

[Chairman: Mr. Amerongen] [9:05 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the meeting to order. The first is approval of the minutes of the meeting of September 18. Are there any comments, or is there a motion?

MR. PENGELLY: I so move, Gerry.

MR. KOWALSKI: Are we going to have an item, Business Arising out of the Minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We weren't. The committee decided this meeting would be devoted to budget.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's fine, except there's one item in the minutes, and that's the top one on the page that's numbered at the bottom 22.85:

MOVED by the Hon. Dr. Reid that the administration provide stationery and office supplies from its general administration budget, whereas furniture and equipment should be provided from Members' constituency office allowance or other special allowance.

When we were talking about that item the other day, we were talking about a series of items that were identified on a sheet of paper.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: The one clarification that is important to me is that the way that particular motion reads, or at least the way it comes out, is not the way I thought we drafted it the other day. One could get the impression here that if an hon. member needed to get equipment such as a typewriter, that would in essence have to come under one of those particular allowances. Of course, that's certainly not the intent. I want to raise that point here for clarification, because three, four, or five years from now, whoever the hon. members are sitting around the table might go back to this motion and say, "That's what you did at that time." It's that point of clarification. We're not talking about typewriters and that sort of equipment.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, to the best of my knowledge, equipment has always been

provided for through special budgetary items. That has included typewriters, telephone answering equipment -- all equipment that has been described as standard equipment. Special budgets have been developed in the past for that. More recently, where members have elected in some instances to install word processing or data processing equipment and that has not been provided for out of special budgets for such purposes on a universal basis, members have had to find the funding for those items within their respective allowances.

MR. KOWALSKI: What you're basically saying, Mr. Clerk, is that your definition of special allowance does not apply to promotional allowance or something like that.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. I read that and said: on one hand you have members' constituency office allowances or their special allowance . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you be happier if we took out the word "allowance" and put in "funding."?

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That it has to be reworded?

MRS. EMBURY: That it has to be reworded, and maybe we could work on it. I think the two points have to be separated. It really looks like you're saying that furniture should come from the constituency allowance, not from a special allowance. I see what Bohdan is saying but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose we develop alternate wording and circulate it to the committee within the next few days.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. KOWALSKI: It's just a matter of clarification. I know what the intent was.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The words should express the intent.

Is there anything else arising out of the minutes? There is a special item coming up on

pensionable fees and whether they're going to be retroactive, but let's finish dealing with the minutes.

MR. KOWALSKI: The only other point is pedantic. We had a date; the next meeting was set for Wednesday, October 2, and somehow the meeting was adjusted to today. I'd like you to know, Mr. Chairman, that because of the adjustment from October 2 to today I have to leave at 10:30. I hope that won't cause any major problems for committee members.

MR. PURDY: I came back a day early too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else? Could we take your motion as an amendment or should we take Nigel's motion as including ... Nigel, suppose we take your motion as amended by Ken's proposal?

MR. PENGELLY: I beg your pardon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken made a comment with regard to resolution 85.77, and the question is: will you accept that as an amendment to your motion and we'll put the motion through as approving the minutes except for rewording that particular resolution and submitting the wording to the members?

MR. PENGELLY: Yes I will.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have no visitors, have we? Yes. Any concerns of visitors? No. Can we go to the estimates?

MR. STEFANIUK: I wonder if you might want to dispose of the other business item first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because it's included. All right. A question has arisen as to whether fees earned by members for attending committee meetings become pensionable at a future date, such as November 1, or whether that should be retroactive or retrospective to cover fees earned by members in the past for serving on committees. Michael is here with a text, but I should mention that if we do want to make it retroactive or retrospective, we have to decide

how far. We could go back an awfully long way into the past to say that fees earned by members I don't know how many years back are now pensionable provided the necessary adjustments are made.

MRS. CRIPPS: I thought we dealt with this last spring and agreed that as of this calendar year all fees would be included. I thought that decision was made a long time ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I checked the transcript, and although there seemed to be an indication of a feeling that the thing should be retroactive, there was no decision made as to a date.

MR. PURDY: I'd have to go back and check the record, but I think I made the statement that it should be retroactive to when a person first came into the Assembly, if he wants to pay that back pension.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't recall seeing that.

MR. PURDY: I'm not sure, but that's been my thought anyway.

MR. KOWALSKI: My understanding is the same as Mr. Purdy's. The principle that applies with all the pension plans is that if you have previous service, you can buy it back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Am I right that once you cease being a member and go on pension, you may no longer make adjustments like buying past time? In other words, if we make this retroactive to the beginning of service of a member, it doesn't get us into problems with people who are no longer members.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will cover only presently serving members.

MR. PURDY: I think we set a precedent about two or three years ago regarding my role as Deputy Chairman, when in 1982 or '83 I bought back to 1979, when I took over that role.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's true, but that didn't include committee fees.

MR. PURDY: But at that time that particular

position I hold in the Legislative Assembly was not pensionable either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Michael is here to explain the law as to whether or not it can be done under the present text.

MR. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, the first point I want to make is that I believe this committee does not have the power to actually direct whether or not it be retroactive. It's a matter of legislation; it's not a question on which this committee can make an order. We have to deal with the legislation as it's written.

To go back a bit in history, the Bill came out including committee payments as being pensionable. I then learned, almost by accident, that it was the intention to introduce a government amendment to remove that. After some correspondence and discussion with the Provincial Treasurer, they agreed that it was appropriate to leave it in, and it was left in. The Bill as drafted was not amended in that particular section.

I discovered quite recently that the intention of Treasury in drafting the legislation was not to make it retroactive. They have told me that verbally, but their intention is not particularly relevant in interpreting it.

In reading the legislation, to me it seems that there is absolutely no distinction made as to the effective date between indemnity, government board and commission payments, and committee payments. They're all dealt with in the same way. They're all defined in 1(s) as salary, and there's no statement here that committee payments are only to be included as from the effective date of this particular piece of legislation. All the other items are included in the same way under the definition. There is an argument both ways. One could argue that the legislation only includes committee payments as from the effective date of this. When one is establishing a future pension, starting maybe next year, whether one can look back into history to see what the entitlement is is a question of whether the Act is retrospective. It's not really retroactive in that it doesn't go back into the past and change people's past pension payments. That's what retroactivity would be.

