewhere else. It was just that we had two people who were essentially doing similar functions. What happened was that the secretary to the Deputy Speaker, which is under the Speaker's budget, really did not have enough to do in that particular narrow function, so half of her salary has been moved over to the government members' budget. She now covers both the Deputy Speaker and myself.

On the other side of the coin, we have the Legislature Annex across here, and we need a runner to go back and forth. It seemed ridiculous to have somebody doing this on behalf of the Legislature and somebody doing it on behalf of the government members,

because the members who were over there are all government members. Perhaps that clarifies what was done there. We split these two people. and one salary went . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: So general administration had to take half of those costs, and that resulted in a slight increase, although the total cost to the taxpayer won't be any different.

MRS. CRIPPS: But our aim certainly isn't for a 9.6 per cent increase in any global area; it's for a decrease or hold the line.

MR. BAXTER: That's the way it appears here. You seem to be doing a great job at that.

MR. STEFANIUK: What we're showing, in general administration at least, which our guests may want to note, is an overall decrease of 2.3 per cent as our budget forecast. That's shown on the white sheets which precede the detailed working papers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course our guests weren't here at our last meeting, but it might be interesting to recall that the increases — we have three caucuses: the government caucus, the Official Opposition, and the Independents — were held to a uniform .96 per cent.

MR. BAXTER: Terrific.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions or comments from our guests? They're very welcome.

MR. PURDY: There's a conversation going on here over our credit cards, Mr. Chairman. Maybe I could just explain that the gasoline credit cards were set up in 1977, I believe. They cover oil changes, gasoline, antifreeze, and windshield fluid.

DR. REID Automatic transmission fluid and other miscellaneous liquids.

MR. PURDY: I meant all oils.

MR. GRAHAM: You each have a government car. Is that why?

MR. PURDY: Oh, no.

MR. GRAHAM: That's what I was wondering. Do you submit mileage besides that?

MR. PURDY: No.

MR. GRAHAM: You don't get anything for the use of your car?

MR. PURDY: It's our own automobile, but we do get that.

DR. REID: That's exactly what Mr. Kowalski is working on.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mileage, not costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other queries? Can we go on then? We've just postponed item 200, pending Mr. Kowalski's report, and we're at item 260, advertising. Are there any comments or queries about that item. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 270, insurance.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 290, freight and postage — a pretty substantial item.

DR. REID: Mr. Speaker, is it really true that we can stay with no increase in that particular item? It surprises me somewhat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I could ask the Clerk or Miss Blaney.

MR. STEFANIUK: The calculations are clearly shown with a notation for the members' communication allowance based on the latest voters' list. At the present time, we do not have any indication of a further postal increase. Therefore we're not in a position to provide for any increase at all there.

DR. REID: Do you really believe the Canada Post Corporation?

MR. STEFANIUK: I don't believe them for one minute. I don't believe that my mail is going to be delivered either, but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was Code 290. We're now at 350, rental of property, equipment, and goods.

MR. KOWALSKI: This is not a question in terms of documentation with regard to the cost but simply to say to my colleagues — are these machines that apply to constituency offices, Charlene, or is that another section?

MR. STEFANIUK: No. These are machines that are located here.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 400, telephone and communications.

MRS. CRIPPS: Maybe the Clerk could give us some information on the effect the change to direct dialing has had on telephone costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So far.

MRS. CRIPPS: If he has any information on it.

MR. STEFANIUK: All I can tell the committee at the moment, Mr. Chairman, is that the results are minimal, because the number of residential installations has been minimal. In other words, not too many members have requested the extra residential installation with a view to avoiding the use of the credit card to a large extent. So the saving has been minimal thus far.

MRS. CRIPPS: Could you possibly undertake to do a comparison of a couple of members?

MR. STEFANIUK: We can over the period it has been in effect, perhaps in comparison to a previous year.

MRS. CRIPPS: It might be interesting and useful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So your request, Mrs. Cripps, is that the Clerk make a comparison in regard to members who have in fact had the telephones put in.

MRS. CRIPPS: Or are making use of the telephones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Comparing the present cost with the cost as it was. There may be a problem, because the period may be too short to do some significant averaging. There could be ups and downs in the use from one month to another.

MR. STEFANIUK: I thought it might be worth while, for the information of our guests, to note what we're talking about at this time. Each of the members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly has been provided with a long-distance credit card to enable him or her to effect long-distance calls without the need to reach into his pocket and provide the correct change. We find that the use of a credit card in fact results in the highest form of charges for tolls. With a view to reducing those long-distance charges, this committee approved the installation of a separate telephone line in every members' home so that he could use that telephone to direct dial long-distance calls from his home, and the tolls would be covered directly by the Legislative Assembly office. In that way, we hoped to effect some savings. But as I explained a minute ago, we have not had a significant number of members who have requested the special home installation. To a large extent, they continue to use the toll card.

DR. REID: I'll remind the government caucus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I apologize; I should have recognized Mr. Hyland a while ago.

MR. HYLAND: On that point, we'll also have to grab the numbers off here, because we're using the long-distance charges off here too. We'll have to take it off the home numbers too to give a comparison [inaudible] home numbers are are going to do the trick.

On Code 400, mobile phones, I didn't realize members had that many mobile phones around, with \$4,800 worth of mobile calls charges. I thought that should show up on credit card costs, and the rest would come out of communications allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Miss Blaney.

MISS BLANEY: The rental for the mobile telephones comes from that individual member's communication allowance, but we treat the tolls as if they had been placed on a credit card. When the telephone company bills us, they bill us on the same billing we receive for the rent. It's not charged to your credit card. You simply use your mobile number to charge it to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you say the rental comes out of the member's communication allowance, and the tolls for the long distance calls made from the mobile telephones come out of this Code 400.

MISS BLANEY: That's right.

MR. HYLAND: How many mobile phones have we got?

MISS BLANEY: I believe we have eight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You had a second point, Mr. Hyland.

MR. HYLAND: That was the second point. I just wondered where it came from. I didn't realize there were that many mobile phones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments? Mrs. Embury.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to inquire about the equipment for our constituency offices. I assume that the figure \$32,588 is merely a charge for all the present equipment we have in our offices. That's sort of a yearly charge and is standard.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's the hardware. That's your monthly rentals, if you like, for the telephone equipment that is in those offices.

MRS. EMBURY: The telephone? Oh, that's only telephone. I'm sorry. Would you run that by me again?

MR. STEFANIUK: That is the amount of annual rental for the telephone equipment that is in your constituency offices, exclusive of any toll charges. In other words, to place telephone equipment and to a large extent standardizing it throughout the province, our annual charge is \$32,588.

