

[Chairman: Mr. Amerongen] [9:04 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're a quorum. Perhaps we could open the meeting and ask for a motion concerning the minutes of the previous meeting, May 8, 1985.

MR. PURDY: I so move, as received.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. Business arising from various previous minutes: 3(a), Mr. Senchuk and probably one or two of his key staff people will be here at 9:30. We have Nigel Pengelly, Sheila, and Jim Gurnett on the telephone. Jim's time is limited. Since Jim may have to leave by 10 o'clock, we might go directly to his item, if the meeting agrees, which is under 5(a). Would you like to give us some information about what you had in mind there, Jim.

MR. GURNETT: Thank you. What I really want to do is raise the idea and at least get some indication, especially from other rural members, about the whole issue of constituency budgets, the allowance that covers constituency offices and staff. My short experience so far has led me to start feeling that it may be possible to make a case or see a good reason for looking at differential budgeting, simply because of the large areas rural constituencies cover. I know that when I talk to my colleague, for example, his ability to have one office that really does a fairly adequate job of serving his constituency and my ability to accomplish the same thing with one office are vastly different. It seems to me that since the constituencies aren't created on a straight population or numerical basis, it might be possible to see good reasons to look at budgets also being on a basis that considers the geography as well as the population of the constituency. I'm sure there are a number of ways that could be done: a larger allowance or, one of the other thoughts that occurred to me, if constituency offices could use available space in provincial buildings or places like that that might be available without rental involved.

I'm not sure of the details, but I wanted to

see if that is something that has perhaps been discussed before and why things are done the way they are, and at least open up the possibility of looking at saying that very large, spread-out rural constituencies may be funded on a somewhat different basis to allow perhaps more than one office to function in separated areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do any members of the committee wish to comment on Jim's outline of what he has in mind?

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, we've discussed this at previous meetings. Number one is the use of provincial buildings. I think there's correspondence of file someplace. I wouldn't want to try to recall from memory the exact decision on that, but I think an answer came down from the office of Tom Chambers, the minister responsible. The answer at that time was no.

Maybe we can have Mr. Amerongen, as chairman of this committee, research what material is now available and get an answer for Mr. Gurnett and the rest of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'd have to have some focus or direction for that kind of research. One thing that comes to mind is that I believe there are some differentials in Saskatchewan. The far northern constituencies get either additional pay for the members or additional funding for members' services. By way of a start, suppose I get that information and simply send it to members of the committee.

MR. HYLAND: And the correspondence on using provincial buildings. I think we talked about that before, Jim. The feeling of the committee, at least as I remember it, was that we wondered if a provincial building is a very good place for an office. The Legislature, whatever side of it you're on, is not the government, and we wondered about a legislative office in a government office. That angle was talked about at that time. It was thought that people might feel a little easier going to a neutral place rather than to a provincial building.

MR. GURNETT: Yes, I can see that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's two things we'll do. We'll get the information with regard to Saskatchewan, and we'll look up the material relating to our previous discussions of this and get it to the members of the committee.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder too, Mr. Chairman, if Jim could put in writing some ideas or suggestions on how he would like to see it done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How about that, Jim? Suppose you get up a little outline of what you have in mind.

MR. GURNETT: I'd be happy to do that. I could give it to you to circulate with the other information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. GURNETT: I'll do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Is that all right for that topic?

MR. PURDY: Just one other point. I also recall that we made some amendments to an order about 18 months ago, I think, allowing extra air travel for some of the northern constituencies. Norm Weiss brought that up. That's just information for Jim.

MR. GURNETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else? We still have a little time before Mr. Senchuk is due. You may recall that item 3(b) has been left for a decision in principle by the committee. That relates to services to -- it's not really services to members; it's services to constituencies during the period a by-election is pending. The basic decision that needs to be made is whether the committee favours shutting down a constituency office on the death or resignation of a member, as I think is done in Ontario in relation to by-elections, or making an arrangement to continue the services to constituents as well as could be done under the circumstances, pending the arrival of the new member.

It seems to me that would include mainly two things. One is follow-up on existing constituents' concerns which had already been given to the former member. The other is new

items coming in from constituents. In that regard, since there is no member and since the constituency secretary could perhaps be expected to deal with those items only to a limited extent, it would be a matter of asking the constituent, if the thing had to be dealt with before the result of the by-election, to whom the matter ought to be referred -- another member or another caucus or the same caucus.

Does anyone have any thoughts about that, or do you want to table it for further consideration?

MR. HYLAND: I'd be interested in Jim's thoughts. He's the latest one to experience that and what happened in Spirit River between the time Grant passed away and he got elected.

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, based on the input I've had from people in this constituency, I suggest that keeping the office open, as you outlined in your second idea, is one that would be widely acceptable to the general public. I think people would have been very unhappy and concerned if there had been no office functioning and no way to begin to at least have some of the simpler requests dealt with and attention given to them. People seemed to appreciate the fact that the office continued to function during those months.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other views?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I think the office should definitely be kept open. In previous discussions on this topic, I thought the point was raised that if the office were kept open, there might be a request of the constituent as to where they would want their concern directed: to the government office of the day or to whatever opposition offices there are. I think that's a very reasonable way to go. If you want a motion to that effect, I would make a motion that we have that policy established.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you're saying that as a matter of policy, pending by-elections, constituency offices be kept open. Would you want some draft guidelines submitted on that? That would be a further development of what was previously given to you, with some detail filled in. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comment before we take it as generally agreed?

MR. PURDY: I have one concern about the guidelines. You have a variety in the province. You have 79 constituencies, going to 83 by the next election. There are only 68 constituency offices right now, so it's evident that all members don't have a constituency office. I'm one of the 68; however, it's not funded. If something happened in my area, that office would automatically be closed and the phone taken out, because there is no staff or secretary there.

The other concern I have is the variation throughout the province. You may have to start drawing up guidelines for how 83 constituency offices function and operate. So I have some concerns about coming up with guidelines. I think the way it happened in Spirit River-Fairview worked very well, and that's what we should be looking at -- something that's very simple.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That, of course, is subject to certain basic guidelines or, if you might want to use another term, practices.

MR. KOWALSKI: But the process for looking at this is simply to have guidelines come back here for this committee's review so that we would have a further discussion on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: And then have something on the table for us all to look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. I'm not suggesting that there's a decision made on the basis of which the thing will be put into effect. Okay?

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next is item 3(c), Pensionable Fees. Bohdan, do you want to kick off on that?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, with the passage of Bill 48 in the form in which it was passed, all fees paid to members are now eligible for pension benefits. In other words,

what we had up to now, I think, was a situation whereby certain fees which were payable by the government were eligible as pensionable earnings and those paid by the Assembly were not. The form in which Bill 48 was passed now allows for all fees to be pensionable. For example, fees paid to members of the committee for attendance at this meeting would be eligible for pension.

The question which we raised with the committee in the first place dealt with the committee's concurrence in having the pension deductions made at source as the fees were paid, thus eliminating the need for computation of a global payment figure at the end of any given year and working within very severe time restraints to collect from the member the appropriate pension contribution. What we have suggested for the committee's consideration is a process whereby the deductions would be made for pension contributions each time a payment is made to a member. Therefore, the member's payments at the end of any given year would be current.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any comments?