Understanding the committee's wishes -- in essence, it's probably only of importance to buy back about three years, unless members'

committee activities have been very up and down over the last few years, because generally when they're establishing their pension payment, they'll be taking the highest three-year average, which is quite often the final three-year average. So if somebody were going on pension in a fairly short time from now, if they had gone back three years and paid for their committee service over the previous three years, that would probably give them the optimum pension benefit. So for the member to make 7.5 percent contributions back for 15 years and for the Legislative Assembly Office budget to provide for an employer contribution for 15 years doesn't seem to be necessary, because for the pensionability it is only important to establish your base three years.

As to whether or not the Act can be administered either way, I believe it probably can. Without having any interest in what the Treasurer's original intention was, because intent is not a part of interpretation, in my view you can read this Act quite clearly to show that committee payments are to be included.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Retroactively.

MR. CLEGG: Retrospectively, yes. So that in establishing a pension in the future, it's calculated on the basis of those committee payments. To get this done, I have suggested that a resolution be drafted requesting that the Provincial Treasurer administer the Act in such a way as to make them retrospective. There are (inaudible) to make regulations in here if they feel that's necessary. I think one would leave it to them to determine whether they want to pass a regulation dealing with that. I think it's possible to administer a retrospective feature with respect to committee payments without their passing any regulations. But this committee doesn't have to pass any orders; it just has to say to the Provincial Treasurer, "We request you to administer this Act with retrospective effect for committee payments."

It's clear from the previous discussion that members wish to have it retrospective, and it was asked that the administration look into the question of retrospectivity and clarify it, which is what we're now doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Suppose we were to ask to have it effective as of November 2, 1982? That takes us back three years; that's the election

day.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, that's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I suggest we avoid any semantic problems with regard to retroactivity and retrospectivity. I respectfully think it does affect past rights, because you're using the past as part of the calculation. But that's beside the point. Why don't we simply say that we request Treasury to administer this item with effect and regard to committee fees as of November 2, 1985?

MRS. EMBURY: '82.

MR. CHAIRMAN: '82, sorry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to hear the text or ...?

MR. CLEGG: I've suggested a memorandum to the chairman. I suggested a motion that read: Be it resolved that the Provincial Treasurer be requested to administer the Members of the Legislative Assembly Pension Plan Act so as to allow committee allowances to be included as from November 2, 1982, and to provide for the payment of the contributions in respect thereof.

That would cover contributions from both the employer, being the Legislative Assembly office, and the members.

Now, the only other question I want to put to you is whether you want to add the complication of making this elective; in other words, only for members who decide to buy it back. You can provide for it to be done for either all members -- in which case they have to make the contribution -- or you can say that those members who want to, can contribute. That would be more complicated, but obviously it's possible. I think that's something the committee should also deal with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why don't we simply say "for those members who make the back payments"?

MR. KOWALSKI: I agree with that in principle, for the MLA pension plan is an elective one anyway. You choose to take it or you choose

not to take it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Some of us here have been speaking rather softly. Can those attending by phone hear what's being said?

MR. HYLAND: More or less.

MR. PENGELLY: Part of it.

MR. GURNETT: It's very difficult, actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gee, I'm sorry. I've been one of the culprits or the culprit, and I'm farthest away from the box.

We're talking about the pension entitlements based on fees that members have earned by serving on committees; in other words, those fees to be added to their member salaries in calculating pension entitlement. Since it hasn't been done in the past, it'll be necessary, if the thing is going to take effect on a date in the past, for members who wish to take advantage of that to make catch-up payments. We've now reached a point where, unless there are questions or further comments, perhaps we can vote on a resolution which would provide that a request be made of Treasury that this entitlement be made effective as of November 2, 1982, for those members who elect to make up the necessary payments.

MR. HYLAND: Gerry, is that the effective date of the last Legislative Assembly Act?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it isn't. As was pointed out, it doesn't do us any good to go back further than three years, because when your pension is calculated, it's calculated on the basis of your highest three years.

MR. HYLAND: Yes, but it was just three years ago that the Legislative Assembly Act was passed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's true, but according to the opinion we have from Michael Clegg, although it has been passed since that time, the text of the Act permits making it effective from an earlier date.

MR. HYLAND: A question to Michael. What does that do for those on boards and others? Does that take it back to that date too?

Because those on boards have been paying according to when the Legislative Assembly Act became effective and not according to 1982.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, so far there's been no reference to changing that situation, Alan. We're dealing only with committee fees.

MR. HYLAND: Yes, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

MR. HYLAND: If it sets a precedent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right, okay.

Any other questions or comments? Is that your motion, Ken? Whose motion is that?

MR. CLEGG: No member has made the motion yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does somebody want to?

MR. PURDY: I move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Bill Purdy. Are you ready for the question?

MR. PENGELLY: Ready.

MR. HYLAND: Ready.

MR. GURNETT: Ready.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can those on the telephone say aye or nay?

MR. HYLAND: You call the question and we will.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question. Jim?

MR. GURNETT: Aye, agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Nigel?

MR. PENGELLY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those present in the meeting in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? It's carried.

Now, if there's nothing further, can we go to the estimates? We have an updated version of the introduction with an explanation of codes and terms. The next item is a copy of the Deputy Provincial Treasurer's memorandum of June 21 this year to all deputy ministers and equivalents, followed by a copy of the Provincial Treasurer's memo to all ministers. We then go to a summary of the figures which shows the percentage change for all the items. You will notice some significant percentages there, but in each case, except for the two opposition budgets, you'll find explanatory notes at the places under the tabs where you have the particulars.

MR. CLEGG: I'll be downstairs if you don't need me for anything else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. We can thank Mr. Clegg.

MR. CLEGG: I'll be available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, he'll be in his office. Thanks very much, Michael.

Now, do you want to go from the summary to the individual tabs? That's the place where you'll find the explanations. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: Can I raise a question about the manner in which you're going to be dealing with this this morning?

First of all, I'm really quite impressed with the amount of detail and the organization of this document.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think this is the best single book we've ever had before us when we come to look at these estimates, and I really want to congratulate everybody for putting that together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's Chuck here and the Clerk.

MR. KOWALSKI: They certainly have my appreciation for competence with respect to it.