MR. BAXTER: Mr. Chairman, I think all members across the land are interested in the telephone system, and what perks are available. We also use that cumbersome card system, that I dislike and I know others do. I know some of the ministers in New Brunswick now use the government phone line system in their own homes for government purposes, rather than go through all that. They do that in Fredericton. I think that's an interesting twist, that you should be looking at the installation of a government phone line to the member's house or constituency office, or whatever it is you have in mind.

The first thing I'd like to know is if there is a special government prefix number. Is it the same you would find in any Alberta residence?

MR. STEFANIUK: No. The telephone numbers follow the numbering system that prevails in a given community, and it isn't a government telephone as such. It is a private line telephone which, at the member's request, is placed in his home for the purpose of that member being able to effect long distance calls on a direct-dial basis. What it also does for the member is eliminate undue use of his personal telephone, which of course is used by other members of his family if he has a family, in tying up that phone on official business. So he has the benefit of what we refer to as an MLA number for the purpose of doing his local business as well as effecting any of his long distance calls.

We in fact receive billings in the Clerk's office for that telephone, and we pay the telephone company directly. That eliminates placement of any payments into the MLA's hands and the possibility of construing those payments as a benefit to the MLA.

MR. BAXTER: I see.

MRS. CRIPPS: I might just add that in rural Alberta, most of our phones are party lines. I think one of the major reasons many MLAs had an extra phone put in was the necessity of having a private line.

MR. BAXTER: I see. Does the government of Alberta have a special prefix?

MR. STEFANIUK: The government of Alberta has something called the RITE system, which is a network which goes throughout the province and enables any citizen to call a government office or agency toll free.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is the 427 prefix. That's here in Edmonton.

MR. BAXTER: In Edmonton only, not in the province?

MR. STEFANIUK: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think Mrs. Embury wanted to add to that, followed by Mr. Harrison.

MRS. EMBURY: I just have another question, Mr. Chairman. Why is there a toll charge under our constituency offices?

MR. STEFANIUK: Because the direct distance calls are being effected from constituency offices. In fact we have encouraged the use of direct dialing from constituency offices as opposed to credit card use, because there again we realize a cost saving.

DR. REID: Of almost 50 per cent.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MRS. EMBURY: I guess I'm just curious, though. It doesn't show up under the MLA's credit card.

MR. STEFANIUK: No, because it's not under the credit card.

MRS. EMBURY: What direction is given to those MLAs, though, to be sure their call was either made by the MLA or for the purpose of government business?

MR. STEFANIUK: The accounts which come in that list all the toll calls are spot checked and returned to the MLA for certification.

MRS. EMBURY: They can do that?

MR. STEFANIUK: Every account for every one of those numbers lists all the long distance calls, and we will, on a spot check basis, send the accounts back to the MLA and ask the MLA to certify that all those calls are legitimate business calls originating from his or her constituency office.

MRS. EMBURY: Thank you.

MR. HARRISON: Are all MLAs required to have this phone now as opposed to the credit card, or are you just encouraging that?

MR. STEFANIUK: We're encouraging it, because on the individual tolls we realize a 50 per cent cost saving after the capital expenditure. The cost for a credit card call to some destinations may be \$2 for the first three minutes, whereas a direct dial call will cost \$1. So we're encouraging the use of direct dial and, if the member so wishes, the installation of a private line phone dedicated to him as an MLA.

MR. HARRISON: I'm wondering what use it ends up being. For example, in my case a phone in the home would not be nearly as valuable as the credit card because of making calls from my place of employment or from communities within the riding.

MR. STEFANIUK: We still provide the credit card.

MR. HARRISON: I see. Everybody will have one anyway.

MR. STEFANIUK: So if the MLA is on the road and has to make a call from his friend's home, a telephone booth, or wherever, he can still use his credit card. He's not impaired in any way in communicating with whomever he needs to communicate with.

MR. GRAHAM: Just perhaps to share what is done in New Brunswick — I believe that here the Clerk's office pays the credit cards direct.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. GRAHAM: In New Brunswick each MLA is issued a credit card. A bill comes to their home, they pay it, and then they submit it. They're then certifying that they are all MLA calls. I do have a separate line on which I submit the — I don't put very much on credit cards unless it's from a telephone booth, from a hotel, or somewhere where you're outside. But in New Brunswick we pay our own bills and then submit them, certifying the sheets you get from the telephone company. That way, we certify our own every month.

MR. STEFANIUK: We feel there's a slight danger there in that for taxation purposes, the Department of National Revenue can possibly interpret that payment to the MLA as a benefit and cause it to be taxable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had that situation about 10 years ago, and it's never been properly resolved. Certain members, very legitimately and properly, received reimbursement of expenses they had incurred in connection with their work. The position taken by fisc was that they were getting a tax-free allowance for unspecified expenses anyway, and that should have covered all of them. Consequently anything over and above that was taxable.

So we religiously and scrupulously avoid making any payment of any kind to members, particularly where it's possible to have the billing done directly to the Legislative Assembly.

MR. GRAHAM: I see. Ours is just the opposite. We have to submit all our bills and all the money comes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We wouldn't do that because of our experience. We had members who, on reassessment on that basis, had to pay several thousand dollars in income tax.

MR. PURDY: That's still before the courts, too, isn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. It's never been resolved. I don't know just . . .

MR. PURDY: Every once in a while I divvy out \$100 to some lawyer, and I don't get any satisfaction out of it.

DR. REID: It's less than the interest on the thousands.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Some archeologist may find out what happened to that.

MR. PURDY: I'll leave it in my will.

MR. CHAIRMAN: May we go on, then? Are we content with telephone and communications?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next code item is 410: repair and maintenance of machinery and equipment.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, not to be facetious or anything, but I thought the Clerk kept better care of his car than a \$500 bill a year for repairs.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, that is a contingency. It covers the tune-ups and tires, and I don't think necessarily gets into repairs outside of the headlights that are broken on Highway 16 west.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's referring to tune-ups for the car, not for the Clerk.

MR. PURDY: I thought the Clerk got a new car every year, and everything would be under warranties.

MR. STEFANIUK: Every year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 410.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we're at Code 430: professional, technical, and labor services. The hon. Mr. Baxter has a quizzical look in his eye. Perhaps someone could explain what that heading covers.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's all listed, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Working paper 17.

