

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[1:06 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome back to another in the series of soap operas known as Members' Services Committee. Approval of the minutes of November 14: what is your pleasure, ladies and gentlemen?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, could I ask for a correction? I apologize for not having it right turned up. Just in the wording of some comments that I made on item 6, and if you have item 6, I'll tell you what page number.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have 86.159. Whereabouts are we?

MR. WRIGHT: The pages are numbered at the bottom.

MR. STEVENS: It's page 40, isn't it? It's correct where it says, "Members' indemnity allowance, Members' expense allowance," et cetera. Can you turn the page to the particular section where we talk about 86.162:

Mr. Stevens stated that the responsibility of setting Members' tax-free allowance

...

I would prefer that we use the wording that is in the Act; in other words, the "expense" allowance rather than the "tax-free" allowance, wherever it appears in this section, below that and on the next page and on the next page and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's slow down. So in paragraph 86.158 where it says, "Members' expense allowance," that's the correct phrasing. So that paragraph is fine. Do you want to do it by paragraph number, please, Greg?

MR. STEVENS: 86.162, 86.163, on the bottom of the page and the top of the next page.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Wright. Does that carry them all?

MR. STEVENS: I think that has them all, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WRIGHT: What's the description substituted?

MR. STEVENS: I'm putting in what's in the Act; what is referred to at the beginning of the discussion is correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, 86.158, members' expense allowance, Gordon. That's the correct consistency of style.

MR. WRIGHT: There are a whole raft of other expense allowances too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But as Mr. Stevens pointed out, it makes it congruent with the legislation.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With those corrections, the motion to adopt is circulated. Mr. Stevens? Thank you. Further discussion? Call for the question. All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carried. Thank you.

Any other business under item 7 that we need to give notice of? We can still pick it up as we get down that far.

Business arising from the minutes: 3(a), ongoing. Mr. Bogle.

MR. BOGLE: I have nothing to report on that as a specific item at this time, Mr. Chairman, but I wonder if I might make a suggestion for all of the items that fall under the general category, "business arising from the minutes." Would it be helpful if before the agenda is struck, the person who is responsible to make the necessary inquiries is contacted, and if there is nothing to report, why have it on the agenda?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, but I think we left it on there as a reminder to make sure that nothing got lost.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, I think it serves a good purpose.

MR. BOGLE: So that things don't get lost?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: If you prefer, we can put question marks on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next item will be carried over to the next meeting as well. I haven't had time to deal with that one. The office allocation and space requirements with regard to various caucuses: most of that doesn't fall within my jurisdiction at this time anyway, other than the fact that I have been attempting to have a meeting with the person responsible, on behalf of government, to see if there are some other ways we might be able to approach the issue, so that's carried on as well.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, is office allocation to cover MLA allocation or is it to go into the whole question of allocation for the caucus as a whole?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we view it as having some initial discussions as to the overlap or the division of jurisdictions and then go on from there. It's an item that's going to take us a number of months; there's no doubt about that.

MR. BOGLE: If I may, Mr. Chairman, to you, Mr. Taylor, the intent was to get this committee involved in the allocation of space and in the requests from leaders of parties and caucuses re the space they do have. That's currently a responsibility held by the government through the Attorney General, the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry. You whipped over (b) rather quickly. Is something stirring under that heading?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Barely stirring. I confess to you, Edmonton Strathcona, that I am somewhat preoccupied this month with some other things going on in the building and in the department, but I have not forgotten.

MR. WRIGHT: There was a remark last time that you thought there had been a change of practice on that. I was interested to hear that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two meetings ago, Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, did you not say that you'd received some grant money to be handed out in your constituency?

MR. TAYLOR: I didn't get a grant to hand out, but I got some scholarships.

I got another thing, but I'm going to try to put a little bomb under the cabinet. One of the cabinet ministers has circulated — I won't let you in on it; you can read it in the papers — a brochure saying who to contact in every constituency. They named the MLA wherever it was a Tory; where it wasn't a Tory, it said just "opposition." I think that'll be interesting. But that's the type of stuff that's going on. I think you might as well let them know when you're back talking to your cabinet that I don't think either the NDP or us are going to sit there and take it quietly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. May I suggest that both you and I, who are munching on nanaimo bars, talk louder for the sake of the transcript.