MR. KOWALSKI: I have no problem at all with that procedure providing it can be handled within the normal component we have from an administrative point of view.

MR. STEFANIUK: I believe, Mr. Chairman, we would have to put some administrative machinery in motion to accommodate this particular practice. Our perception is that in the long term, the member would be favoured and certainly all of the administrative bodies who are concerned -- the Legislative Assembly administration, the pension office, and the provincial Treasury -- might be favoured as well.

MR. PURDY: Is there retroactivity to this?

MR. KOWALSKI: That would be the second item we should raise with respect to it after we solve the first one.

MR. PURDY: That is what I'm getting at. What does the Bill say?

MR. STEFANIUK: The Bill has not as yet been proclaimed. Our ability to effect deductions

for payments made by the Legislative Assembly would be contingent upon the proclamation of the Bill. As far as retroactivity in the process for payments made to members of the Assembly by the government, I am not clear as to whether or not that is spelled out in the legislation.

MR. HYLAND: That's done now.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's been done, so there is no retroactivity to be considered there other than administrative retroactivity. I don't believe, offhand, that there is provision for retroactivity where payments by the Legislative Assembly are concerned, although we would certainly be prepared to investigate the intent of the legislation with the Provincial Treasurer, who was the sponsor of the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would seem to me that perhaps we can't do very much further in this regard until the Bill is proclaimed. We'll have to check to see whether, if and when proclaimed, it would take effect as of the beginning of the current fiscal year. If it did, we'd have some back fees to collect.

Is that all right for the time being? Should we put it on the agenda for the next meeting to see what happens in the meantime?

MR. KOWALSKI: In addition to that aspect, look at the permissiveness of this legislation and at those peculiar sections in that new Bill with respect to back service as well. That would be more than just the current fiscal year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but the narrow point we're on here is with regard to including committee fees and the reckoning of the pension entitlement and pension contribution.

MR. KOWALSKI: I accept that, but the point was the position put forward by Bill Purdy in terms of retroactivity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: Would it apply only to the fiscal year we are currently in, or would it also apply to service in previous fiscal years? Most pension plans allow you to participate and buy up that pensionable service. I think we just need the clarification in terms of the intent of this one too.

MR. PURDY: I can probably clarify that, Mr. Chairman. When legislation was passed two years ago under the Legislative Assembly Act allowing me as Deputy Chairman of Committees to be pensionable in that particular role, I bought back to 1979.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, do I take it that there is agreement for the proposal to deduct pension contributions at source by this committee and that we are further being requested to look into the question of retroactivity and the possibility of buy-back service?

MR. PURDY: Agreed.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's right.

MR. HYLAND: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan has moved that the committee approve in principle the deductions at the source; that is to say, as the Clerk explained a short while ago, that when cheques are issued for fees in regard to committee service, the pension deduction for the member's contribution would be taken out of each of those cheques. I understand that's the purport of your motion, Alan — approving that. Is that agreed?

MR. HYLAND: Along with understanding. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was going to work it as two. Is that agreed thus far?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone contra? The motion is passed.

The second point is with regard to retroactivity. What did you want to say in your motion about that, Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Just to request that the Clerk and/or his office explore the possibility of buy-back, which is common in most pension plans.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, consistent with previous rulings in similar situations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bill, did you want to get in?

MR. PURDY: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on that? Do you want the Clerk to do that now, or do you want to wait until the Act is proclaimed?

MR. HYLAND: We might as well do it now. You can do it now, can't you?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, we can certainly look into the possibilities and be prepared to act when proclamation comes about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mr. Senchuk is here now. If the meeting agrees, I'll invite him in.

MR. PURDY: We didn't agree to the last motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks for reminding me. Anyone contra? That's carried.

Now if you agree, we can invite Mr. Senchuk in.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CONFERENCE OPERATOR: I'm going to try to get Sheila Embury back on again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is she off?

CONFERENCE OPERATOR: Yes, she cut herself off evidently. I'll have to get her back. Can you hold for a moment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

CONFERENCE OPERATOR: There she is. She's back on the line again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning again, Sheila.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We lost you for a bit.

MRS. EMBURY: Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: What did you do? Did you put the phone down?

MRS. EMBURY: It slipped.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have Mr. Senchuk of ACCESS. Would you like to introduce the members of your team and express their function, please?

MR. SENCHUK: Excellent. Malcolm Knox, who is our general manager of television, is with us. We have Don Thomas, who is general manager of our radio division. Also with us is Ron Lazlock, who is our station manager and in charge of all our production facilities at ACCESS Network. I brought these gentlemen with me this morning so we could discuss both radio and television coverage, because we have done extensive coverage on radio going back to the late 1970s.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Present here on the telephone we have Sheila Embury and Nigel Pengelly. Have we still got you, Jim?

MR. GURNETT: Yes, I'll be here for another 20 minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim Gurnett, the Member for Spirit River-Fairview. Here in the room, just going around the circle, we have Mrs. Pratt, chief of administration for the government caucus; Charles Eliuk, who is chief of administration for the office of the Legislative Assembly; Mr. Stefaniuk, the Clerk; Miss Conroy, who is diligently recording all this wisdom; Mr. Ken Kowalski, the Member for Barrhead; Bill Purdy, the Member for Stony Plain; Alan Hyland, the Member for Cypress; and I'm the Member for Edmonton Meadowlark. Back there watching and possibly heckling is Rod Scarlett.

Just to introduce the subject generally, as Mr. Senchuk no doubt suspects from correspondence that he and I have had, the Members' Services Committee is interested in the possibility of more extended coverage of the proceedings of the House. We did have, for one Legislature, coverage from opening to adjournment of each sitting. Following that, it was found to be uneconomical, and the question was left open as to whether some arrangements could be made which would be acceptable to

ACCESS and to the committee on behalf of all the members. Perhaps with that introduction you'd like to get into the topic, Mr. Senchuk.

MR. SENCHUK: Okay. I'll ask Don Thomas to highlight the coverage we've been doing on CKUA radio across the province since the late 1970s. In introducing radio, we have 14 FM transmitters and one AM transmitter here in Edmonton. It provides us coverage to make our service on CKUA available to about 85 percent of Albertans who can tune into CKUA throughout the province. I'll let Don highlight our coverage today.

MR. THOMAS: CKUA has been broadcasting the question period itself since 1977. As you perhaps know, that broadcast begins with the opening of the question period. We have a man on duty here who identifies each speaker. The broadcast concludes with the end of question period.

In addition to broadcasting the question period, CKUA has broadcast the throne speech. Up to about a year ago, I think, we also broadcast the Premier's state-of-the-province address and the opposition leader's response. We have also broadcast -- and this continues -- the Budget Address, and in the past, on a per-occasion basis, we have picked up some of the specials that go on.