DR. REID: Shall I take a run at it? In 1979 we had a commission, headed by a judge, to look at members' indemnities, allowances, expenses, and everything else. Some of us think that the hon. judge made a mistake, in that when he came down with his recommendations, he recommended an increase in the taxable indemnity which was roughly proportionate to the increase in time he felt MLAs were spending on the job. Off the top of my head, I think he said that prior to that, approximately one-third of a year had been required for the sittings and work in between the sittings, and that due to the committee work, the expanded budget, the heritage fund responsibilities, and other things, I think he then said it was roughly equivalent to a seven month a year occupation, and made approximately that percentage increase in the taxable allowance. He made very little, if any, allowance for inflation in that award.

He then recommended the setting up of constituency offices. Each member was allowed to have an office in the constituency, and for some of us that's a considerable distance away from Edmonton. The allowance he set for that was \$5,000 for rent and \$5,000 for staffing, which has since been increased to approximately \$15,000.

MR. BAXTER: Total.

DR. REID: Yes, that means total. It's now global, because we found that in some areas of the province rents were high and in some areas the salaries were high. Rather than have it cast in stone at \$5,000 and \$5,000, it was made a global budget of \$10,000, and then that was changed over the years.

Because of that award, incidentally, he also made no increase in the non-taxable allowance. He had some peculiar idea in his head that he was aiding our costs by the provision of the constituency office. None of us comprehends that piece of reasoning.

MR. BAXTER: That must have changed your percentage of the members' expense allowances?

DR. REID: Considerably.

MR. BAXTER: So where are you now in percentage terms?

DR. REID: We're down about \$5,000.

MR. BAXTER: I understand the maximum allowable is 50 per cent.

DR. REID: We are running currently — do you know, Charlene? About 30?

MISS BLANEY: About a third.

DR. REID: He was in error in reasoning. And that's just gone in Hansard.

MR. BAXTER: He should be appealed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's only one way to cure him, and that's to make him an MLA.

MRS. CRIPPS: It's easier to make an MLA a judge.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask how many MLAs have a constituency office.

MR. STEFANIUK: Sixty-eight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Out of 79.

MR. PURDY: Sixty-seven, because I've got a constituency office but it is not paid for out of government funds.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps our guests from New Brunswick might be interested in alternatives — my own case, for example, and I think a number of ministers; I don't know about MLAs. Instead of having constituency offices, they make periodic pre-advertised visits to shopping centres in their constituencies. It's advertised that they'll be at a certain location on a certain day between certain hours, and then people in the constituency come to see them at those shopping centres. I think the Premier does that as well. One or two of us are using trailers, because sometimes you can't get shopping centre space. I use both. I have a number of shopping centres, and where I can, where there's vacant space, I go into the shopping centre for those visits. Where there's not shopping centre space available, I rent a trailer. The cost is quite modest.

DR. REID: I think the Provincial Treasurer rents a motor home for a week and spots it at different places in the constituency.

MR. STEFANIUK: For the benefit of our guests, that is the sort of expense that would be chargeable to the constituency office allowance. It constitutes a constituency office on a temporary basis.

MR. BAXTER: That's included in the \$700 a month, though, is it?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's in the \$14,700 per year.

MR. BAXTER: Okay. If I might just say one thing — I don't like to let it pass, because I think it's germane to every jurisdiction — and that is the perception people have, including that judge, as to whether an MLA is a full-time job or not. In New Brunswick we're inclining toward the view that you do not measure in terms of whether you sit three or four months or whether the execution of certain duties takes you up to five, six, or seven months of the year. We now view an MLA as a full-time occupation, based primarily on the impairment of your ability to function in any other capacity. Even if you only occupied, say, six or seven months, that very fact alone may make you unable to function in any other profession or job. You might do a little moonlighting or a little something else, but really your major profession is the fact that you're a member of the Assembly.

So rather than nit-pick on months, or whether it's broken down into sittings of the House, functioning in the constituency office, calling on your constituents, attending cocktail parties and other public functions, and that sort of thing, which are all part of your duties, the overall picture we considered at this — I hate to use this expression — moment in time, the MLA is now a full-time occupation.

I have that to contribute, for what it's worth. It may be only in our own minds, but ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's very true, and I think the members who continue with their practices and other business involvements do it by means of working substantial overtime because, as you say, the MLA job is definitely full time.

MR. PURDY: Just to extend that comment I made about my constituency office and to share it with the member from New Brunswick, Mr. Chairman. Way back when I was elected in '71, I opened up a constituency office within the office of an insurance company in one of the towns I represent, and to this day they've asked for no rent or anything. The secretaries answer the phone during the week if I'm not there. I'm there practically every Saturday to look after the business of the constituency, and the only bill we submit to the government is for telephone rental, which is about \$32 a month.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I suppose we could talk about this item for a long time, but I think it's interesting how different MLAs have resolved meeting the needs of their constituents. Because I'm in a very urban setting and Calgary had terrific rents for a long time, I sublet my office. That was about the only way I could justify having an office and having a secretary for three part-time days a week. It works fairly well. I only have one office room, but it's part of an area that has four other offices, so we manage. But I probably don't use it or spend much time there, as most other MLAs do.

The thing I find interesting, and I didn't realize Bill's situation before, is that while our budget is relatively set — there are some increases in that \$14,700, and we now have that flexibility in how we use it — there are increases in the legislative budget to meet the services in our office, and we've certainly seen them grow from the time I thought I needed furnishings for my office. I happened to get that in my contract when I sublet,

because we didn't have a budget. We could have an office and a secretary, but for a while there was nothing for equipment. So now we have the use of all the equipment.

Last year we added the xerox machines. There are a lot of MLAs that really need that, and it's worth while. But if there's one item — once my constituents hear that I have my own xerox machine, they see that as a real extravagance.

So we are adding services. We can get some typewriters — not Mag typewriters, but I guess they're good IBMs. So the services we keep getting in our offices are expanding.

MR. KOWALSKI: I wasn't going to get involved until Mrs. Embury got involved. Now I will, just to briefly explain it. Mr. Purdy and I have adjoining constituencies. He has one type of service and, in the sense that I have a constituency office that costs \$550 a month rent, I think I provide the extreme on the other side. I have a very excellent lady in the community who works as my secretary. So the difference between the \$6,600 for the rent — if you subtract that from \$14,700, that basically is her so-called salary. She works approximately 35 hours a week, so it works out to about \$5.50 an hour or something.