MR. TAYLOR: Okay. It's just a friendly little notice that I'll be throwing a hand grenade over the fence.

MR. HYLAND: That was in the paper already.

MR. TAYLOR: Was it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 3(d), the purchase of members' chairs: all of the chairs have been sold. Only one was given away free; we decided to give that to ex-Premier Manning. The offer was made to ex-Premier Lougheed, and it was not taken advantage of. The other chairs that we had — we checked up on these chairs. I went down and examined the bowels of the building, and none of these chairs were around. They're being used in some of the offices of executive assistants to cabinet ministers, I understand — not Rod's. You had a comment about chairs?

MR. STEVENS: They're not even that comfortable.

MR. TAYLOR: Did they all go?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. We've been killing two birds with one stone.

All right. The Deputy Speaker, otherwise known as the hon. Member for Lethbridge West, is here to speak to the matter of monetary gifts, promotional allowance. Mr. Gogo, over to you, sir.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I at the outset make a comment as a member of almost 12 years' standing in the Assembly with regard to this committee. I'm not saying this simply because I have a proposition to the committee; I'm saying it with a deep sense of sincerity. I have seen this committee take more action in the way of benefitting members of this Assembly than in all previous committees of members' services. I served on two of them, and I want to, through you, Mr. Chairman, commend the committee for putting the member of this Assembly first in its deliberations, which is in accordance with the name of the committee. Mr. Chairman, I think you and your colleagues can indeed be proud of the tremendous amount of time you spend dealing with matters affecting our colleagues within this House.

I'd like to speak to the question of my memo dated November 7 and the previous one of July 14, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I believe that in the Assembly we now have an excellent system of tools to benefit the member, both for the constituency office allowance, the communication allowance, and indeed the promotional allowance. My view of the promotional allowance is probably somewhat at variance with the present system, and I'd like to speak to that.

In my view, all constituencies are equal in many ways, but in some ways they are perhaps not. For example, although I appreciate the opportunity of using that allowance to purchase pins and plaques -- as indeed I do -- and books, depending on who the speakers and visitors are at meetings, I don't think it goes wide enough. As a member of the Assembly responsible for expending \$10.5 billion to \$11 billion of public funds, I would think a member could indeed be trusted to spend the promotional allowance in a very responsible way.

I'd like to indicate to the committee what my experience has been as far as Lethbridge West is concerned. I receive an expense allowance, as all members do, and I'm well aware that that expense allowance -- albeit, in my view, it is not adequate -- is to be utilized in performing your duties as a member. Of course, in terms of personal contributions each member is entitled to do what he or she in their private life does. I happen to be a major contributor to the United Way in my own community. That's my business, and I don't think it should be the

business of the promotional allowance or the Assembly.

However, I want to express a practice within my community that I've had in the past that has been discontinued and I think should be reinstituted. For example, Mr. Chairman, a local service club in Lethbridge puts on a fund-raising event each year called the chicken barbecue, which raises funds for the Y and for this and that. I've been in the habit, for example, of purchasing 50 tickets at \$5 and giving them out to handicapped children so they may attend that function. I believe that is more meaningful than giving them pins and more meaningful than presenting a plaque to their group. The Army, Navy and Airforce club -- there are only five in Alberta, so there are not many in most constituencies -- recently went on a building project, and I purchased a brick for \$100. I feel that it could have been and should have been allowed under the promotional allowance. Recently a senior citizens' lodge in my constituency wanted to purchase a \$3,000 organ, and I contributed \$50 to that. I think it could be allowed out of my promotional allowance as opposed to a plaque in that lodge.