As Peter has already mentioned, coincident with this spring's sittings and with Mr. Amerongen's consent, we offered to allow the private stations in the province to listen to, record, and take what information they wished out of the question period broadcast, which permitted the stations not only to listen to question period, which I'm sure they've done in the past anyway, but also to air check it and use the voices of the members, should they wish to do so in associating it with some sort of news story they may be running.

We feel that it's also an important thing as a service to the private broadcasters, because it alerts the other newsrooms across the province, some of whom cannot afford to have a member of the press gallery, to some story that may affect their constituency, and then they can follow it up from that point.

So CKUA has assigned a certain amount of equipment to the Legislature Building. During the sittings, the chap from our newsroom who is here covers the House full time and spends the

rest of the year actually maintaining his contacts with government members and the civil service here.

Peter, I think that basically sums up what CKUA has been doing until now. As Peter has said, CKUA can reach 85 percent of the province. With the extension of that service that we have granted to the private sector, that increases it measurably and, I think, to the advantage and the benefit of all of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Should we now discuss what we have just heard, or would you prefer that we hear about the television side and then discuss the whole matter?

MR. KOWALSKI: That would be my preference.

MR. HYLAND: Let's hear it all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There seems to be a preference here that we discuss the television side of the broadcasting and then open the topic for discussion.

MR. SENCHUK: Thank you very much. In regard to the television coverage, ACCESS Network has not been directly involved in the past. One main reason no discussions have precipitated on television was that ACCESS Network itself did not have its own distribution system for television services. Early this year, we acquired commercial time from private television stations to air a limited amount of educational children's programming each morning. We went into our own full distribution system in January of this year, going satellite to cable across the province and literally making our full service available to 90-some percent of cable subscribers throughout our province.

A proposal that was put to this committee some time ago was as a result of inquiries that came to us from Hon. Gerard Amerongen's office when the four cable companies of Edmonton and Calgary made a decision not to extend the coverage they had previously provided to subscribers in Edmonton and Calgary. Since that date, as we understand it, one cable company in Edmonton, QCTV, which is a licensee for half the city of Edmonton and a number of other cable systems they have in Alberta, produces the question period live each

day and then rotates the videotapes through a number of their other systems here in the province.

What we have undertaken since our discussions, sir, and as a potential for our meeting is that we've produced a discussion paper which outlines a proposal of what we would like to discuss with you here today. At this point, this is a discussion paper only. We have not fully reviewed it or had any discussions with our board at this time, and that would naturally have to be proceeded with. However, we felt that it would be important to have a document that we could address ourselves to here today and look at various aspects of what we could undertake.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just cut in for a moment? For those listening in on the telephone, Mr. Senchuk has just distributed the discussion paper he mentioned, and of course we'll be sending copies by mail to the members who are not here.

MR. SENCHUK: Under the highlights and summaries under each of the headings, we've provided the background relative to the QCTV coverage of the question period in their part of the city of Edmonton and the tape and delay basis to other subscribers in the other communities of which they are the licensee, and that the previous coverage was undertaken by the four cable companies of Edmonton and Calgary prior to that for a period of time.

The principle objective of the service we're proposing here is to provide a greater number of people in this province with televised coverage of the proceedings and distribute it on the ACCESS Network system. We outlined the proposed coverage we have and that we propose to continue providing through ACCESS Network, CKUA radio.

In regard to distribution, using ACCESS Network via a satellite delivery system, it will provide the opportunity for the majority of cable systems in the province to receive and distribute that service that would be within our schedule.

We've attached an appendix which contains a listing of all those cable systems in Alberta that have the capability of receiving and distributing our television service and, thus, any coverage of the proceedings that would be within our schedule. We have also provided appendix B,

which indicates the number of school systems throughout our province that do not have access to cable and have equipped their schools with satellite dish receiving systems to obtain our ACCESS Network television service.

On page 2, Facilities Required — due to our corporate primary commitment of meeting the educational media needs of our clients, ACCESS Network will be operating its facilities and manpower to capacity. We're into our third year with budgetary restraints. We undertook the new service of going satellite and going into that distribution system by reallocating internal funds. Our RFD for that service did not have any funding attached to it. We've done that through internal reallocation of our existing financial resources and manpower.

What we are proposing under the "equipment required" is that the purchase and installation of the necessary technical equipment be undertaken by the Legislature, that the contracts for the manpower required for staffing and operating and television cameras for the proceedings be undertaken by the Legislature, and that we would provide and supervise the crews and see that the broadcasts are all provided. We would ensure that the technical quality of the televised proceedings meets high quality technical standards.

Fiscal Implications — I'll go back to the previous proposal we had which this committee discussed. There was a requirement for the uplink or the signal to be transmitted to satellite. There was also the satellite time requirement, and that was a very expensive process at that time because the distribution system had to be rented by the hour from Telesat Canada, whereas that system is now in place in a full operating mode under our corporate operations. However, certain technical equipment would be required; for example, wiring that is here within the system could be acquired for the modest price of \$5,500 from QCTV. Additionally, what are required to provide a broadcast system of televising from the Legislature are cameras. I believe three are being proposed in this case to provide good telecasting of all members of the Legislature who would be speaking during any of the broadcasts. The character generator and other equipment are needed to have it up to the standards of televising via satellite and full broadcast system. We're estimating the additional broadcast equipment cost to be

\$143,500, or a total one-time-only cost of \$149,000.

In the operating area we're basing the operating costs on each session, which we understand would average 10 weeks. It could be longer or shorter. We did the previous calculations based on a 10-week period, so we've stayed with that standard for the purposes of calculations under this proposal as well. There is manpower, administration, maintenance of the equipment, et cetera. There is also the distribution by microwave or other means through Alberta Government Telephones or Edmonton Tel to obtain the video/audio signals from the Legislature Building through to our facility at ACCESS Network, where it is then mixed in with our other services and uplinked via another system at Allarcom from there. We're estimating the cost to be \$27,600 for each 10-week period. So the operating costs are substantially less under this proposal than previously, when a full distribution system was not in order.

We felt that it would be of interest to provide the committee — we researched information from a number of other provincial Legislatures in Canada as to what coverage is undertaken there and who provides the expenditures to undertake that. I'll highlight them as well, if I can, for the benefit of those on the telephone. In the Quebec Legislature the equipment is owned by the government. Our counterpart Radio Quebec, the educational broadcaster in that province, is reimbursed all the costs of presenting the broadcast. They provide the proceedings of question period each day for one hour, and I believe their broadcast hour is 2 p.m.

In the province of Ontario a proposal is in the stages of being considered for presentation by our colleague there, TV Ontario. There is no coverage provided on an ongoing basis, and their understanding is that consideration will be given in the very near future to coverage of the proceedings there. Television Ontario is proposing to have the government completely responsible for all aspects of the coverage: equipment, personnel, and distribution. TV Ontario proposed to receive question period on a tape-and-delay basis. It would be taped each afternoon, and they would replay it at 11:30 that same evening. TV Ontario presently provides a question period rebroadcast of the House of Commons at 11:30. They would revert

from the House of Commons to the provincial legislative proceedings for one hour a day.