How we're going to deal with this this morning is a matter of interest to me. I just want to raise this thought. I hope that we would have an overview made of this, so that we can feel comfortable with it. I know that all of us have had an opportunity to flip through the pages and see it, but I'd like to get just a general overview from the Clerk or yourself, as the chairman of this committee, with respect to this document. While I suppose we might — by the time I have to depart, anyway — get through all these items, I somehow think we're not going to. I would like this overview before we start doing any voting on it at all, because there may be some adjustments back and forth. I want to feel more comfortable with the overview on all of these items before we get to the specifics, just so I have the feeling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps if we go into an overview, we're very shortly going to be into the specifics of this summary. The general intent, of course, has been restraint, and the significant differences that you see in the summary result either from the shifting of items from one category to another or from the provision that's been made in these estimates for the addition of four members. That's a policy decision for the committee to make, because we naturally don't know when the next election is going to occur. The chances are that if it occurs during the fiscal year covered by these estimates, we would have to go for a special warrant in order to look after those additional four members, with their indemnities, their various allowances and staff, and so on.

Is there anything else that should be added to that overview?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I think the members may want to note that the bulk of the proposed increase from last year is accounted for by the provision for four new members. The fact is that Treasury's budget bureau was consulted relative to including the estimate for four additional members in this budgetary proposal. It has been included mainly because Treasury felt that it was advisable to do so. We acted on their advice in preparing these estimates.

The other portion of the increase, other than

the provision for the services, facilities, and indemnities for four new members, is accounted for by a very careful study of actual experience in this past year and by knowledge of certain increases in costs that will occur, over which we have virtually little control. For example, we know that postage rates have recently gone up and are going to affect our costs in the '86-87 budget year. We have no control over that kind of item. Other than that, the increases really reflect experience and practice over the past year.

MR. KOWALSKI: I guess the first point is really a clarification. In looking through this, I do know that substantial numbers of adjustments were made on the basis that there will be four Members of the Legislative Assembly added to the component of the Legislature. I wonder why Treasury would have provided this advice, recognizing that the mandate of the government really does not terminate till November 2, 1987. Is Treasury advising us that we're going to be going to the polls momentarily or something? What would be their basis for doing this?

MR. STEFANIUK: No. Our question to Treasury, Mr. Chairman, was raised on the basis that past practice has indicated that we go to the polls in Alberta approximately every four years. With that in mind we asked about the advisability of including the cost of supporting four additional members. I don't think anyone is suggesting that we should go to the polls at any particular time. We generally anticipate that we will be going to the polls every four years. We simply asked how they felt about our making provision for that possibility, and they suggested that it was in order to make provision for it.

Now, in calculating these figures, particularly in the area of support services, we took the most costly possible scenario into consideration in that we considered the possibility of electing four additional Independent members, each of whom would require independent support facilities. The figures supporting those services have not been added to any existing caucus budget but have been added to general administration's budgetary proposal, having in mind that if and when the time came for making these provisions for additional support services, the appropriate

amounts would be transferred from general administration's budget to the appropriate caucus budgets, whether they be to existing caucuses or to Independent members, who for budgetary purposes would be regarded as caucuses.

MR. KOWALSKI: I take it, Mr. Clerk, that you're basically saying that these adjustments for four new members are based on what the cost implications might be for four Independent members with the whole scenario, the office staff and . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MR. KOWALSKI: That is substantially higher on a per capita member basis than it would be if the four were to join the government caucus, for example.

MR. STEFANIUK: If all four additional members were elected to a single caucus, the cost would obviously be lower.

MR. KOWALSKI: And if they were elected to the government caucus, it would be significantly lower.

MR. STEFANIUK: I'm saying any single caucus.

MR. KOWALSKI: I just want to get a perspective on this when I look at the percentages.

MR. STEFANIUK: In preparing a budget, we felt it was necessary to consider the most costly proposal. Obviously, the funds cannot be expended without the appropriate authorization. Should an election not take place within the budget year which is taken into consideration here, the funds could not be expended. We could not pay an indemnity, an expense allowance, or any of the other allowances for any member that did not exist.

MRS. CRIPPS: I just think it's very presumptuous of us to jump to the conclusion that there's going to be an election in the next year and to try to pre-guess what the electorate is going to do in the election of four new members. I believe that if we're going to include in the estimates additional costs for four new members, we should bring in a B

budget. That item should be in a B budget. Knowing how the budget comes into the House and that the public does not have the information we've been given, I just think it's very, very presumptuous to add 10.5 percent, for instance, to Members' Indemnity. I know how it will be read by the public at large. If we intend to budget for it, it should come in as a B budget item totally outside our own estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would it not also be presumptuous of us to presume that there will not be an election before the end of the next fiscal year? In other words, are we entitled to ignore realities and to presume that there will not be an election before April 1, 1987?

MRS. CRIPPS: That's why we would bring it in as a B budget. We activate it if necessary.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Chairman, I don't think we are entitled to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To do which?

MR. PURDY: To make that presumptuous statement that there is going to be an election. My experience from prior years when an election has been held and there has been an increase in the Legislative Assembly numbers is that we've gone to special warrant. You only have to look at the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer. He has not put anything into his budget on the presumption that there is going to be an election in 1985, '86, or '87. I questioned him on that, and he said he had no instruction from anybody to put any amount of money in for a general election to show 83 constituencies. He said that if that happens, they will have to go for a special warrant. I think that's the way this committee should go too, because it's not this committee that's going to say when an election is going to be held.

MRS. CRIPPS: Exactly.

MR. PURDY: It's up to the government caucus and the leader of the government party to make that decision. It's not up to us to be presumptuous and put that message out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not married to this at all. We're very happy to set it up either way. It just seemed to be good business to go on the

realities of past history for 40 years or so and to say that it is more likely that there will be one before this next fiscal year runs out than that there won't be. All I'm saying is that we have to make an assumption or presumption either way. We've got to assume that there won't be an election and hence not reflect it in an A or B budget, or we have to presume that there will be one and put it in. We're totally neutral on it. I'm not arguing for any position.

MR. PURDY: But I'd just like to lay the other scenario out. If there's an election on November 2, 1985, we'd have to go through the process of a special warrant up to March 31, '86.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But we won't for the next fiscal year, which is what we're dealing with here. We can't change the present fiscal year; those estimates are already settled.

MR. PURDY: I know we can't. We weren't presumptuous at that time, and we shouldn't be presumptuous now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we are. We're either going to assume that there will be an election, or we have to act on an assumption that there won't be.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, where in our budget is the allotment for the constituency offices?

MR. ELIUK: Code 430.

MR. STEFANIUK: Page 19, under general administration, is where it starts. It's right at the top of page 19. Do you have page 19, Sheila? Eighty-three constituency offices.