I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, is that when I attend different functions and the Member of Parliament and the mayor of my community are there -- and I'm not here to question their allowances, but I know for a fact, because I've followed it up, that they make cash or monetary contributions, or whatever you wish to call it, out of allowances that they receive. I would like to think that this member could utilize the promotional allowance for the same purpose. I agree with minute 86.115 to the extent that there should not ever be an opportunity for a member to use the allowance for their own personal benefit. I believe, although it's not in the minutes, that mention was made that if a member were to contribute to a tax-exempt foundation of some kind, there might be a receipt involved, in which case the member could utilize that receipt. At the time, I made the case that although I contribute generally to nonprofit organizations, if they were tax-exempt I would think that receipt, if any, should go to the Assembly and not to the individual.

Mr. Chairman, in the November 7 memo I proposed a way it could be done; that is, if a member wished to contribute \$50, \$75, \$100,

\$200, or whatever the amount was, to a bona fide organization within his constituency -- I think it should be a nonprofit association or society -- I think a purchase order could be utilized to raise that cheque. If the committee does not feel that the member should be reimbursed for a contribution, then Treasury could indeed raise the cheque and the member could then deliver that to the organization.

I guess the principle I'm dealing with, Mr. Chairman, is that I believe the member himself or herself would have that responsibility to see the utilization of that allowance -- and I call it the promotional allowance as opposed to the communication allowance -- as that member deems fit. For example, there are members -- I don't want to raise the sensitive hairs on people, but Friday morning this week this member will be making a contribution to the food bank in Lethbridge. I happen to think that also should be able to be included, as opposed to a plaque to put on their wall.

In summary, Mr. Speaker and members of the committee, I think of the promotional allowance that's made available to the members of the Assembly. Unless there is something in conflict with the Legislative Assembly Act, I do think the member should be able, within the promotional allowance, to present sums to the organizations that I've described.

That concludes my presentation, Mr. Chairman. If there are questions from the committee, I'd certainly be prepared to answer them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First off, thank you for your positive comments about the committee and its work. That's appreciated, John.

Members, if you have questions to ask of the Member for Lethbridge West with regard to the hows, technical process, or whatever, and any other information. Taber-Warner. I got it right this time.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A question to Mr. Gogo, Mr. Chairman. In your brief overview you mentioned that if the Member of Parliament is in Lethbridge, the Member for Lethbridge-Foothills, he now has the ability to present a cheque which is part of his communication allowance. Are you aware of any other provincial or municipal jurisdictions that do this?

MR. GOGO: No, I'm not, other than the mayor of Lethbridge, who receives an allowance for that purpose.

MR. TAYLOR: Because it was the mayor, not the Member of Parliament, wasn't it?

MR. GOGO: No. The Member of Parliament and the mayor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, Westlock-Sturgeon, you have to wait your turn, because it's Edmonton Highlands after this.

MR. GOGO: If you don't mind, Mr. Chairman, I should point out the uniqueness to Lethbridge of the southern Alberta organization of Boy Scouts, which goes from Bow Island to the B.C. border and from the U.S. border to Turin, and brings into it several constituencies. This member would be prepared to use his allowance, if a \$50 contribution were deemed appropriate, rather than trying to get into this business of purchasing pins and doing this and doing that and sharing it amongst the ridings.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, in expressing my concern that in my view cash contributions on behalf of elected officials is one which courts the danger of a public perception that leaves elected officials somewhat less esteemed than we otherwise might be, it occurs to me that an example you gave is the example of the food bank. On previous occasions our caucus has contributed to the Food Bank here in Edmonton as a caucus, and what we've discovered is that they don't take money. We've gone out and shopped. I wonder if our sincerity at supporting certain leagues for certain types of actions is the essence of the issue, if there's any problem in doing that in your perception, and if you're aware if the food bank that you were considering making a cash donation to is indeed, by virtue of its constitutional bylaws, able to accept a cash donation.

MR. GOGO: I've contributed before, Ma'am, to the Lethbridge food bank. Not wishing any publicity, I simply gave it to them to utilize as they saw fit. They accepted it and it was fine.

MS BARRETT: In cash?

MR. GOGO: In cash, yes.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm concerned about a couple of areas, John.