The intention for extended coverage is based on the proceedings being fed through the cable systems of other than or in addition to question period, of that programming to go forward and be distributed by cable systems through the province on another special channel, whether it be the House of Commons channel or another specially dedicated channel. I think that covers Ontario.

In Manitoba it's our understanding that one of the cable companies in Winnipeg provides audio coverage only of proceedings in the House there. In regard to question period, each day the media are in and out to provide specific coverage of what they deem is news material that they would utilize through the course of each session.

Saskatchewan is interesting. A substantial investment in equipment is being taken forward. Perhaps Ron or Malcolm might want to elaborate in regard to the Saskatchewan proposal. They're proposing to invest some \$1.5 million of equipment which is highly automated and requires only one operator. It would be distributed through the fibre-optic linked system they have devised through some 52 communities through Saskatchewan. Technically, through SaskTel they have a distribution system to provide for the majority of the proceedings in the House or a dedicated space on the fibre-optic link through the province's 52 communities to be able to deliver extensive amounts of time of the proceedings.

Just to give you a brief example, the automated equipment — whatever number of cameras, three or more — is computerized so that when each member in the House pushes the button to speak, a camera focusses on that person. The character generator identifies the speaker from the Legislature, et cetera. It's automated to where just one person is handling the computerization system and seeing that it is fully operational. So they're looking at that. In the long term and with the fibre-optic system, with extensive capacity to have it distributed through their major communities in the province, they've proceeded on that. I don't know whether it has commenced yet; I don't believe so.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's just at the proposal stage.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's in place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Clerk and I viewed the Saskatchewan system last year, and it's operational. We have a couple of videocassettes from it. It's quite impressive but also quite expensive. As Mr. Senchuk mentioned, I think it was between a million and a million and a half dollars to put it in. It's very, very highly automated. It seems very effective as the means of communication between the Legislative Assembly and people around the province.

Alan Hyland with a question.

MR. HYLAND: Yes, to Peter. Unless I misunderstand, I thought what we initially asked for when we looked at it was full coverage, not just question period coverage. I thought we were looking at full House coverage or at least coverage of the afternoon, something more than just question period, so that people get to see speeches, not just questions asked and answered.

MR. SENCHUK: Under our present mandate we provide for an educational programming service schedule which is from 10 in the morning until 10 at night. Our commitments are to educational programs through the schools, through Advanced Ed, et cetera. To provide for extended or full day's coverage would mean another transponder. It would require a distribution system to allow us to continue our regular service. Otherwise, I guess there would be great difficulty in providing the existing full programming service we now provide for the 12 hours per day.

We've brought forward information from other provinces to indicate -- for example, in TV Ontario's case, they're proposing to provide for question period coverage and the government of Ontario is expected to look at a means of another full system of coverage of the Legislature with its own dedicated distribution system to cable across that province. That is certainly possible, much like Ontario's proposal that may come forward or the existing one in Saskatchewan, where they have their own dedicated fibre-optic system for distributing the extended hours of each day of the proceedings.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Senchuk and gentlemen,

what we have here is a proposal, and I recognize that we're discussing only a proposal. The current situation is that you provide coverage in the radio medium over CKUA and through the various ACCESS Network distribution points you have for, basically, the question period on television. You're paying for that right now. There is no coverage or assistance coming forth from the Legislative Assembly.

MR. SENCHUK: No. In radio we're undertaking that expenditure within our budget.

MR. KOWALSKI: And the same applies for television? There's no assistance from the Legislative Assembly for that?

MR. SENCHUK: We don't presently provide any. We're not involved in providing any service in television now.

MR. KOWALSKI: So this proposal, basically, is to look at question period and a few special occasions during the year via television.

MR. SENCHUK: Yes. That's what we're proposing that we undertake within our service as we provide it now.

MR. KOWALSKI: The major concern this committee has looked at over the last number of years is essentially focussing on the television one. We were quite concerned about anybody simply zeroing in on the question period, that it is not a true reflection of what really happens in a Legislature. Of course, the normal sitting time for us is 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. per day. The thought was that from an educational point of view we would like to see the possibility of that 2:30 to 5:30 time frame being looked at, and failing the possibility of the 2:30 to 5:30 time frame, then perhaps looking at the 3:30 to 5:30 time frame. The 3:30 to 5:30 time frame is the one in which the basic debates occur in the Legislative Assembly. It was our view that it would be much more meaningful to the people of Alberta, from an information and education point of view, to get a true understanding of what is really happening among the elected representatives of the people.

As well, attached to that, the request would be made to ACCESS Network that if that were possible, the funding for such a proposal would

be borne by ACCESS Network via another approach you would make, of course, to the Treasury Board for assistance in that regard. So I've zeroed in now away from your proposal to another aspect of it, and you might want to deal with that as an extension of the proposal or in addition to the proposal or as a substitute for the proposal.

MR. SENCHUK: Let me first of all identify that the proposal we've put forward for discussion here is not unlike what is being undertaken by other agencies such as ours in the other provinces. Based on that, we've taken our proposal basically very similar to theirs in presenting it to you here today and in the presentation we undertook previously. During the daytime hours, which is the time period that the majority of the curriculum-related formal educational programs are telecast, we suspect that we'd find it very difficult to space in much more than one hour per day as our programming is scheduled now in the curriculum area.

Additionally, just to identify the latter part of the afternoon and at the completion of school, we're going forward this year with a homework hotline program across the province. We will have teachers in live studio interacting with students across the province, zeroing in on specific questions and problems they have. It has been very successful in two other locations in North America. We're ecstatic about this kind of program concept, whereby it's available to Alberta students across the province by a provincewide phone number they can call and be assisted with their day-to-day school difficulties in the classroom.

The proposal you outlined for extended coverage of the three hours or a two-hour period — one of the key areas to have discussions on in the immediate future would be that of the cable companies across the province, to see what time they have available for extended coverage. There is the possibility that they can accommodate additional coverage on, say, another local channel that they have available at their various locations across Alberta.

This morning we presented a proposal we felt our board would be supportive of. They haven't seen this yet, and of course it would have to be approved by the board. However, to go into this meeting this morning, we felt we should have a discussion position on what we would propose to

do and provide. We did the limited research with our colleagues in the other provinces and other Legislatures to determine the coverage that's done there and who undertakes providing the funding for that. It varies from province to province. The maximum time of any of our other colleagues is the one hour per day that's being provided within their educational television programming service. Extended service beyond that is worked out and distributed by each government through the cable systems of that province.

We would certainly be most pleased to receive your guidance here if we can look at potential options other than or in addition to what we've proposed this morning and do that in concert with, say, the cable association of Alberta.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, to Mr. Senchuk. As I understand it, this would be done via satellite and then distributed to the other cable networks in the province. Have you any indication of how many of the other cable networks would pick this up and actually do it? There are very few people who have satellite in rural Alberta. More and more are coming on every day and in the cities of Edmonton or Calgary or wherever it may be. I note with interest in your attachment of appendix A that the majority of these satellite dish placements are schools. I think four in my own constituency, just outside the city of Edmonton, have satellite dishes and pick up some of the ACCESS Network.

I guess my basic question is: how many people will we be reaching through ACCESS television coverage, regardless if it's question period or the whole three hours?