MRS. EMBURY: Right. So the estimate for that budget item is \$840,000?

MR. STEFANIUK: You see where amounts have been transferred to other expenditure codes to more accurately reflect the appropriateness of the charge. But what you have at the top of page 19 is a summary to indicate to you what in fact the budget is for constituency offices.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry. How could I possibly lose that sheet? The four members'

costs would be . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: What you have is an estimate there for 83 members.

MRS. EMBURY: Okay, but what I was looking at was the difference in the costs because . . .

MR. STEFANIUK: If you want the cost of supporting four additional members removed, we would have to scan the entire budget to determine just where provisions have been made. The provision is made in the constituency office area, in the promotional allowance area, and in the communications allowance area. So we would have to scan the entire budget and remove the provision for those four additional members from a number of areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shirley.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry; I haven't quite finished. What I was trying to do was get a cost, because I believe that one of the ironies in this budget process is the fact that we do have to budget for 79 constituency offices every year, yet we know that we do not spend anywhere near that amount of money. I don't know the exact number of constituency offices. I assume that money goes back into general revenue every year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. EMBURY: So to my mind, in view of that strange procedure, our budgeting is not accurate from the point of view of what we estimate and, of course, what is spent. And it's hard to change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We do reflect reality wherever we have the discretion, but when these allowances are provided for, we can't be presumptuous and presume that a member isn't going to spend it.

MRS. EMBURY: I think that figure is based on tradition, and this is what you're using as rationale for putting in a budget for 83 members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think there has been a steady tendency toward using those allowances

more than was done in the past.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I just add that the Provincial Treasurer in the last few years has encouraged all those departments and agencies who prepare budgets to work on zero-based budgeting. Zero-based budgeting, where we have provision of a certain amount of dollars or a formula pertaining to a particular member, would virtually require us to use this format for budgeting. It is obviously not possible to do that in respect of every single item. For the purpose of zero-based budgeting, for example, we cannot estimate what the cost of mail is going to be from the offices here in the Legislature. We have to be guided by past experience in that regard as well as any knowledge that we may be given concerning an increase in postal rates. Similarly with telephones. We cannot do zero-based budgeting and attempt to estimate the number of calls that each member will generate or the cost of those calls. We have to be guided by past experience. But where a variety of formulae are in place for providing members with certain allowances, obviously we employ zero-based budgeting principles in those areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ken.

MR. KOWALSKI: I want to get back to the original point I raised with respect to... Sorry.

MR. PURDY: I have one other question that arose from a comment the Clerk made, and that's regarding the promotional and communication allowances. That's a global amount of money. Can it not be divided into 79 constituencies instead of 83? It's the same amount.

MR. STEFANIUK: It is. It's calculated here on the basis of 83 constituencies.

MR. PURDY: But the end dollar is the same.

MR. STEFANIUK: If the committee wanted us to break out the appropriate amount for 79 constituencies and adjust it accordingly, yes, that can be done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's purely a matter of choice. We have no brief for either position

whatsoever.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's the point that I want to get back to. The basis for the formulation of this — while this is really top-notch work. It really is. It's very comprehensive. It's the best we've ever had.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in a business you would budget for that.

MR. KOWALSKI: But in terms of approaching a budget for the fiscal year 1986-87, I would like to see us take the approach that Mrs. Cripps brought forward, that we base it on the knowns we now have, 79 constituencies, and then attach a B budget document to it which would say, "These are the provisos and the provisions that would be required if we had to go to 83 constituencies during that fiscal year," and have the package there in readiness, rather than having it included in this particular budget document. When I said, "Let's talk about the overviews" at the beginning, that was one of several that I wanted to raise with the group.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I ask whether any of those participating by telephone would like to add to this discussion?

MR. HYLAND: Just one question or comment. We know we have to go for special warrant for the Chief Electoral Officer, and he's a servant of the Legislature. It can all be one special warrant. We have to go anyway, so why not just plan it for 79 and go, if we have to, for the 83? We're going to go for the special warrant to cover the cost of the election anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Whether it be one or two, they could be applied for at the same time.

MR. HYLAND: Both the Members' Services Committee and the Chief Electoral Officer are servants of the Legislature, so it's us who have to apply for the special warrant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we get to a motion on it, could I ask that this further point be considered? If we break out the cost of the additional four members into a B budget, do we calculate that on the basis of those members belonging to a caucus, or do we calculate it on the basis of their being Independent members,

as has been done already in these figures? Any opinions on the telephone?

MR. GURNETT: Mr. Chairman, I suggest that it makes good sense to calculate it on the basis of their being Independent members so that the figure is as cautious as possible. That perhaps ties in with some of the other comments. To my mind it makes sense to not include the four potential new members completely in the budget at this point but, on the other hand, to show that the budgeting is being done in a reasonable and thoughtful way to have that information available in the B budget. I thought Ken's point about making clear that the information was available for those four potential new members is a sensible one. In keeping with that, it would seem to make sense to look at their being Independent members and having taken the cautious approach.

MRS. CRIPPS: That's wishful thinking, Jim.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I've heard two suggestions in the last few minutes, one being the preparation of a B budget to provide for four additional members and the other being the consideration of a special warrant to support four new members when that should occur. I don't think both can be done, and I think a decision has to be made as to a B budget or a special warrant situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's what we're about to do.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think we have to deal with the B budget item. The special warrant item is an administrative detail that would only kick in on a reality basis after.

MR. STEFANIUK: If we're doing B budget, then we don't need a special warrant.

MR. KOWALSKI: No, that's correct.

MR. STEFANIUK: If we're going to resort to a special warrant, we don't need a B budget.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think the suggestion made by Mr. Hyland was just from administrative efficiency: should there be one forthcoming, why couldn't somebody put the two together?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to add something?

MR. ELIUK: I think it would be more flexible to operate under a special warrant, because you can issue it at the time of knowing when an election is being called. If we put forth a B budget item, we're going to have dollars allocated on the basis of the total 12-month period of time. It might be more efficient to have a special warrant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A special warrant would have this merit too: you would know when the election was going to be and what fraction of the fiscal year remained.

MR. PURDY: That's why, Mr. Chairman, I'm opposed to the B budget concept. If we revert to figures for 79 electoral divisions and then if an election is held -- we may be presumptuous on this -- a special warrant is drawn up to accommodate the number of months left in that year, 1986-87.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, just an additional word, if I may, on that subject. A special warrant procedure would enable us to apply for the precise funding which is necessary. Presumably a special warrant would not be applied for until after an election took place and it was determined in which caucus or which area the funding will be required, as well as taking into consideration the proportion of the year for which the budget was required.