In our community, about 24 per cent of the people in the one town I live in are senior citizens, and they're completely, consistently trooping in to get all kinds of assistance, help, and what have you. Anybody who deals with senior citizens knows that social insurance problems and everything dealing with their whole lives is a real problem. We have a xerox machine, and I don't think it's an extravagance at all. I think it's an absolute necessity in my way of life. In fact the machine we have, while it's a fine little machine, I only view it as a fine little machine. Perhaps down the line we might even want to expand some of the services that machine might be able to provide, because I think it's a minimum at this point. They would not view it as an extravagance at all, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's perhaps not quite strictly to the point, but I think our guests from New Brunswick might be interested in knowing how we calculate the communications allowance and what we may use it for. Is there anyone who would like to volunteer to cover that?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's in another budget, I believe.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we coming to that? Mr. Myers.

MR. MYERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I'm going to be dreadfully embarrassed when this is answered, but I've noticed on a couple of occasions — your actual expenditures on this particular code for '82-83 were \$886,000, and your forecast for this year is \$1.5 million. You say this is a decrease of 7 per cent. Could I have an explanation of that matter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's one of those mysteries that the Clerk concocts, and he's going to unravel it now.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the explanation is very simple. We do zero-base budgeting. In other words, we are not bound by a precedent which may have been established in a preceding year. To the extent that it's possible to do so, we actually calculate the amount for each of these items that are listed on the yellow sheets. If we have found, for example, that we're unable to calculate accurately, if it's a program of such a nature that we're not able to say 79 members by so many dollars, as we are on the constituency offices, then we look at the previous year's experience. If we spent less money than what we were provided in the previous year, we then budget less for the following year.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think, Hazen, that you shouldn't also confuse the three figures that you see there.

MR. MYERS: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: One is the 1982-83 actual, which was \$886,000. The minus 7.2 per cent is the difference between the forecast for this fiscal year — that 1,594 — and next year, April 1, 1984-85. You shouldn't be looking at the '82-83 and comparing it to the figure of \$1,486,000. Those are not the two figures. You look at '83-84, and then look at the one at the top, '84-85. That's where you get the minus 7.2.

DR. REID: And also to clarify the difference from '82-83 to '83-84, do you remember I said it was \$10,000, and was now heading for \$15,000? That was the year that occurred, because there was no increase for three years in a row. And you know what happened to inflation figures in those particular three years. That's why there was that jump.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, you had mentioned communication allowance, and somebody said we were coming to that. But we're not. It's already been looked at in 290. Communication allowance is where we can send a brochure to our constituents as many times as we want. It's worked out by the number of constituents on the voters' list divided by 1.5 times .74. So you work out the actual dollar of what you're allowed per constituency per year. Most members of the Assembly take full use of that, and I think it's a good way to communicate with constituents. They do it in different ways. As an example, this year I'm sending out Christmas cards instead of a printed message. A printed message will go out probably at the commencement of the Legislature in March.

MR. GRAHAM: How many do you send a year?

MR. PURDY: I have to send 14,500 at a time in my constituency.

MR. GRAHAM: I mean how many times?

MR. PURDY: About twice.

MR. GRAHAM: Just twice?

MR. PURDY: Yes.

DR. REID: It's based on two mailings per year to each household.

MR. PURDY: Right.

DR. REID: We get the number of households by an empirical formula of the number of electors on the last electoral roll times 1.5. Those are single person families, married couples, and all the other mixtures and combinations that exist.

MR. GRAHAM: So when you mail those, they are not all addressed.

MR. PURDY: No.

MR. GRAHAM: They are just a blanket flyer so they go into each mail box.

MR. PURDY: To the householder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It can be used for other forms of communication. You could advertise a questionnaire, for example, in the local paper.

MR. PURDY: There are many ways of communicating.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think this is probably clear. We take the number of voters at the last enumeration. We now have an enumeration every second year, except in the year immediately following a general election. We take that number of voters, divide by 1.5, and assume that that is the number of households in the constituency. Then we multiply the number of households by an allowance per communication.

MR. PURDY: Seventy-four cents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. That gives us the communication allowance. But I should add one other thing. On the initiative of this committee, some months ago we made the communication allowance, the constituency office allowance, and the representation allowance, which we are about to come to, a sort of global item, totalling the three together. The member has the discretion as to how much is spent under each of those categories as long as he doesn't exceed the total.

MR. HARRISON: Mr. Chairman, this question is a bit of a digression. You mentioned that you do an enumeration every couple of years. Do you people have a permanent voters' list, or do you have an enumeration every time there is an election?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Reid is on the committee.

DR. REID: In our new Election Act, we changed the system somewhat. We have what you could regard as a permanent list of electors. The system is that there is an enumeration done. In actual fact it's every year in the fall, except the year following a general election. In other words, we had a general election in November 1982, which was based on an enumeration done in September 1982. There was no enumeration in the fall of this year. There will be an enumeration done each succeeding year until the next general election.

MR. HARRISON: Is the citizen upgrading his own situation, or are you people?

DR. REID: No, it is done by enumerators going round to the houses and taking the details. That's how we do it.

MR. BAXTER: Is there any professionalism in that, or is it just anybody?

DR. REID: A fair degree of expertise is required by these people. It tends to be the same enumerators in succession. The returning officer for the electoral district picks enumerators. Obviously, he is going to get rid of people who do not do it well, and he is going to keep people who do it well. They have to be typewritten. They have to be signed below the last name. There are very definite regulations in the Act; they are statutory.

MR. HARRISON: What's the advantage to the cost of that, doing it every year?

DR. REID: Otherwise we would be — we have a very short electoral period, 28 days.

MR. HARRISON: I was going to ask that next.

DR. REID: You couldn't do an enumeration within that 28 days. We have it within the previous year some time, and then we have a period for additional names to go in, people who might be missed. At the beginning of an election period, we have an open time for people who are not on the list to get themselves on the list.

MR. HARRISON: So what you're saying is that you have it in case there's an election each year.

DR. REID: That's right, because of our short electoral period.

MR. HARRISON: What is your actual — you said 28 days? Is it a fixed 28, or is it flexible?

DR. REID: No, it's fixed.

MR. BAXTER: We will have to communicate further with Dr. Reid on this.

MR. HYLAND: Also it gives a good idea yearly on population and population movement, whereas normally you would base a lot of grants and stuff on populations taken about every five years, and it can move quite a bit. This gives you a good base to see what sort of movement there is in the population.

MR. BAXTER: Does this form the base for municipal, provincial, and federal elections?

DR. REID: Just provincial.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The returning officers are appointed to serve throughout the interval between elections. Occasionally the Chief Electoral Officer has a school or a seminar for returning officers, especially new ones. Am I right, Dr. Reid? Don't the returning officers have seminars for enumerators?