MR. SENCHUK: If you refer to page 2 of appendix B of the document, the actual number of cable subscriber households in Alberta is 522,569. It is those households in Alberta, over half a million, that have access to the ACCESS Network service at any given time. As basic cable subscribers, over half a million households have our service available to them on their television sets.

MR. PURDY: There isn't that much cable in rural Alberta to have half a million people on cable.

MR. SENCHUK: I'm talking of the entire province of Alberta. Statistics that we've obtained in the last few weeks, and it has been consistent, are that there are 522,000 cable subscribers in all the cities, towns, et cetera, throughout the province of Alberta.

MR. PURDY: I didn't realize there were that many people on cable.

MR. PENGELLY: How many are hooked into cable rurally?

MR. SENCHUK: It depends from community to community, and there are more communities all the time. Our list here is some 58, is it, Ron?

MR. LAZLOCK: Fifty-nine communities, in fact.

MR. SENCHUK: Appendix B, which is part of our submission this morning, shows 59 cities and communities across Alberta that have cable systems licensed. Our document identifies the potential number of subscribers if everyone who has access to cable subscribed to cable, and another column identifies the actual number of cable subscribers in each community in Alberta.

MR. KOWALSKI: May I ask a question for clarification? I live in the town of Barrhead, which has a population of 3,825. According to these figures, 3,669 residences actually subscribe. That's an absolute crock. There's no way that can possibly be true.

MR. HYLAND: Is that people instead of residences?

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to agree with Ken. If I'm correct, in the Innisfail constituency Innisfail is the only one that has access to cable, and that's less than one-fifth of the population of the constituency. I don't know where you get the number that are hooked up.

MR. PURDY: Nigel, your number is 1,189 according to their document.

MR. PENGELLY: Is that right? Well, that's all the voters I have.

MR. SENCHUK: These figures come from the cable companies, and in some cases a number of

communities are associated for an accumulated total. I think you'll find that in a number of cases with QCTV and some of the other cable companies. That's where the discrepancies may be coming forward.

MR. PURDY: But there is another column showing potential.

MR. SENCHUK: Yes. If every home in the licensed cable area were to subscribe, the total should be that figure. The column on the right-hand side of that identifies the actual number of subscribers at this given time. We've been provided with the figures by the cable companies.

MR. STEFANIUK: If I may ask a question, something has been pointed out to me. In Banff, for example, you show a larger number of actual subscribers than you do potential subscribers: 3,700 actual and 3,000 potential.

I think the question that was asked a few minutes ago was: of the 522,000 households that subscribe, what proportion are rural subscribers? Surely you have some idea of what proportion of those 522,000 are urban subscribers from major centres in the province — because we don't have all that many — as opposed to rural subscribers. We asked that, I think, because that is of very real interest to the vast majority of members of this Legislature, who represent rural constituencies.

MR. THOMAS: May I ask a point of clarification? What is your definition of rural and urban? If you are referring to farms as being rural, none of them are cable.

MR. STEFANIUK: What I would describe as urban are those municipalities presently defined as cities as opposed to towns and villages. I think the question might readily be answered if we knew how many of these 522,000 subscribers reside in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, and what makes up the difference.

MR. SENCHUK: We'd be pleased to do a break-out like that from the statistics and, at the same time, check the ones in this document that seem to have one or two discrepancies.

MR. STEFANIUK: Farmers are all buying

dishes, aren't they, Alan?

MR. HYLAND: They were until last year.

MR. LAZLOCK: Just on a quick count, in Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer there are 345,000. I did not include Lethbridge.

MR. PURDY: No, there aren't. There's a discrepancy there. You have 115,000 showing in Edmonton, but the people in Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, and Leduc all have access to that. So your figure of 115,000 for Edmonton is misleading.

MR. LAZLOCK: Your constituency of Stony Plain is serviced by Shaw Cable.

MR. PURDY: Isn't it QC?

MR. HYLAND: How do you know? You never get time to watch it.

MR. PURDY: That's where I'm getting the figure of 115,000 — Shaw Cable.

MR. SENCHUK: A number of areas are licensed under Shaw and a number under QCTV, but they come in as an overall total figure in the stats they've provided to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any suggestion from members of the committee as to how we proceed further with this topic? Alan Hyland mentioned that our original concern was that there should be coverage that would not be exclusively devoted to question period. Does the committee want to go further and consider the rest of the afternoon, or have we in mind that we'd like to go back to what we had for one Legislature, when the coverage extended from opening to adjournment each day?

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Senchuk said that he would be willing to contact the cable companies to get a better handle on what time and space they have available, if it is possible to go the full day or if you have to start a whole new channel or what. I think we should wait until we get that back, and maybe in the meantime whether ACCESS can do it or the Legislature should do it. What about AGT? Do they have enough of this fibre optic in the ground to provide service if it's not available on satellite; i.e., as you say

Saskatchewan is looking at?

MR. SENCHUK: Over the last number of years Saskatchewan has set up an extensive fibre-optic system that they have designed and put in place across that province. As I understand it, there is not the same kind of system established in Alberta by AGT, with a high-capacity, fibre-optic link that links city to city throughout the province. In AGT's case, they have the terrestrial microwave system capability of delivering audio/video material.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments or queries from members of the committee?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, when the committee last looked at this item, on March 20, the motion was essentially that Mr. Senchuk be invited to attend a meeting of the committee. It was our intent to gather more information with respect to this, and I think we have. We're now going to have to basically digest some of the information that's been brought to our attention today, and we'll have to determine what kind of further information we will request of the ACCESS Network.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about Mr. Senchuk's kind offer to explore the availability of cable time with other companies?

MR. KOWALSKI: That would be most welcome.

MR. SENCHUK: We'd be pleased to do that. We'll also provide an update or replacement to appendix B, if you would be so kind as to let us do that for you. I'll go back to all these folks and get some clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I suggest, too, that if possible, Mr. Senchuk and his staff give some consideration as to whether there would be any relationship between the projected cost for covering the question period and more extended coverage. For example, assuming that this covers about an hour a day, can we assume that this would be a per-hour rate? If the equipment is in place, it can be used; that wouldn't change.

MR. SENCHUK: For whatever the requirements are. There would be no change there, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the operating costs would change.

MR. SENCHUK: Yes. The operating costs, based on a 10-week period of five hours per week, two hours a day -- one hour for setup and getting organized and one hour of question period. So that's 10 hours per week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We would get greater use of the cost of the setup time if we had more extended coverage. That wouldn't be multiplied by the number of hours.

MR. KNOX: The only other consideration is that the cost of carrying the signal throughout the province might go up. If we are talking about covering the full activities in the Legislature, ACCESS may not be in a position to cover that, so you're back to the original position of having to either rent satellite space or some alternate system. Then you would have that distribution cost added to it again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes.

MR. SENCHUK: To use an example, say the one hour of question period was undertaken, similar to what this proposal outlines. If there was a desire for two hours of extended service, your equipment is in place. The additional cost would be the terrestrial or satellite or whatever distribution and delivery to the cable systems, because ACCESS Network itself is on other programs following that one-hour telecast. So an alternative space requirement, satellite or otherwise, would be required for the additional two hours each day.