By the way, I might mention as an aside to Highlands that I have found that different food banks around Alberta will take the money and tell you they'll purchase whatever they're short of in the bank.

Nevertheless, I'm concerned about two things. One is if a tax receipt — and most of these organizations are taxable and most of them have to issue a tax receipt. It's a little difficult in the bookkeeping: your receipts are supposed to equal your donations; otherwise, you've got something sort of sitting there, and that's a pain. So the receipt goes somewhere. It seems to me that we're going to set up a very complicated system of making sure the receipt would flow back to the government rather than to the MLA. I think it would be considered wrong, wouldn't it, to put on your income tax, to lower it with a receipt for a donation that was money given you by the government and that you had not taken into income? In other words, you get an expense on it twice. It seems to me there is a legal problem, even with the diligence that I know you would exercise, but maybe some would be less diligent, that it would be very hard to leap over.

MR. GOGO: I thought I spoke to that, but let me reiterate. The proposal I have in the memo is as a result of a purchase order being submitted. I don't know whether that's necessary, but the cheque would be raised by the government of Alberta and the member's name would not even be on the cheque. The member would simply attach a letter . . .

MR. TAYLOR: In effect, you would then cause a donation to be made to the charitable institution. That kind of bothers me in a way. Maybe I've run in too many elections, trying to get into this House, but I've always felt there was slant enough for the MLA, all kinds of privileges: signs in the neighbourhood, space in the pictures, handing out scholarships, welcoming Bob Bogle to town, and things like that. It was hard enough to beat anyhow, without an MLA suddenly having a little bit of a slush fund that suddenly brings cheques in. I just don't get a good, comfortable feeling out of it.

Lastly, as an MLA, I don't know how the hell you would stop the blizzard of requests that

would suddenly come in. You would be faced with having to make out a little budget each year, because people would know that you have it, and it wouldn't take long before it was there. I'm just really bothered by getting saddled with the idea of having to go out to my constituency with a budget and trying to figure out the needy, the most and least needy.

MR. GOGO: If I could respond, Mr. Chairman. I've had a request by schools in Lethbridge West for a framed picture of myself to hang in the schools. I'm sure that coverage would come under the education allowance, and it's probably \$50 apiece. So it's not the monetary amount that's the issue. I personally can see much more benefit in purchasing a brick for the local army and navy club's building fund than giving them something they already have trouble hanging, and that's another plaque. As I mentioned in the memo . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We don't want to encourage them to hang the member.

MR. GOGO: If it's a matter of the receipting business and so on, as Mr. Taylor addressed, I don't believe that's a problem. I had discussions with Mr. Eliuk, and as long as the cheque is raised by Alberta Treasury and the member's name is not on it, I don't understand why there would be a receipt to a member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Strathcona.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I share the . . .

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. I apologize. Banff-Cochrane. My eyes looked here.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, my mind was boggled at the idea that perhaps I could have some of John Gogo's framed pictures for my schools too. They might want them more than they'd want mine, John.

MR. TAYLOR: Unless it's for a bonfire.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I wasn't at the meeting when the committee rejected the proposal, and I

appreciate the concept that we have Mr. Gogo here to discuss it. I would have agreed with the committee, had I been here. I would like to say the reasons; some of them have been said already.

There are some local clubs that stand alone. They have no other support than the members of that club. There are other clubs that are part of a region or a province or a national or international organization, and in most cases fund-raising is their responsibility. They raise funds through seeking dollars from individuals, corporations, and governments. Sometimes those dollars are provided in the form of dollars, but in many instances the support comes in the form of goods and services.

But the funds that are provided to these organizations, as the Liberal leader was saying, are basically provided on the basis that they are tax deductible for the individuals or for the corporations. The funds from a government are not. They're raised from the taxpayers at any level of government. That government or that municipality or that agency, sports council, or whatever determines how those funds are to be provided and sets certain stringent rules, guidelines, and so on.

I think our promotional allowance as MLAs is very unique, and I'm concerned about the perception we would create versus the benefit of dollars flowing from that communications and promotional allowance versus a plaque, a book, an Alberta art or craft, or some support that fund is to have for the nurturing of a small business in the crafts area in a constituency and the balancing one can have or the fact that we can use that fund in a very free manner. We can use it to be at openings or to reward the work of some citizen for his or her community.