DR. REID: They do. We made a number of changes in the last Election Act, to make sure that these things were done on a quasi-professional basis — to use the word that you were using — on the basis that it's a key part of the electoral process to have a proper list. In the urban areas there have to be two enumerators, and they are picked from lists that are provided by the party that won election and the party that came second in that particular constituency in the previous election. They submit lists to the returning officer. If the returning officers find that those people are not adequate — the returning officer is a non-political position — they can pick additional people, they can move people around within the constituency or, under exceptional circumstances, they can indeed use an enumerator from outside the constituency. That would only happen in an urban riding. In new subdivisions, for instance, there may be very few people who know very much about Alberta. In our particular province, we can get suburbs in Edmonton and Calgary where there is a very large number of people who have only recently moved into the province.

MR. BAXTER: How long have you had this system in effect?

DR. REID: We passed that in 1980.

MR. PURDY: Which one, Ian?

DR. REID: We passed the new Election Act in 1980.

MR. PURDY: For the enumeration? We had that prior to the 1979 election. I was on the committee that changed the Act in 1976.

DR. REID: Yes, we modified your system.

MR. PURDY: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our electoral period used to be 39 days, and it was reduced to 28.

MR. MYERS: Just an observation, Mr. Chairman. I gather from what I am hearing that you could conceivably have an election with an enumerator's list that was one year old. In a mobile society like Alberta's, I suspect you must have an enormous number of people being sworn in at the polls.

MR. PURDY: That's correct. In the last election we had over 2,000 people in my constituency who were sworn in at the polls.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In spite of the recent voters' list.

MR. PURDY: That was done in September, and the election was in November.

MR. BAXTER: How many were sworn in?

MR. PURDY: Two thousand. I have a high intensity of acreage owners and things like that. The enumerator will only go to the door twice, I think it is. After that they leave a note, and if the person doesn't show up to have his or her name added to the list, they still have the right to swear an affidavit on election day that they are a resident of that area. We had 2,000.

AN HON. MEMBER: In '82 I had two sworn in.

DR. REID: A more static population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that enough for that item?

MR. HYLAND: I have one question. I know it was fairly late last year when we changed the allotment, the amount, to the constituency office. Is there any need to re-adjust that according to some inflation factor, or is it okay for the next year?

MRS. CRIPPS: There is no inflation factor in rents.

DR. REID: Nor salary.

MRS. CRIPPS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've digressed a bit. Am I right that we were dealing last with Code 430? Is it agreed?

MR. PURDY: I have one more question, Mr. Chairman, regarding the contract with the Sergeant-at-Arms. I see he gets \$4,450.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. PURDY: But the people who work for him get \$10,500. Where is his extra salary?

Does that come from the Premier's office as part of his security staff, or what?

MR. CHAIRMAN: From the government, the Solicitor General's office.

MR. STEFANIUK: He is on the full-time staff of the Department of the Solicitor General, and he receives a full salary as a building security officer. This amount is paid to him in recognition of his extra duties as Sergeant-at-Arms while the House is in session.

MR. PURDY: So it is kind of an honorarium for night sittings and so on?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is Code 430 agreed?

MR. HYLAND: Did I get shot down, then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, not a bit.

MR. HYLAND: I don't know if it needs to. I am just asking if it needs to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If what needs to?

MR. HYLAND: If the \$14,700 is okay for the following year, because I know we set it late this year, or if there needs to be some sort of adjustment or if we can do it late this coming year in time for next year. I don't know. Maybe nobody has bumped up near the \$14,700 for the constituency office, but maybe some have — I would doubt because of rents but maybe because of wages paid.

MRS. CRIPPS: I expect that rents have decreased, and certainly salaries aren't any higher than they were when we set that figure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the committee agree — I think that would involve a fairly major discussion. Could we leave it the way it is, and if committee members feel strongly that they should review that, we could perhaps do it at the next meeting.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

DR. REID: I think we can agree to the budget as it is set.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So Code 430 is agreed. Data processing services, 500, page 19 of the support material. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Over the page: 510, hospitality.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, what has happened to our CPA annual dinners?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was a victim of frugality.

MR. PURDY: Why is it in the budget then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There might be one next year. That was this year's I was talking

about.

MR. PURDY: And the year before?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had an election.

MR. PURDY: Okay.

MR. HARRISON: Mr. Chairman, on the CPA, do you people have an association with an executive, that meets once or twice a year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have the usual executive — the Speaker, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Clerk. We have an advisory committee of about 16 members.

MR. HARRISON: Do you have any kind of formal set-up on paper, that I could have a copy of?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not that I am aware of, no. That's all there is to it.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, because of the budgetary restraints we are into and so on, I think we should seriously look at foregoing this CPA dinner.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could still do that next year. I realize that it will make the estimates look prettier if we take it out now, but perhaps we should leave that open. I should explain that we haven't had this CPA dinner regularly, but we have had it most falls of the year. We meet around the rotunda here in the building. Tables are set up. The members come with their spouses. We usually honor a particular group, sometimes colleagues from other provincial parliaments. We have an institute of technology here that, among other things, trains chefs. They do the catering at quite low cost. It is a sort of intermediate examination for them, I guess. None of us has suffered any ill effects. It is not a high-cost item, considering the number of people who take part. But we decided to forego it this year because of financial restraint.

Is there anything else on item 510?

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, on that same item I am not trying to be nit-picky or anything, but for the 79 members, that \$8,665 figure comes out to \$109 a dinner. If you put the spouses in, it comes down to a \$55 a plate dinner. I think that's pretty extravagant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not all of it, though.

MR. PURDY: No, but it's a lot of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. But, for example, one year we honored the native population of Alberta. We subsidized some of their travel to the dinner. As you know, we have customarily given out the two awards that we give from the Alberta branch. That has been done at the dinner, and the relatives have attended. On another occasion, the hon. member may recall that we honored the handicapped. I think one of the outstanding ones was from his constituency.

MR. PURDY: I can always do that in the constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all included.

MRS. CRIPPS: I would have to disagree with the member here. For the amount that is in the budget, I think we should maintain the flexibility to make a decision, because we are talking about March 1985 as the period to which this budget is running. I personally would prefer to see us keep that item in the budget. If we make a decision not to use it, that's fine. But we do have the flexibility of the option of making that decision in the future.

DR. REID: The Member for Drayton Valley just said it all.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think I am going to disagree. I guess it's really because I have never had much of a role to play in the CPA. I somehow seemingly get invited like everybody else gets invited. Frankly, I don't really know that much about the CPA and the annual dinner. But I think the point raised by Mr. Purdy is a valid one in terms of the cost of it.