MR. HYLAND: But you'll have a better idea of that when you talk to them about where it fits in.

MR. SENCHUK: To determine what it is they're capable of doing, by and large by most of the cable systems in the province. The receipt and distribution is in place of ACCESS Network's schedule. So that one hour each day is there and is reaching all the TV sets we normally reach with our service. Then it's a question of an alternative channel each cable company would have, to see what can be arranged there and what coverage they could provide for additional time.

MR. HYLAND: Maybe my son will watch me on ACCESS instead of Polka Dot Door or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions or comments? On behalf of everyone here and on the telephone, I'd like to very cordially thank Mr. Senchuk and the senior staff from ACCESS who came with him. We look forward to getting the additional information. I don't think anyone should be horribly distressed about a couple of figures being reversed, especially since that never happens in the Legislative Assembly.

MR. SENCHUK: Thank you very much. I'll be back to your office next week to commence the additional information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Can we go back to our agenda? We discussed items 3(a), (b), and (c). We now have item 3(d), Long-Term Disability Insurance. For today, if members of the committee agree, I think we can deal with that only as a report item, because the information we got didn't arrive in time to be included in the books. I suggest that we distribute that information to all the members. We have it for those who are here; we'll mail it to those who are not. Then we'll put it on the agenda for the next meeting. Is that acceptable?

MR. HYLAND: Just a question. I sent a memo to you enclosing a copy of a memo from Stan Nelson on May 20. He had looked over some information that was sent out. It simply asked why MLAs aren't covered by long-term disability and indicated his support for coverage for long-term disability. I briefly read this stuff over, and it talks about percentage. What are we talking about in dollars?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was told that that was difficult to calculate, but I think we can get a little closer to it than that. The question is what is going to be included. As you'll see from the information provided, only ministerial salaries were included originally. I'm not sure whether or not their MLA indemnities are included now, but I don't think they are.

MR. HYLAND: At that rate, what would be the rough cost of this insurance coverage?

MR. STEFANIUK: One percent of salary. That's 1 percent of what we have in the budget for MLA indemnities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would depend on what is decided on, but it seems to me we would have to have some regard as to whether the tax-free allowance would be included in the reckoning. I can't see it being . . .

MR. HYLAND: Is my arithmetic right or wrong? Twenty-one thousand dollars?

MR. ELIUK: One percent. That's right.

MR. HYLAND: That's all. And that would cover every member.

MR. STEFANIUK: That would be the cost to the public purse. Then, of course, there is a contribution to be made by the participant as well.

MR. HYLAND: Yes. It's 2 percent or something in total, isn't it? One percent each?

MR. STEFANIUK: I believe that's the case.

MR. HYLAND: To me, that doesn't seem that great for that kind of coverage. If the person wants it, they should be willing to share their 1 percent of the cost if they feel it's worth while.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Included in the information is a reference to there so far not having been any claim among the cabinet ministers. Consequently, the claims procedure has never been tested or tried.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I don't think the coverage that is provided to cabinet ministers is any different from that which is provided to management in the public service. We have had some experience with claims on that basis. It appears to me that there is a waiting period of approximately 80 days, during which time the person is on full sick-leave benefit, which means an entitlement to full salary. Thereafter, the long-term disability coverage steps in, and if I'm not mistaken, that is in the area of 75 percent of the earnings. There is no limitation on the time during which that disability can be paid. It can be paid for a lifetime.

MR. HYLAND: How does the MLA workers' compensation Act work into this? Does that cover this? Is it covered in a backward way?

MR. STEFANIUK: There is an M.L.A. Compensation Act.

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. ELIUK: It's totally separate and removed from this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? We'll put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next item, 3(e), was a query as to whether the group life insurance coverage of former members could, upon their ceasing to be members — that is, members who are members and cease to be members, become former members — be continued. The answer is yes. Thus far I have only one copy of the booklet. I'll get copies for all the members and send them out. There are certain terms and conditions, one of which is that the member has to decide and act on it within 30 days.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's very good. We'll come back to that at the next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. I just got the information a few days ago and got only one copy of the booklet that sets out the terms. I'll get enough copies and send them out. Perhaps in a preliminary way, I need to send them only to members of the committee. Then if the thing goes ahead, or whatever the committee decides, we can get them for all members.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next one, item 3(f), Agreement for Engaging Constituency Office Assistance, is a topic that you may recall caused a little distress to some members. One of the things they were concerned about in the proposed new form of agreement with constituency help was a statement at the end that they were not employees. I can only repeat what I said at that time: that is not a statement of fact; that's a conclusion of law which a person signing a contract is entitled to

put in there if they want to. Someone else may not agree with that legal opinion, but a person is entitled to hold it if he wants to.

I would like to suggest that we should encourage the use of these forms. They have been recommended to us by legal counsel experienced in taxation matters, and they'll provide a reinforcement for the position taken by the members from the beginning, that constituency office staff are not ordinary employees. I don't think it requires a decision on the part of the committee. Perhaps it requires a recommendation that we proceed to put these forms into use. We can't dictate to the members, but we can certainly recommend that they use these forms in engaging constituency office help.

Could we go off the recording of the transcript just for a moment?

[The recorder was turned off from 10:24 a.m. to 10:29 a.m.]

Under item 3(f), it's been moved by Mr. Kowalski that we accept the recommended form, which is the pink form among the support material in your books this morning. Is there any further discussion or comment? Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone contra? The motion is carried.

Next is item 3(g), Members' Office Automation. I guess that's more in the nature of a progress report. How is that working out?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I'll just briefly report on that. The information I've received certainly indicates that it's been going very well. It's well received in the offices by the secretaries and by the members themselves. It seems to have really enhanced the functioning of the offices. Probably all I can say is thank you to Bob Bubba and Sheila Unger, who have done an excellent job in seeing that the system is functioning. I think it behooves us now to look at certain long-term goals in adding to the system and looking at what future capabilities we could utilize.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Under the circumstances, would the committee agree

that we could drop this item from our agenda and just restore it in case a concern arises?

MR. HYLAND: Was this the six-month checkup? No, the six-month review is coming yet. This is three months.

MR. KOWALSKI: No, this is pretty close now. The first review that we want would be June.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's your wish?

MR. STEFANIUK: It was installed before the House went in.

MR. HYLAND: Four months ago. We had some trouble with placement, but that seems to be working out. The only thing I've seen — and I guess it's a common thing with all the printers. When I talked to the fellow who was fixing it one day, I asked him if we had a lemon in our corner. He said he didn't believe in lemons. I said I did, because I've had some of them. It's apparently a common thing that a certain motor in a printer just isn't heavy enough. Maybe it would work if just one person was working on it, but when more than one is working on it, the motor keeps burning out. I don't know if they are all like the one we have in our corner or not.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I can answer that question if you like.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do.