If we decide to reverse ourselves, I believe organizations would be placed in a very difficult position, and they would soon pass that on to the MLAs. They would simply ply one MLA versus another. They would rapidly approach us near the year end and say, "Have you used up your funds?" They would thus turn more to government, and that's the perception I want to speak about. I don't think we should be encouraging organizations to turn more to government. These are Legislature funds. I can just see the complexities we'd then want to introduce, because we'd say: "How much will we limit ourselves? Will it be a \$25 limit to a nonprofit society versus no limit other than the

maximum amount if it's a sugar company?" We'd have to have a bureaucracy to watch carefully to see that it's a nonprofit society, because that's what we're talking about.

I'm really glad we talked about it, but I think the committee has made the right decision. Unless there's something new presented, Mr. Gogo, I have nothing today that would change my mind. In fact, I'm firmly convinced this would be the wrong way to go.

MR. WRIGHT: I concur, Mr. Chairman. In saying that, I'm not impugning the motives of anyone here, least of all the Member for Lethbridge West. My object is centred on the real purpose of the promotional allowance. It's not to do useful things with the money. I have no doubt that a \$50 contribution to the food bank would be worth more in the greater scheme of things than even the picture of the Member for Lethbridge West in the school. But that's not the purpose. The purpose is to reasonably expend money to make people aware of the services the MLA offers, that he or she will be at a certain place at a certain time, and those sorts of things.

It's true that the little mementos we are expected to hand out as we go are fairly useless in themselves, and the money might be better spent. But I have no doubt at all that the public did not intend that this money be used as a fund to make donations of public money at the whim of the member. So, with the greatest respect to the member making the presentation, I must concur with what we, tentatively at least, concluded.

MR. CHAIRMAN: John, would you like to make any counterarguments or any additional comment?

MR. GOGO: None other than the following summary, Mr. Chairman. I don't disagree with the two previous speakers. I don't envisage that difficulty. I do think the promotional allowance is to be utilized as the member would see fit; however, the member must act in accordance with guidelines laid down by this committee. I've submitted what I think are the checks and balances. I have no quarrel at all with the decision of the committee, except that in concluding I would suggest and recommend that in the committee's wisdom, if they get around to it, there would be a reasonable case for this

committee recommending an increase in the members' expense allowances in lieu of that. I appreciate the time of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you again, John.

MR. GOGO: If I might make a comment as I leave the room, Mr. Chairman, this is the first time since 1979 when I've been in attendance with the hon. Member for Barrhead that he hasn't made a comment. [laughter]

MS BARRETT: Shouldn't we have invited him to stick around for a while longer then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, don't fill out your expense claims yet please because we have some -- let me rephrase that. There needs to be an operative motion later in the day with regard to Mr. Kowalski, Mr. Taylor, and myself so we can regularize expense claim patterns. So hold the phone.

MR. STEVENS: I won't be here after 2:30.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, you're okay. Just that it's Taylor, Kowalski, and Carter who present the situation.

I gather there is no motion to change the wisdom of the committee with regard to the proposal by the Member for Lethbridge West. In concurrence with the previous action of the committee, we may now move forward.

MR. WRIGHT: Is that resolution recorded somewhere in the book? Oh, here, I've got it. It's section (e).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Section (e). The committee rejected Mr. Gogo's proposal.

MR. WRIGHT: It must have come up earlier.

MR. TAYLOR: We've acted on it before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, we've acted on it. Section (e) shows you the minute from July 29 at the top of the page, that's (f) from promotional allowance, and then (e) is the minute from November 14 requesting Mr. Gogo to come to the committee. So the decision was made back in July.

Move right along. Item 3(f) should be called "member's expense allowance."

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, there's an error there too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right there; okay.

MR. STEVENS: In the third line, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of what?

MR. STEVENS: On what you're reading.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're back on section (e). I need you to quote chapter and verse -- (e) on the minute of July 29 or November 14?