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, that's my point exactly. We don't know how many months might be entailed in the need for a special warrant. I'm easy either way as long as we don't show in our budget a full year's additional cost for four extra members. We simply don't have four extra members, and I think it's totally unrealistic to include it in our budget at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I suggest that someone sponsor a motion requesting that the allowances for the four additional members be taken out of this budget and recommending that if and when the need arises for funding for additional members, it be applied for in an appropriate amount under a special warrant?

MR. HYLAND: I'll move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Alan Hyland.

MR. PENGELLY: I'll second that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there any further discussion?

MR. PURDY: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the telephone — Jim?

MR. GURNETT: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nigel?

MR. PENGELLY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour here in the room?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Ken, you had something else.

MR. KOWALSKI: The second one again. Just on the general overview, the section dealing with members' indemnities and allowances, point number 3, I guess, in the briefing booklet. There's a presumption in here again. I know it's a legal requirement under the Legislative Assembly Act that if inflation reaches such and such a number, there will be a 5 percent adjustment made. We, of course, don't know what that's going to be. While this document has it built in here, I just want to raise that to know what the views of the members of the committee would be with respect to this. It may very well be, of course, that this will not be necessary.

MR. ELIUK: I'd like to speak to that, Mr. Chairman. I did consult with the Treasury department, and they advised that over the last two years the combined inflationary increase was in excess of 5 percent. So they said it would be acceptable to put the 5 percent

inflationary . . .

MR. PURDY: It's in legislation too.

MR. KOWALSKI: It is in legislation.

MR. ELIUK: So it was on that basis that the members' indemnities were developed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any comments on the telephone about that?

MR. HYLAND: No, I didn't hear Chuck very well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you repeat that, Chuck?

MR. ELIUK: The 5 percent is okay, Alan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan, we're not always conscious of whether our voices are carrying properly or not. I'd welcome it if you'd interrupt, if you wouldn't mind.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When the volume drops too low, keep us alert here. Okay?

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that enough for that point, Ken?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other points that you want to raise before we go into it heading by heading? Should we go to General Administration, tab 2 in your book?

MRS. CRIPPS: Mr. Chairman, all approvals that we give here will be subject to the deletion of whatever consideration has been put in for the four members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quite. Also, you may recall past practice. These are preliminary approvals, and we wrap it up with one overall approval at the end. So nothing is graven in stone as yet.

MR. HYLAND: But a lot of things like communication allowance — the number of members doesn't really change it. As Bill said

earlier, we're dealing with population numbers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. Are there any queries, comments, or suggestions regarding General Administration?

MRS. EMBURY: I didn't know if we were going to go page by page. Are you saying we'll take the whole section?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're in the hands of the committee. What would you prefer?

MR. KOWALSKI: I'd like to go page by page if we could.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Summary of MLA Allowances, page 4.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Summary of Budget Estimates for Administrative Support, pages 5 and 6.

MR. KOWALSKI: A question on page 6. I guess we have to come back to page 5, because it's just a summary anyway. The specifics deal with those other ones. Page 6 shows an increase in the manpower component. Could I have an explanation of that? It shows an increase from 14 to 18.

MR. STEFANIUK: That is the provision for four additional MLAs' secretaries, which will now be removed.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay.

MRS. CRIPPS: We're looking at one apiece then?

MR. KOWALSKI: That was the basis on which they made the provisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we go on? Any comments or queries on page 7?

MRS. EMBURY: Actually, Mr. Chairman, I just want to comment that from page 7 it looks like when you consolidate three part-time positions into one full-time, you're actually reducing hours. Is that so?

MR. ELIUK: We're reducing the actual number of people we have to employ over the course of a year into one, but the actual number of hours worked would remain constant.

MRS. EMBURY: It's still the same. You know, one might have made the assumption that three part-time was like one and a half equivalency instead of one, but you're saying it's equal to one.

MR. ELIUK: That is correct.

MRS. EMBURY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 8.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 9.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, that first item on 9, the group life insurance, will change too, won't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. HYLAND: And it won't show 21 percent; it will be less than that increase.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What did you say about 21 percent?

MR. HYLAND: Long-term disability insurance is also according to the number of members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, the bottom one.

MRS. EMBURY: Could I please ask why the Blue Cross premium is up so much?

MR. ELIUK: The addition of people to the coverage plan, and the rates have increased.

MRS. EMBURY: I just wondered. It will be interesting to see if they've taken quite a jump proportionately. It doesn't really matter now, Chuck, but I was surprised at the percent it must be.

MR. ELIUK: The increase is approximately \$1.21 per individual covered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is page 9 agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 10.

MRS. EMBURY: Could I have an explanation, please, Mr. Chairman, of what NCSL is?

MR. STEFANIUK: The National Conference of State Legislatures, the American body which groups all state Legislatures in the United States and in which conference we have now participated on two occasions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They practically treat us as courtesy members. Is page 10 agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 11. There you see some more increases due to four new members, which of course will be calculated downward.

MR. KOWALSKI: This last year was the first year in which we had the mileage program. We've always agreed that we were going to have a look at this one of these days to see exactly what was happening with respect to this new program. Perhaps sometime during this budget process we might have a discussion on this to see exactly how it's working. We budgeted X amount of money in the mileage program. We were unsure whether or not it would be appropriate. What we have in here, basically, is a similar figure for the two fiscal years, with no percentage increase. The first two above had the basis of four new MLAs. I'd like to have a discussion on it sometime during this whole process to see exactly what our experience with this program is.

MR. ELIUK: Do you want to discuss it now?

MR. KOWALSKI: We could.

MR. ELIUK: Briefly, on actual costs or dollars paid out to members under the mileage program, it did not come near to the \$172,000 that was budgeted for. Even if we took the actual costs and increased them by the four

members, it would have brought it in line with the \$172,000 that had been budgeted previously.

MR. KOWALSKI: We also asked when we set up this particular program that members file on a quarterly basis so that we would have some kind of running track to see if we were in the ballpark or not. Has that been our experience of what's been happening?

MR. ELIUK: The members have been filing on a quarterly basis. Insofar as tracking them, we could track them with our systems.