MRS. EMBURY: Actually, to get into details, which I wasn't going to bother with unless somebody raised specifics, naturally when any system goes on stream, there are going to be a few problems that need to be worked out. The member has certainly identified one of the areas that has caused some concern. There are two reasons for the problems with the printers. Number one is that there has been utilization of different weights of paper and different size envelopes, which I'm sure can be corrected in the near future by standardizing the type of paper and size of envelopes used. That has created problems. The second problem with the printer sheet feeder results from a design fault in the eject motor of the sheet feeder, which causes it to burn out and damage the related circuit board. The manufacturer is

cognizant of this, and the solution is being worked on. I think that answers the member's question.

MR. HYLAND: I have only one other question. At one time they were talking about getting more -- what do you call it? -- things that hold the paper and the envelopes.

MR. STEFANIUK: Feeder trays.

MR. HYLAND: Feeder trays. Are they still going to do that? Then they were going to be able to just pull the tray out and shove a new tray in instead of changing paper all the time.

MR. STEFANIUK: What we ran into, to the best of my knowledge at the moment, is a problem with triple feeder trays relative to the machine's ability to perform. I think that is what Mrs. Embury is defining as the solution that is being sought at the present moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments or queries?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think there are two aspects. Sheila, I appreciate the report you've obtained for this June 18, 1985, meeting. I'd like to suggest that we retain this as an item on the agenda and that we come back to it in, say, three months' time. I'd like to have two items discussed with it at that time. One would be the question of the personal computer interface, which is identified on page 3. When we talked about this and originally putting it in, we indicated that one of the extensions of the system we would like to see is the connection to word processor or computer systems that might now be in existence in constituency offices. There's a paragraph that indicates that the NBI processor we currently have can only talk to an IBM personal computer. I would like to ask the Clerk to have one of his people see what the possibility is or the implications are of extending the system whereby our NBI system here can talk to computers that currently exist in constituency offices. I don't know if it's possible or not, but I'd like to get some professional advice with respect to it.

The second item associated with it as well is looking at the system we currently have and seeing what we can do in adding to it that would

make it more efficient and effective in terms of major mailouts. I'm not sure if that's a peculiar kind of equipment that has to be looked at or an addition and what the level of the problem is, but it's the possibility and potential of the current system for larger use mailouts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's your ballpark figure of what's major?

MR. KOWALSKI: I do not have a definition of one right now. I would like us to come back to that when we get some more information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed that we have covered the topic for the time being and that it will be included on the agenda of the first meeting that happens after a lapse of another three months?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next topic is a progress report on the purchase order books for constituency offices. Mr. Eliuk is here, and he has been working on that. We have a draft modification of a purchase order, and I think you have some support material in that regard in your books that you might want to look at. We're trying to make it as simple and convenient as possible.

MR. HYLAND: Briefly, in the squared-off paragraph almost at the bottom, it says: the goods mentioned in the above order are for the use of the government. Shouldn't that be "Legislative Assembly"?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quite.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes, it should.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on that topic? Have members thought of things they would like included or avoided in this exercise?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I have a question I'd like to ask, please. I've certainly been in support of this type of book, although I don't want to load down the secretary in my constituency office with any more work; she doesn't need it. I'm willing to support it if it's perceived that this will aid in the system of accounting. I see this as one solution, but I

don't see this as the only solution. A lot of concerns have come to my attention from the items on our computer printouts and things like that. I'm wondering if maybe we as MLAs are not using the printout correctly. When we receive it, we look at it and say, "Yes, that's fine; that's where we're at." It's expected that we look at it and question the items that may be on it. If Mr. Eliuk is there, I'm wondering if he could not speak of any changes that will occur in his office, where, I understand, a lot of the mistakes result from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not so sure I agree with that last comment.

MRS. EMBURY: That's your prerogative, sir, as chairman and as an individual.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can back it up.

MRS. EMBURY: I can back that statement up, which I'm certainly willing to do at another time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. ELIUK: With respect to your concern, Sheila, the purchase order system should provide members with better control over their commitments. It will also provide us with feedback ahead of time on what commitments have been made by members against any of their allowances. The printout itself is a snapshot of the commitments we have processed at a certain point in time and does not include any possible commitments which may have been made without our prior knowledge, those being commitments made without a direct purchase order. So there is a certain amount of control and added accounting responsibility, I suppose, that falls within the constituency office, but we want to try to minimize that as much as possible. The way we propose to minimize that is that at the time of issuing a purchase order, we would receive a copy of that purchase order. We would then know ahead of time what commitments had been made. If there were invoices that we were expecting and had not received, particularly crucial toward the end of the fiscal year, we would be able to follow up on it.

MRS. EMBURY: Thanks very much, Chuck. I

appreciate that explanation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I ask a question? Would it be your intention that once the purchase order copy comes to your office, that would be reflected in the next current printout?

MR. ELIUK: I intend to make it somewhat of a credit memo. It would be an indication to the member that there is a commitment; however, it has not yet been paid.

MR. HYLAND: A couple of questions. First, this wouldn't be only constituency offices. It would be the secretary here and/or the MLA. You could have three sources of this. Wouldn't it be easier to fill out one of these than having to write a separate memo every time you wanted a bag of pins or a book, or going up to your office and filling out a quick memo and signing it? It would take the place of all these things. So as far as work, it won't mean any more work for anybody. It will mean less work, because it's easier to fill this out than to type up a memo.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. ELIUK: Let's hope that it will streamline.

MR. HYLAND: I move we go for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan is about to move that we approve the idea of having purchases made for constituency office purposes ordered on direct purchase order forms. Perhaps we could take it in two stages. If you want to agree with Alan's motion, the next stage would be to develop a purchase order form which would put that into effect.

MR. HYLAND: This one is good enough, except for the one change. Let's be careful about using the words "constituency office". Why don't we use "members" or something like that. If you start using "constituency office", you're going to tag it to that office, and that leaves out the offices up here. We know what we want, and let's just . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: There are three different funds that this direct purchase order would apply to. Perhaps there's need for clarification on this particular form as to which one the

direct purchase order is for.

MR. ELIUK: Further to that, Ken, with the explanation on the purchase order, the girls will be able to determine from the expenditure code what it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So would you agree that your motion refers to the three allowances that are now being paid to members with regard to constituency services?

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess the motion will have to be reworded a little for the minutes, but I think it's clear. Do the members agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone contra? The motion is carried.

I think that covers everything except item 5(b), John Gogo's proposal. We haven't sufficient information on that as yet. We have some, but what we're looking for is cost figures. We have some preliminary information from Blue Cross, but we haven't cost figures for the various plans that are available, which depend on the extent of the coverage, whether full or partial. I propose getting the rest of this information, which I think we can get within the next 10 days, sending it out to the members before hand, and then bringing the matter up again at the next meeting. In the meantime, I'll give a progress report to John Gogo. Is that all right?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other Other Business? Any comments with regard to the date of the next meeting?

MR. KOWALSKI: I really don't see the need for one in July.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: Perhaps we can tentatively schedule one for August, but if there are no pending items on the agenda, just let it go till September.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're in vacation time. Would everyone agree with the last suggestion made by Ken, that we plan for another meeting in September?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about a date?