MR. STEVENS: I'm sorry. You've thrown me with your e's and f's too now. Where are you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; wait a minute. I'm trying to find out where you are, because I'm trying to respond to your concern.

MRS. MIROSH: Under 3(f).

MR. CHAIRMAN: On today's agenda, folks, we're now at item 3(f) which reads "member's tax-free allowance," which should read "member's expense allowance," in the light of earlier discussion today. Take me by the hand from there please.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. With your correction, which I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, if you would then turn to section (f), which is the blue page ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Section (f).

MR. STEVENS: Referring to the minute, it says on the third line "\$7,150." That is, in fact, the amount I quoted when I spoke at the meeting, because that is what was printed in the Act. But Bill 54 did amend that number, and now the committee must make a decision. I wonder if that's a problem; it really is \$7,508. I was quoting the Act before Bill 54. Bill 54 modified that number to \$7,508. That's just been drawn to my attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we would take that as information to be put into the minutes today

rather than have to go back and try to correct all that.

MR. STEVENS: Okay.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, relative to those two numbers, I just want to point out that the adjustment from \$7,150 to \$7,508 resulted from adjustments which came about, provided for in the Act, owing to the cost of living increases.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But this previous figure was the information you had at the time as being correct, so we now make a note in our minutes for the sake of the secretary that the figure as of this date is \$7,508, at least as of . . .

MR. STEVENS: Two months ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . 1:42 in the afternoon. Okay? Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Where does that fit into the minute? I got it under (f), but we're going back and forth . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure you south-country boys there will get it together so that Alan Hyland will help you make the appropriate change.

MR. TAYLOR: I have another problem, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry you've got another problem.

MR. TAYLOR: If we're cleaning up blue sheets . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only if it pertains to this particular item.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, it's simply that the \$7,508 is the figure in the Act of \$7,150, increased by the 5 percent, which came automatically at the first of January.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Entirely correct. Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: I was going to suggest that the matter be further tabled as — I'm not sure of the other parties, but we have not had an

opportunity to caucus on the matter yet. I move we table it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to table. No debate. Those in favour please signify. Opposed? Carried. Item tabled to the next meeting.

Item 3(g).

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I want to correct an impression. I guess I either made — the system or the recording back to 3(b). I nodded my head to something I didn't realize until I looked into the blue sheets on (b). You said the Liberal leader had been receiving cheques for presentations of government grants. I think somehow or another that misconstrued from my earlier mumbling where I presented heritage trust fund scholarships maybe. I can't recall ever presenting a cheque. Usually I'm pretty good, being mostly Scottish; if somebody gives me a cheque, it's sort of burned into my mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. That's why we had that little interchange earlier in the day for clarification, and you clarified it at that time.

MR. TAYLOR: I didn't realize that when I was sitting nodding and smiling, you were talking about the blue sheet here, the cheques. I have had presentations but not cheques.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: A cheque is the ultimate presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rather than get into a philosophical discourse, I would say that the gift of life was the ultimate one, but nevertheless . . .

Does anyone want to feel blue about 3(g)?

MS BARRETT: I'm sure I could sing a little blues number.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, good. Along this note we have some photographs here that were taken of the committee trip to Regina, and after the meeting or during coffee break if any of you would like to look through that, they're up here.

Any combined wisdom with regard to meetings in other Legislatures, or is that an

item ... I don't see that happening prior to Christmas, so would that be another item to hold till the next meeting?

MR. HYLAND: Probably because we haven't had an opportunity to move yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was a short time line from our last meeting to this that didn't really allow us to get some of the other things done.

All right. Issue 3(g) onto the next meeting.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, may I lodge an inquiry on this matter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. Is this a formal, public, royal commission or just ...

MS BARRETT: If you want to so strike it. I wonder if any of the plans that you had enunciated a few months ago for alterations to the Chamber will be affected by further delaying any other consideration by this subcommittee to review other Legislatures?