I want to move that for the 1984-85 fiscal year, Code 510 be reduced by a figure of \$8,665 and that no CPA dinner be held during that fiscal year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is just one other thing I should mention in connection with that motion. Compared with other branches of CPA — for example, Saskatchewan and the Atlantic provinces branches, where they have an annual conference, and I attended the fifth annual conference last fall — Alberta is probably among the provinces which have the fewest CPA activities. We are really not overdoing it.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak very strongly against the motion. I guess it is an individual responsibility how involved one is in the CPA, how you learn about it, or what happens. But I think it is a very lovely function that is put on in the rotunda of our Assembly. I have never been quite so impressed at anything so nicely done. As far as the spouses go, I think it is one opportunity — I realize there are more opportunities from the budget item that we put in before, where they can come to Edmonton. But we really don't have many opportunities where there is a formal setting for our spouses to attend. For that reason alone, I think it is nice for them to see something a little more formal. The fall timing has always been very, very pleasant, because it just adds another little extra to our starting of the Legislature in the fall.

I really feel that for the budget item there, it will be optional whether or not we use it again, because the decision will be made by the members involved on the CPA committee. They will look back and see whether it's worthy. But I would also like my colleague from Barrhead to consider that we have had an election, we have new members in the Legislature, not only in the government but in the opposition, and I think it would be very nice for them to see something that would bring them together.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I would like to look at it from two standpoints — first of all, the traditions of the parliamentary democratic process, which has a fairly long history, and relate that to the country we live in, which is extremely large. I know that on occasion we have had visitors from other provinces, from other parliaments, at the CPA dinner. That itself is a useful enough function to justify the cost. We are finding today, for example, that there are fairly marked differences between the operation of one provincial parliament and another. Those interchanges of information, whether formal or informal, are extremely useful to the maintenance of those processes and traditions within our country and within our provinces.

The other thing I would like to mention is the one brought up by the Member for Calgary North West, which is that many of the members' spouses are quite interested in the political and parliamentary process, and they have little enough involvement with it. That again I think justifies the cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that point, there was some discussion in the previous Members' Services Committee with regard to spouses, and it was recognized very diplomatically that public service in a parliament sometimes produced spinoff hazards to marriages and that, as much as possible, there should be some involvement and some connection with spouses so as to offset that sort of tendency.

MR. PURDY: In supporting the motion, Mr. Chairman, I also look at Code 790, where there are grants made to the CPA. I imagine some of the figures that you pointed out that were made for awards and so on, to recognize individuals in this province, probably come under these other grants and stuff, under Code 790, which is further into our book. I still maintain that it is a pretty high cost for one short evening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the subject of frugality, may I also bring in something which is perhaps relevant. The plenary conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association takes place once a year. As we know, this year it was in Kenya. There was no sponsor, and there hasn't been a sponsor for some time. There has been difficulty in finding a sponsor for 1985. A proposal was made that Saskatchewan and Alberta co-host that one, although it has never been done under anything but national auspices. The Clerk worked out a budget. It was checked out with a number of members of the Executive Council, including the Provincial Treasurer. After full and mature consideration, it was decided that Alberta would not take part. That conference is now being hosted entirely by Saskatchewan, with some subsidy from the central CPA office in London. Nevertheless, as I say, compared with some of the other provinces, we are really not doing our share in CPA, although I go along with the idea that we stay out of that conference, because it saved us many tens of thousands of dollars.

Is there any further discussion on this item?

MR. KOWALSKI: May I have permission to conclude the debate on my motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fair enough.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, you know the position that I have advocated in the past, that this is basically a Members' Services Committee. You found me speaking and advocating certain positions in terms of the delivery of services for our constituents. All of us represent a constituency, and I think we have a unique responsibility to provide the maximum amount of services that our constituents would want. I have been very active in advocating improvement of services to those people who live in the constituency that I represent.

However, I do not believe that my attendance at a CPA annual dinner with my colleagues in Edmonton is going to necessarily improve my ability to provide a better service to my constituents in the area of Alberta that I represent. Mr. Purdy has worked out in a very, very rough way what the cost per plate would be. If it comes out to \$109 or \$110 per plate for an evening of fellowship, so we as colleagues in this Assembly might get together, so be it. But I don't think that is an expenditure we should look forward to advocating during the 1984-85 fiscal year. If in fact all Members of the Legislative Assembly would like to attend a CPA annual dinner, then somebody can work out the cost and we can each supply our own tariff, no matter what it is. I would be delighted to meet Mrs. Embury's spouse, and I am sure she would be delighted to have him come up. I am sure she would be delighted, of course, to pay for his bill as well.

My basic point is that I think we have a responsibility to our constituents, and part of those responsibilities from my view, at this point in time, does not see me attending a CPA dinner that is paid for by the public at large in the province of Alberta. While it is a fine opportunity for fellowship, I think there are less costly ways of arriving at it. I say that only in light of the current fiscal situation in our province. My motion only calls for

deferment for one year, 1984-85.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would those in favor of the motion to eliminate this item so indicate? Would those opposed indicate? The motion is lost. Are three members going to stand up? [laughter]

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, would we please show a correction there, that the cost is not \$100 a plate?

MR. PURDY: It's \$57 a plate.

MRS. CRIPPS: No.

DR. REID: It depends on the total number.

MR. PURDY: There are usually approximately 150 people. If you divide it out, it is \$57.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But there is something else besides the per plate cost.

MR. PURDY: That's still pretty high.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was Code 510. Are you agreed with Code 510? Anyone contra? Carried.

Materials and supplies, 600. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next is 790, other grants, general.

MR. GRAHAM: Just a question on that annual allowance to members of \$246,000. What is that allowance? Is it a lump sum per member?

MR. STEFANIUK: There is a lump sum available per member, per year, to enable a member to acquire lapel pins, flags, and other presentation items. But as mentioned by the Chairman earlier, this allowance along with the communications allowance and the constituency office allowance are interchangeable. A member may elect to use his portion of this allowance for one of the other two purposes defined or vice versa.

DR. REID: Perhaps we should clarify it. This is another of those where there is an allowance for each constituency, which is a base allowance of \$2,100 a year. If there are more than 14,000 electors, then we have an additional amount of seven cents per elector over that amount. What it means is that there is a minimum of \$2,100. There are a few constituencies with less than that base population. There are other constituencies with very large populations, and the largest promotion allowance is just under \$6,000 for a gentleman who has many a tens of thousands of people to look after.

MRS. CRIPPS: Why do we show a 29.5 per cent increase in that item?