MR. KOWALSKI: The schedule is usually the second Wednesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The usual second Wednesday? Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That will be September 11.

MR. HYLAND: Relating to this TV coverage, in the meantime I wonder if -- I don't think ACCESS is going to do it, but maybe they are -- somebody could ask AGT what their capacity to carry something like this would be. Then we would have the whole rounded thing to make our decision on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. HYLAND: They may not have the capacity. Maybe we have to go to satellite.

MR. STEFANIUK: May I for a moment, Mr. Chairman, on that subject? It seems to me that the question as to what we want to do in the long term for TV coverage of the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is very broad. In my estimation, there are two very important programs that are under way now. The one in Saskatchewan, which the Speaker and I viewed, is totally self-contained. We were impressed with the type of coverage and type of equipment they have in the House to begin with. I think the gentlemen who were here from ACCESS suggested that they have three cameras. The fact is that they have five, which automatically zoom in on the member as soon as his microphone is activated.

The Ottawa coverage is very similar except that it goes several steps further. I just spent a little time with the administrator of the House of Commons in Ottawa and had a pretty in-detail look at the TV operation there. What they are offering members in Ottawa is

absolutely phenomenal. The members have access to 100 channels out of 2,900 locations on Parliament Hill. For example, a member can request a replay of a given segment of a sitting of the House of Commons or of a committee of the House of Commons. A member can dial in a channel and see the Order Paper on any given day flashed up on the screen.

MR. HYLAND: He can sit in his office and watch it.

MR. STEFANIUK: Virtually everything. It's quite a system.

I think this question of coverage and how we're going to address it merits some very special consideration. I respectfully suggest a sitting of this committee dedicated entirely to it, with expertise brought in to assist with the technical advice.

As I read the ACCESS presentation this afternoon, they were in fact saying: all we can give you is one hour's coverage — the question period. The question that arises in my mind as a result of that is: why do we want to go to ACCESS and spend any money? We're getting question period covered now by QCTV at no direct charge to the taxpayer, and ACCESS is offering us nothing but the same kind of coverage, worked through ACCESS. Why do it?

If we're interested in the total proceedings, it seems to me that we're going to have to consider the kind of thing that has been done in the House of Commons for a longer period of time and in Saskatchewan for a shorter period of time. The Saskatchewan thing is operational. It's going now; it's working beautifully. It's true that it takes only one person at the console at any given time to operate this entire conglomerate in Saskatchewan, but the fact is that they have three people on staff because one person cannot sit there for that entire length of time without being subjected to some very unreasonable fatigue. They have to have three people on staff so they can spell each other off. They cover not only the afternoon sittings but all the evening sittings of the House as well.

Those are considerations which I think will have to be made in the longer term. I think one of the prime considerations is going to be: do we in Alberta want to spend a million or a million and a half dollars to ensure that citizens throughout the province are provided with TV

coverage of what goes on in their Legislature?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the suggestion made that at some future time we consider devoting a meeting to this topic?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose we go about it this way. We'll be getting some additional information from ACCESS. I think we can provide you with additional information about Saskatchewan. At the next meeting we could consider fixing a date which the committee might find acceptable for a meeting devoted to dealing with this topic. We have, for example, two videotape cassettes from Saskatchewan, which I think would be quite informative.

MR. KOWALSKI: And if we could get one from Ottawa, that would be excellent as well.

MR. HYLAND: If we leave it to the next meeting to set a date, we'll be so far down — let alone not getting the fall session covered, we won't get the next spring session covered. We'll be in the middle of the following spring session before we get it in place. If we did decide to go, it's going to take a lot of time and planning.

MR. STEFANIUK: But, you see, ACCESS is saying to you at the moment, "We only have time to give you the question period." It appears to me that unless there is a change of heart by ACCESS, we have to approach some other source if we're going to think in terms of immediate coverage.

MR. HYLAND: I'm thinking the same thing as you are, Bo, except I'm saying that if we wait a long time to have a meeting about it, it's that much further down the road.

MR. STEFANIUK: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you prepared to consider now the setting of a date for a special meeting to go in depth into the question of television and radio coverage of the proceedings of the House? I think one of the things we have to keep in mind is sufficient lead time to get some of the experts who were referred to.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, was the member suggesting a summer meeting?

MR. HYLAND: No, all I was suggesting, Sheila, is that by the look of the agenda and the amount of stuff that will be left on it -- about two items -- why couldn't the September meeting be devoted almost to that? Unless a lot of things come along in the summertime, there aren't going to be a lot of other agenda items for September.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We could try to minimize the September agenda by sending out in advance the information on the various items you're waiting for information on, and they might not even have to appear on the agenda.

MR. HYLAND: Whatever we do, we've got to have enough time to get a lot of material together. September gives us almost three months. We're a week late with this one. Is that enough time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been suggested that we use the September meeting for this purpose. Is there any comment on that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How about our telephone audience?

MRS. EMBURY: Agreed.

MR. PENGELLY: As long as it isn't sooner. Yes, agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's agreed, and this will be the major item for our September meeting.

MR. PENGELLY: Agreed.

MR. KOWALSKI: One last item that I'd like Mr. Stefaniuk to bring us up to date on is the result of his discussions with the people in Ottawa about those citizenship lists. I can't recall if we were on or off the record before.

MR. STEFANIUK: I met with two representatives from the department of the Secretary of State. I suggested to them that the bulk lists were of no use to us and that, indeed, our members have access to federal

members' lists which would provide a finer breakdown. They were horrified to learn that federal members would share those lists, which were given to them in absolute and utter confidence. However, they agreed that for the moment they could supply us with lists that were broken down by federal ridings.

I advanced the discussion a stage further and suggested that what we really wanted was a facility which would enable us to break the list down by provincial constituencies. That, of course, was something they were not willing to do for us. I suggested to them, in turn, that we didn't really want them to do it for us but provide us with a disk which would, in fact, contain the information, inform us of the technical specifications of the disk, and we, in turn, would take that information and do our own sort, because we could write a sort program for it. They will investigate and get back to me on it. I believe they will get back to me on it.

Depending on what their answer is, I think we may need to pursue the question with perhaps some higher authorities in the department. If they tell me it's impossible to share the disk, I don't think we should readily accept that, because they can dump onto a floppy disk all the information pertaining to Alberta. If they trust us with hard copy, then they should certainly trust us with the information that's on a disk.

They appeared to be very sensitive about transmission of information via telephone lines. I suggested that that was one of the alternatives, but they informed me that they had some very real security problems with transmission of information via telephone lines. In fact, the RCMP was presently involved in looking at the security aspects of telephone line transmission. So I suggested to them that if that was a concern, then the floppy disk by itself would eliminate the risk that might be incurred by using telephone lines.

We're waiting to hear, but in the meantime we will have, with the next edition, a breakdown by federal ridings at least, which will help us somewhat in an interim period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed that if the department of the Secretary of State does not follow through on the disk idea, we'll follow up on that and report to the members?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion for adjournment to September 11. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much to everybody for taking part.

MR. PENGELLY: Have a good summer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You too.

[The committee adjourned at 10:58 a.m.]