MR. KOWALSKI: I've heard no complaints from anyone about the administration of this particular program. It seemed to work out very, very well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bill, did you have a comment?

MR. PURDY: No, I was just going to say that it has worked out quite well.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, I wonder how close we came. I understand you've budgeted the same amount this year, but you said we didn't come near it.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the other thing with this type of program is that there could be claims filed toward the end of the year, so it's virtually impossible to say how close we will come by March 31, 1986, to the budgeted figure. Some members may have elected not to file a claim quarterly but rather have it accumulated. We could well be confronted with a demand for payments toward the end of the fiscal year. It is for that reason that we show the forecast at the same level as the previously budgeted amount. We are unable to judge as of yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else on page 11?

MRS. EMBURY: One thing that I don't recall ever having discussed or mentioned as a committee, in view of the restraint over the past few years, is a little bit of discussion on the amount of money we spend on conferences. While it appears to me to be still a very humble amount considering our large representation and whatnot, I just wonder if

anybody else on the committee has any concerns, merely when you look at some of the percentage increases, that are probably due to very good reasons. Do you still think this is legitimate expense, that it's worth it for us to send members to these conferences?

MR. PURDY: It's the best thing going to get the view of other Legislatures and to see what's happening out there. I've attended a number of CPA conferences over the last 15 years, and I think it has worked to the benefit of the Legislature and of the other members who we can share experiences with.

I was one of the members sitting around this table four or five years ago that thought that the spouse should also be included in some of these travels, because they're a part of the team in many respects. I was successful in getting that through. So I think any discussion right now of trying to delete any travel to CPA conferences is a mistake. We are, as the Alberta Legislature, a body of the Canadian Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and we should be there participating.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Compared with other jurisdictions we're being very modest in this regard. In fact, we may not be doing what we should be doing.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I was a severe critic, perhaps because I never got to go to any of these things. But having had the experience of one this July, which was the regional conference of the Canadian Parliamentary Association in Quebec and Montreal, I have to echo the words of Mr. Purdy. I think it was a super experience for a member of this Legislative Assembly.

I also want to say that I very much appreciated the very professional and competent role the Clerk played in terms of setting out the detail, making the arrangements, and being there to solve problems for hon. members. I think he did a whale of a job.

I, frankly, don't know at this point in time what the agendas for these kinds of meetings are during the fiscal year in question. If there was any way we could get a handle on knowing what these agendas would be for the fiscal year 1986-87, or even subsequent years, I would be

very willing to see that we make an upward adjustment in here to allow even more Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in these meetings.

In looking at the representation that came from other provinces and other countries, I think that the merit in terms of the relationship that can be developed in breaking down barriers from one provincial representative to another or, quite frankly, from a Canadian perspective to an international perspective, is very important. When I recognize the warmth that seems to have come out of the Bahamas this past week in terms of the Commonwealth meeting, with some 41 or 42 heads of state who arrived there, I can really see great benefit.

In particular, I would like to see us doing a heck of a lot more in the United States of America with respect to what their state legislators are doing, to send one or two representatives from Alberta to a major international conference that might have upwards of 5,000 American state legislators and congressmen and senators. I think we're missing a heck of an opportunity to do good work on behalf of the people of Alberta.

So if there's any way we can have a handle on seeing what will be happening next year . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I answer that, could I just briefly go to Bohdan.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I want to attempt to clarify a question raised by Mrs. Embury in respect of costs and significant percentage increases, and just comment on one or two of them. For example, on CPA general conference, where we show and increase of 148 percent, that is likely to occur considering the change of venue, which is from Saskatchewan in 1985 to London, England, in 1986. The venues of the Commonwealth conferences vary very considerably; they can be held anywhere in the Commonwealth. So even London will not present an astronomical bill for us, but when the conference goes to Australia, for example, we can expect a substantial increase. Again we're into zero-based budgeting. We are considering the actual venue of the conference in arriving at these figures.

There is another one for NCSL, which shows a 90 percent increase. We bear in mind there that we are moving from a conference which was held in 1985 in Seattle, Washington, very

close to home, to a conference in 1986 in New Orleans, Louisiana. So the travel costs are going to be very significantly different.

These estimates reflect accurately the venues of the conferences, which account primarily for the significant variations.

MRS. EMBURY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I now go to the point Ken raised. Regularly the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of the whole Commonwealth sponsors a plenary conference. As the Clerk mentioned, this year that was in Regina and next year it will be in London, England.

Another regular event, and this is in the Canadian region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, is an annual conference of that region. This year that was held in Quebec City; next year I believe it's due to be held in Toronto. To that one we are entitled to send, and customarily do, the Speaker and five other members. This year the Deputy Speaker went instead. In addition to that, each year there is the Canadian Regional Parliamentary Seminar, which this year will be held in Ottawa. To that we are entitled to send three members, and we'll do that.

In addition to that, we have the National Conference of State Legislatures, and there we've been slacking a bit. They have invited us year after year. I believe the Clerk has attended two of them so far, and we have sent members to three, one of them being last year in Boston, when we just tacked it on to the Canadian regional conference, which was in Halifax. We sent one member. Because of the interest in the province in free trade and in trade generally with the United States, I would have to second what Ken said about our possibly overlooking what we should be doing in establishing contacts with the American states.

In addition to these, there was a special one in Washington this year which was sponsored by the Canadian region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and dealt with trade matters, to which each province was entitled to send two members. I went to that one. That's the only one I attended -- well, I went to the Speakers' conference; that's another one. The Member for Grande Prairie went to that one as well.

We developed a custom some time ago that

each member and spouse attending these conferences provides a report. In order to make it simpler to make those reports, we've just now developed a checklist, which I hope to share -- just by way of suggestion, not by way of any kind of mandatory requirement -- with the people who have attended these conferences.

In addition to those CPA activities, there are two which are pretty well confined to Speakers, Deputy Speakers, and chief administrative officers. The Speakers meet once a year, usually in Ottawa, chaired by the federal Speaker. Starting two years ago, they have what they call a Presiding Officers' Conference. The Speakers' meeting deals mainly with Commonwealth Parliamentary Association matters, but the Speakers heretofore had not had an opportunity to deal with bread-and-butter things that go on in the House and so on. The first one of those was hosted by Alberta two years ago, and the second one was hosted this year by British Columbia.

Have I missed anything?