DR. REID: Due to that allowance for population.

MR. HYLAND: We adjusted it for the population.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, it was adjusted for the population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions regarding Code 600?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other grants, general, 790. It is agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Purchase of office equipment, 850. Any questions, comments? Sorry, 860. There is nothing there. I guess we have come to the end, and we are dealing with the total. Are we agreed on the whole estimate except for Code No. 200, which is going to go over to the next meeting?

I think the only other item left is the committees' budget. Can we deal with that?

MR. STEFANIUK: Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, we are still not ready for the committee budget because as you know, there were two committees established in the House within the last few days. The chairmen of those committees are now working very closely with the Clerk of Committees. They were reluctant to do any significant work before before the committees were officially established by the House. Those budgets will be ready very shortly, certainly in time for the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I believe that is all we can do on the estimates today. Under members' indemnity, those are all statutory but I suppose we should have formal approval. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BAXTER: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I may ask one question. I was wondering how much the total cost of general administration is up this year over last year?

MR. STEFANIUK: It's down 2.3 per cent.

MR. BAXTER: Isn't that beautiful. I set you up for that, Bo.

MR. STEFANIUK: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You know why he did it; he is a minister of finance.

MR. BAXTER: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we are dealing now with the members' indemnity section, are we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I thought we had agreed to it. I called it.

MR. KOWALSKI: I have a question, and it deals with the life insurance factor of it. As I recall, the Clerk was — I am not sure if he was supposed to come back and give us a status report on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We dealt with it at a previous meeting.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's correct, we did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you like to answer Mr. Kowalski?

MR. STEFANIUK: I believe the agreement was that we would go with the maximum amount and that there would be further consideration of it at some future date.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. This life insurance premium would kick in on April 1, 1984.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes. That's when these funds become available.

DR. REID: Maybe we should consider what happens in the interim. How quickly could we introduce this item? Being a physician, I have a sensitivity about having the members of this Assembly walking around without life insurance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or an awareness of mortality.

MR. STEFANIUK: We can do it immediately, Mr. Chairman, if the funding were to become available. Obviously, any funding to cover the present fiscal year would have to be obtained by special warrant. That could be done when the House rises. As members are aware, warrants cannot be considered while the House is in session.

MR. HYLAND: Do we have any unexpended amounts in the budget at this time that would cover that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That we could transfer?

MR. HYLAND: That could be transferred from this year.

MISS BLANEY: In members' indemnity? No.

MR. HYLAND: I keep on thinking it's in the other one, but it's in members' indemnity.

MR. STEFANIUK: I should mention as well, Mr. Chairman, that in order to effect insurance coverage immediately, we would request the Minister responsible for Personnel Administration to approach the underwriters to include the Members of the Legislative Assembly. So the effectiveness of the program is contingent upon two things: the minister of personnel's success with the underwriters and the availability of funding.

DR. REID: Perhaps you could initiate those discussions with Mr. Stevens promptly, and we'll do something about the special warrant subsequently.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion by Dr. Reid that the Clerk be instructed to initiate discussions with the hon. Mr. Stevens with regard to life insurance coverage for the members. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: May we now go on to the next order of business, which is Legislature staff travel to constituencies. There was some material on that topic sent around to members just a day or so ago. I don't know if you've had a chance to absorb it. In the meantime, perhaps someone would like to explain to our guests what this is about.

MR. HYLAND: On a motion, that I think I made initially, we decided two things a few meetings ago. One was that our constituency office staff should be allowed to come to the Legislature to see what things are like here, and it was subsequently decided that the Legislature staff, our secretaries here, should be allowed to go to the constituency

offices to meet the people they deal with on the phone and to see how things work there. It appears as though we're having a bit of a problem about where that money should come from.

To control it so ill use wasn't made of it, it was initially suggested that it come out of the constituency office allotment, but it appears that there's a problem with paying the travel of staff from one department out of another, or something like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have order please. Mr. Hyland is explaining this for the benefit of our guests.

MR. HYLAND: I'm through unless there are any questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Are there any of our guests who would like to have Mr. Hyland elaborate?

MR. MYERS: It's not really very pertinent to members from New Brunswick, since we don't have constituency staff, which I would love to have. I would be so grateful that it would probably be several years before I'd worry about taking them to Fredericton. I think there would be considerable advantage in taking some of our Legislature staff around the province a bit. There again, we have such a small number. For private members, we work on the ratio of one girl to five MLAs. That would impose quite a burden.

Our immediate goal in New Brunswick is to get a staff person in our constituencies, Mr. Minister of Finance.

MR. HYLAND: Our average here is some two to one, some three to one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that enough for that? Can we continue with item 6? We're starting to run out of time. The Public Accounts Committee will be meeting in about four minutes, I expect.

DR. REID: Perhaps I can put a motion on the table that we allow two visits per year — they may be in either direction — and that the dollars come out of the constituency office allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarification, Dr. Reid, does that mean one each way or two each way?

DR. REID: A total of two but they may be in either direction, at the discretion of the member concerned, and that they come out of the constituency office allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that clear to everyone?

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry, I need clarification, Mr. Chairman. Ian, are you saying that — I thought that at one time we approved that our constituency staff could come to Edmonton, the two visits. Are you talking about those two visits?

DR. REID: This is to allow for it to be either way.

MRS. EMBURY: It could be either way. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This really doesn't change funding in any way. What it will do is make it a proper and authorized expenditure out of constituency office funds or that trilogy of funds we have, to have a person travel, as Dr. Reid explained.

MR. HYLAND: We're just talking here. I thought we had passed that motion before, but let's pass it again and make absolutely sure that's where we're getting it from, and let's let somebody else iron out how the hell we do it. We give direction to do it; let somebody else figure out how to do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The thing is that if we were going to do it out of general administration, we'd have to increase that.

MR. HYLAND: If I remember my motion — I'd have to go back and look — I thought that's what I said. Anyway, let's just do 'er again.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I feel I should mention a concern that was expressed to me verbally by Parliamentary Counsel, and is not necessarily covered in his memorandum of October 27, which is included in the members' background materials. That concern was for responsibility for a staff member's travel in the event that there were to be some unfortunate mishap in the course of such travel.

In their terms of reference, staff who are engaged at the constituency level and on these premises are not necessarily required to travel on behalf of the members whom they serve. That is an additional question, which causes Parliamentary Counsel some considerable concern in the event there were to be an accident, even a fatal one, on the road, in the air, or travelling by rail. Who assumes responsibility?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would we wish to give some consideration to getting a waiver from any such staff before they went, that they would travel at their own risk from the constituency office to the Legislature or visa versa?