MR. HYLAND: Gerry, I would like to support what Ken and others have said. Also, besides the National Conference of State Legislatures, there's a Western State Legislatures Conference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. HYLAND: I wonder if we should explore the possibility of adding that to the budget. I think that's as important to us as the national state legislatures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan, are you thinking of the Western Governors' Conference?

MR. HYLAND: No. I think there's a western conference the same as the national one. They have a conference of just the western states as well. Last year it was held in Scottsdale. I remember that the lady who was Clerk of the Arizona State Legislature was in Halifax.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're right, Alan. Ed Oman represented us in Scottsdale last year.

MR. HYLAND: Right. I note that that isn't on the list.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; I overlooked that

one.

MR. HYLAND: I think that is just about as important to us as the national one.

MRS. CRIPPS: We should be looking at more than one member too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shirley has suggested that we should be looking at more than one member.

MR. HYLAND: I believe we should too, but it doesn't list anybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further comment on that item? Are we agreed on pages 11 and 12?

MR. KOWALSKI: There were some suggestions made by members, and I think the feeling generally among members is that there would be some support in increasing these numbers. Do we want to leave that on the basis of saying that there is some empathy with increasing that, until somebody gets back to us saying that ...

MR. PURDY: I think we'd have a problem there, Ken. Take the CPA seminar. I think they gave us instructions that we're only allowed to send three members to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. We can send only three, and we can send only six to the regional conference. But we're not limited in the one Alan Hyland mentioned, the Western State Legislatures, nor are we limited in the National Conference of State Legislatures. In the Washington one I went to, we were limited to two members.

MR. KOWALSKI: The point I want to make here is that from my perspective I would hate to think that if there was an opportunity in the fiscal year '86-87 to send additional members to additional conferences, somebody would come back and say that we don't have the budget for it. That's the only point I want to make.

MR. STEFANIUK: On that item specifically, Mr. Chairman, may I respectfully draw to the committee's attention the provision of a contingency item of \$10,000, which has heretofore been used for those conferences

which have not been anticipated. We call it CPA, but I think the interpretation has been broadly regarded and has included American conferences such as the one that one of the members attended in Arizona.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we all right for pages 11 and 12?

MR. KOWALSKI: I have a question with respect to the last item on page 12, Spouses' Travel. That's one of those items we had put in and were unsure about. I want to know what kind of experience we've been having with that particular item.

MR. STEFANIUK: I think the director of administration would tell you that there has been relatively low claim experience against that item. Again, we have to wait till the end of the fiscal year to read real experience, and there may be back claims covering a long period of time. At this stage we're unable to forecast accurately. Our experience has been a very low claim function.

MRS. EMBURY: Could I make a suggestion that we note that that item be assessed at the end of the 1987 budget year? I say that because this has been a bit of an unusual year, without a fall sitting. When we have what we would term a normal calendar year in the Legislature, that might be a fairer assessment of that item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're speaking of the ...

MRS. EMBURY: Spouses' Travel. Just to see how we are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What you're suggesting is that sometime after March 31, 1986, we report to the committee the experience with regard to that item. Is that it?

MRS. EMBURY: No, sir, I didn't say that. Excuse me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm trying to find out what you would like us to do.

MRS. EMBURY: I said it would be toward the end of the '87 budget year, when we've taken the whole of what we term a normal calendar year for the Legislature, rather than this year,

which is not normal because as yet we have not had a fall sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what you have in mind is special attention to that item when we're dealing with the budget for 1987-88.

MRS. EMBURY: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. HYLAND: Do I assume that on page 11 we've added that Western State Legislatures Conference, not just the national one?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, my interpretation is that if that conference were to be attended, if there were to be an invitation received, we would rely on the contingency of \$10,000 with which to fund participation at that conference.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that all right, Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Yes. As you said, I think there should be more than one. There should be at least two or more attending.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that okay for pages 11 and 12? Page 13.

MR. PURDY: A question on that. What is MLAs' Communication Allowances for Advertising? Is that for private Bills?

MR. ELIUK: That's for any brochures or any communications type of literature you have specially printed up.

MR. PURDY: Where was this before?

MR. STEFANIUK: It was in the lump sum communications allowance. So that we can appropriately take it out of an area where it belongs, so that we can take it out of the appropriate expense code, we have transferred that amount of the communications allowance into code 260, which is advertising.

MR. PURDY: Is \$90,000 a consistent amount?

MR. STEFANIUK: Our experience has shown that \$90,000 is what has been used by members for advertising out of their communications

allowances.

MRS. EMBURY: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I guess I'm just curious why you wanted to do that. I thought the communication allowance was a total amount of money that can be used by the member, and I would have thought it was easier to keep it.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, may I refer Mrs. Embury to page 4, under General Administration, which summarizes and in fact shows the global allowance. The global allowance provided for here is \$743,000. Of that amount, certain portions are transferred for budgeting and accounting purposes to other expenditure codes, but that does not in any way affect the amount of communications allowance made available to members of the Assembly. It is broken out to more accurately reflect for accounting purposes the areas which should be charged for various expenditures incurred by members in expending their communications allowances.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything further on page 13?

MR. PURDY: The only comment I'd make is that I would think there would be more bookkeeping for your staff doing it that way, wouldn't there?

MR. STEFANIUK: It's desirable bookkeeping from our point of view because it more accurately reflects the type of expenditure, and is certainly desirable from the auditor's point of view because they see where the expenditure is incurred.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that just for the purpose of making sure it's labelled as advertising?

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MR. ELIUK: In this year's audit the auditor paid special attention to that and queried why we didn't put the moneys where they were being spent. We thought it would be prudent to do so to get the auditors off our back as well as being helpful to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe the auditors would be off your back if this committee said they liked it the way it was.

MRS. EMBURY: I guess I'm not at all ready to approve that item. We said we would approve the whole thing at the end, so keep it in abeyance. I haven't thought out some of the concerns I have with that item. I'm beginning to think that at some time it might be worth looking at the legislation and that these allowances — I realize the Legislature is responsible for this item, but it's beginning to look like our three allowances are becoming very complex. I'm beginning to feel that at some time we should consider that the member has total control over that amount of money, period.

MR. STEFANIUK: He has.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has.

MR. ELIUK: Totally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're totally interchangeable.

MRS. EMBURY: I know they're interchangeable, but I'm saying that with the restrictions that are occurring ... We're finding out more and more, and I think part of it is due to what the auditor is pointing out to us. It's certainly making everybody's job a lot more complex to administer this allowance from what was anticipated when it was first introduced.