MR. HYLAND: I don't know how many of them, but I thought a lot of the constituency staff are on contracts.

MR. STEFANIUK: They are, but their contracts do not provide for a responsibility to travel other than from their place of residence to their place of work.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think the point raised by the Clerk is a very important and valid one. I would not like to see us requesting that the people who are working on behalf of the people of Alberta be asked to sign any waiver lessening responsibility or anything else in the event of an accident. Should my constituency secretary or the secretary who happens to be working with me here in Edmonton be requested to go and visit — either one of them either way — I think it would be irresponsible on our part to ask them to sign a waiver of any kind. I think these are very competent people who are working very hard on behalf of not only us but our constituents. I think there has to be a mechanism that can be worked up in order to cover that. I'm really concerned about that.

I welcome the concept that there will be some interchange and some travel. I would ask the Clerk to undertake whatever he can to see what kind of solution we can have to that kind of scenario, because I really think it's irresponsible on our part to ask such people to sign such a waiver.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only solution is insurance. There isn't any other.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I support what Mr. Kowalski said. But I would think that the people we have employed are covered under workers' compensation, so I don't see the problem. If they're on government business, they should be covered by compensation.

MR. STEFANIUK: I'm not sure that they are, Mr. Chairman.

MR. GRAHAM: Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. Myers and I have to go. Just before we do — it's not relevant to what you're discussing . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is indeed.

MR. GRAHAM: . . . but I just want to thank you very much for your very kind hospitality and the information I obtained. As Members of the Legislature for a number of years, we always continue to learn a lot about our colleagues in other provinces. I hope we can take some things back to our province and that maybe the exchange of views is something that should be ongoing no matter what province it is. I want to thank you and your colleagues for your kind hospitality.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. It's been interesting to have you. Pursuant to some discussion yesterday, we'll be sending copies of our members' guide. My suggestion would be that since there are two caucuses represented here, we send one to each.

MR. GRAHAM: Thank you.

DR. REID: The other request, from Bev, was for an updated copy of the Election Act.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. So we'll send a couple of those with the members' guide.

MR. MYERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also have to leave with Mr. Graham. One point I would like to make — I really feel I have to say it before I leave — is in support of all the CPA activities in which I've been involved. As a member of an extremely small group in one of the largest nations on earth, I think the exchange of ideas and the friendships and acquaintances we've made through CPA have been extremely valuable not only to me but also to my constituents, because I've solved problems that I didn't know how to come to grips with by consultation with elected members from other provinces. I think the exchange of ideas that we often get ourselves involved in at CPA conferences is valuable to all our provinces, and I think it very important that we be as consistent as we possibly can be across this nation.

I don't know if you have a French parliamentarians association in Alberta, but we have a very active one in New Brunswick, that's growing very, very quickly. The expenses and travel they involve themselves in far exceed the ones for CPA.

I've made numerous acquaintances over the years, but over and above that I've made some very long-lasting and deep friendships with other members, and I've had the pleasure of meeting some of them again on this particular tour. I would encourage participation in every CPA activity possible. I think it is of immeasurable benefit, not only to us but to the degree that we can pass on what we've learned through service to our constituents.

Thank you again for your very kind hospitality. I've enjoyed this particular trip very much. I just wish we had several more days to spend in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's mutual.

MR. MYERS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My understanding is that the upshot of our discussion was that the Clerk was to inquire as to alternatives, although that had not yet been agreed upon by the committee. That would automatically indicate that we would defer this item until probably the next meeting. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. PURDY: And the question I asked, Mr. Chairman: to determine if they are covered under workers' compensation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, I can assure Mr. Purdy that his constituency secretary is certainly not covered under workers' compensation because they are contract, self-employed people. I would be doubtful about the secretarial staff in the building under the Workers' Compensation Act provisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not aware that they're . . .

MRS. EMBURY: Well, let's get a report.

MR. HYLAND: And if not, Mr. Chairman, if we can find out how much money it is going to cost to cover us, because we're only looking at one trip a year.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, could I please make a brief reference in the event that the meeting breaks up very soon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. STEFANIUK: I have distributed to members of the committee certain summary sheets which reflect the decisions made by the committee on certain budget matters at their last meeting. These should replace the sheets which are presently in the committee members' binders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Should we go on? There is a question that perhaps we would have come to had we gone further on item 6, and that's the matter of retroactivity of some amendments we made. Members may recall that they got some material on that point just a day or two ago.

MRS. CRIPPS: Unless the remainder of the agenda is very important, I would prefer to discuss other things that may be of mutual interest between ourselves and the members who are here, if that would be agreeable with the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you some examples in mind?

MRS. CRIPPS: No. But I think the points made by Mr. Myers and the other gentleman were very relevant to all of us. We may not get another chance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Mr. Baxter and Mr. Harrison, if you wouldn't mind, I think you should feel free to perhaps share some further insights and perhaps some information that you have based on your experience relating to some of the items we've discussed in the meeting.

MR. HARRISON: It's not what we were discussing at the meeting; it's another area altogether: the role of private members and legislation.

MR. HYLAND: If we get into general discussion — I'm looking at the items that are left. I don't think there is anything really pressing. Why don't we cut the meeting off,

and then we can have some good general discussion for a while?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sooner or later we should fix the date for the next meeting.

MR. HYLAND: Yes, we can do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Harrison.

MR. HARRISON: I'm just wondering about the role. Apparently because of the nature of your caucus, private members have a role to play in the legislative process other than scrutinizing a Bill that comes out of a department. I'm wondering just what role you people do play.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hyland has sponsored some of those Bills. Perhaps he'd like to explain that.

DR. REID: Mr. Chairman, before we get into that, perhaps we should decide that the next meeting will be called subsequent to discussions to decide a suitable time for people's schedules, and adjourn the meeting of the Members Services Committee. Otherwise, we're going to have a transcript of a discussion of something that has little to do with the Members Services Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I was just going to ask for the date of the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Reid's suggestion is that we leave it open subject to a consensus being arrived at by a telephone call to the members.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm just kind of curious to know — are you looking at December, January, or November?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it should be fairly soon. I would like to see it within the next two weeks myself, because we have a number of tag ends that we should clean up. We really shouldn't let them drag.

DR. REID: We have a couple of items at least with some budgetary implications. We should get those finished.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Code 200, for example. So is it agreed that next Monday, we'll get in touch with all the members and try to arrive at a consensus on a time for a meeting within the next two weeks?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a motion for adjournment? Dr. Reid. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.]

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