MR. KOWALSKI: Just one comment. The amount of dollars being allocated under the communications allowance is based on that complicated little formula about how many mail-outs you do per year and everything else, and it's adjusted periodically because of mailing costs and the like. But the amount of dollars allocated is in there. We're just talking about bookkeeping in terms of three different areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

There's a motion by Mrs. Embury that the item on page 13 which was transferred from code 290 to code 260 be adverted to again the next time we discuss the estimates. Is that agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the telephone — Jim?

MR. GURNETT: I have no problem with it, but I have no problem dealing with it as it is now proposed either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nigel?

MR. PENGELLY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alan?

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 14.

MR. PURDY: What are the four vehicles?

MR. HYLAND: Whose is the fourth car?

MR. STEFANIUK: The four vehicles are for the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Clerk.

MR. PURDY: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is 14 agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 15.

MR. PURDY: Why the significant decrease?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Transfers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the telephone — Alan, are you agreed?

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nigel?

MR. PENGELLY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim?

MR. GURNETT: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 16.

MR. HYLAND: Is the increase in the last item on 16, supply of office equipment, et cetera, what we were talking about earlier in the

meeting and what we decided at the last meeting?

MR. ELIUK: Alan, this item is the lease of your office space and any other leases which you hold, as well as equipment which is normally budgeted for in your constituency allowance, which is located in code 290. When we pay your invoices for you, we are charging these expenditures to 350.

MR. HYLAND: I didn't read it properly. It's a reallocation too.

MR. STEFANIUK: That's right.

MRS. CRIPPS: I notice a distinct decrease in photocopiers. Maybe we should hold the line on that cost and improve the photocopiers.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, these are the photocopiers which are to be found in the administration generally, I believe.

MRS. CRIPPS: Not the ones in the members' offices?

MR. STEFANIUK: No. By exchanging equipment, we were able to effect certain cost efficiencies. That is reflected in the budget.

MRS. CRIPPS: We should try that in our office too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is page 16 agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to go to the end of this section? Some members have to leave. How much further do you want to go?

MRS. EMBURY: There's quite a bit, isn't there?

MR. PURDY: There's quite a bit more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to agree on a new date?

MRS. EMBURY: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any suggestions? Any suggestions from those on the telephone for a new date?

MRS. EMBURY: What would be our normal date? Is it the second Wednesday, Mr. Chairman?

MR. PENGELLY: Wouldn't that be on November 6?

MR. HYLAND: No, we're the second Wednesday for Members' Services, aren't we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought so. That should be on the 13th.

MRS. CRIPPS: I can't attend.

MR. PENGELLY: I was being selfish, because I'm going to be in Edmonton on Monday and Tuesday, anyway.

MR. HYLAND: Not Monday, Nigel; not the 11th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Mrs. Cripps can't attend on the 13th.

MR. KOWALSKI: Neither can I.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Neither can Ken Kowalski.

MR. GURNETT: Neither can I, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's three. That's too many.

MR. HYLAND: What about the day before then, Tuesday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The 12th. The day after the long weekend.

MR. GURNETT: Yes.

MRS. EMBURY: What day is that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the 12th, Tuesday.

MR. HYLAND: There may be some of us up to take part in the various things in the municipal districts and counties conference, which is starting that week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is Thursday, the 14th, any good?

MRS. CRIPPS: Tuesday morning would be all right.

MR. PURDY: Early Tuesday morning is all right for me.

MRS. EMBURY: You could eliminate two people. Tuesday is cabinet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Would the following Wednesday, the 20th, be more appropriate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've been asked to test the 20th; that's a Wednesday. Any objections from those on the telephone?

MR. HYLAND: No, I'm still open that day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any objections in the room? Ian Reid will perhaps have a committee meeting. He seems to have them on Wednesday mornings.

MR. PURDY: Could I ask you a question about the date that these estimates must be completed?

MR. CHAIRMAN: September 5.

MR. KOWALSKI: Traditionally, we have a fair degree of flexibility.

MR. PURDY: Do we have enough flexibility?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes; we have gone into December.

MR. STEFANIUK: We have filed by the end of the year in past years.

MR. PURDY: But it's not desirable.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's not necessarily desirable, although I imagine some departmental estimates may be held up a little longer than they have been in previous years, considering recent events. I imagine the priorities committee of government has perhaps not had an opportunity to address all the departmental estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you on the telephone

hear what's being said?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: These estimates of the Legislative Assembly, though, are filed in a separate document.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

MR. STEFANIUK: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Separate from the other government estimates. So I think we have a fair degree of flexibility in terms of how anybody would deal with this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a notion we can get along more quickly on the next one. We won't have the pensionable item, for example, to discuss.

MRS. CRIPPS: Could the estimates be redone before the next time to reflect what we're actually looking at, because it's very, very hard to calculate these increases into what our actual estimates are and what is pertaining to the increased costs due to new members — very difficult.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What Shirley is saying — as a matter of fact by having it on the 20th, it will give the administration a better chance to have the changes made and mailed out to the members ahead of the meeting.

MR. HYLAND: So is the 20th the date then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed?

MRS. EMBURY: Is that a Wednesday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a Wednesday.

MR. PURDY: What time?

MRS. EMBURY: Would we plan on having a longer meeting to cover all the estimates?

MR. KOWALSKI: I'd be delighted if . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm good for all day.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's right. If we could do it

in . . .

MR. HYLAND: We're going to block all day then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right?

MRS. CRIPPS: Sure.

MR. PENGELLY: What time would you start in the morning, Gerry?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is nine any good? Some of you have to travel in the morning.

MR. PENGELLY: I might have to travel the day before if it's that early, but that's all right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about you, Jim?

MR. GURNETT: That would be all right. I can come in Tuesday evening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we'll make it 9 o'clock on Wednesday, the 20th, and be prepared to go all day, if necessary, to finish. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So ordered.

Is there anything else before there's a motion for adjournment?

MR. PENGELLY: Is Chuck there?

MR. ELIUK: Yes, I am.

MR. PENGELLY: Chuck, this has nothing to with the Members' Services meeting. Did you find out about that credit card for our new airline in Red Deer?

MR. ELIUK: We haven't yet received the signed documents. I checked on it last week.

MR. PENGELLY: Thank you very much.

MR. ELIUK: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything else before somebody moves adjournment? May I have a motion? Does somebody on the telephone want to move?

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

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 10:36 a.m.]