MR. CHAIRMAN: My imagination is being boggled on a couple of counts here. First off, this issue of travelling to other Legislatures I brought forward, having perused the minutes of the previous committee before the '86 election. In there there was budget allocation put aside for the committee to travel. I had no idea what that committee was intending to do. However, with regard to then bringing it forward onto the agenda of the lifetime of this committee, was to ascertain what this committee intended to do or not to do with that item. That's one issue.

The second issue was that following on the conversation I then made some suggestions that if the committee wanted to go to other places to look at facilities for members — you know, ratio of secretarial staff to members and other types of coverage — I would hope that in addition they would look at the matter of audiovisual, telecommunications, those kinds of things: security and food services, including whether or not other Legislatures have restaurants, whether that's an open-door policy to all the staff in the building or whether or not there's the aspect of a members' dining area. That, of course, also raises the matter of what types of beverages are being served in such facilities. So I really saw that as being a much

broader thing than just hinging on whether or not there would be a phase 2 or 3 sometime in our Legislature, along the lines of the renovations to the Chamber. Anything else I might cover with that?

The final thing was that with regard to the video package systems, it was Saskatchewan that had it in place. We've gone there. Ontario has it in place, and the House of Commons. Other than that, I'm at the mercy of the committee.

MR. HYLAND: I suppose that as long as provisions are made for placement of the video equipment, the cameras, et cetera, in certain spots in the walls, we've probably got a year or more — maybe not that much, but at least a few months — to decide on the type of equipment anyway, compared to having to make the decision immediately about renovations. It isn't a great cost to build that part in; the big cost of that equipment is not the box it goes in but the equipment itself and the lines to and from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a good point, because we've provided the capability in phase 1 construction that if phase 2 were to take place in 1999, at least everything is there — the conduit and the ports for the installation of the cameras — if that becomes a decision of the Legislature at some stage of the game. But I assure the committee again that as for the next phase of it, it has to go through trying to survive the priorities committee; it has to try to go through the whole budget process, including whether or not it would be approved by the Assembly as a whole. So, indeed, no further commitments have been made at this stage with regard to going on and ordering television cameras.

If, for example, the costs were built in for increasing the lighting and putting in the full technological capability for the television system, if that were approved by the budget process, the earliest we could order a television camera would be the summer of '87, and my understanding is that it would take up to 18 months to get them in place. So if we did get it through the budget process and approved by next summer, we're still looking at — the first session with all of that remote control stuff in place would be the spring of '89.

The only other way to go about it would be to

have some discussions about some private entrepreneur television system placing all the material and then our working on a lease arrangement. I initiated some discussion about that this morning just for discussion purposes, so that at least I could try to examine all the possible alternatives. But at the moment, what we see in February is what we get.

Do we then take it that 3(g) moves us on to the next meeting as well?

MR. HYLAND: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Wright, item 3(h).

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. As to (h), I'm not sure Mr. Taylor even knows he's on this committee.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, I read the minutes a couple of days ago. I did some checking to find out what the problem was. I gather everybody is using -- I guess one part of our job is that we're supposed to try to get something before everybody gets off in different directions again, some sort of standardization. I find it difficult, because I haven't even been able to get a computer for our caucus yet. The last time I put in a request, I got a letter from Toronto asking for a credit rating on the Alberta government, which I was quite willing to fill out. I then thought that if I filled it out, I'd maybe never get it, so I transferred it up to the Treasurer to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got one in a warehouse in Calgary.

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe we should have a meeting.

MR. WRIGHT: So that may be tabled, with the concurrence of the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman of the subcommittee.

Item 3(i). Following that we then have an item 3(j), which I failed to inform the secretary about, a piece of correspondence which came in this morning from Mr. Taylor. The Clerk, please.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, there is a memorandum, which in fact is a report which

was distributed to all members and is contained again in the book, as a result of discussions with a variety of persons within the province of Alberta and with the government of Canada relative to a universal gasoline credit card and the possibility and practicality of introducing a Visa or MasterCard.

I would draw the attention of members of the committee to item 4, beginning at the bottom of page 2 of the report, which indicates that a committee will be struck within two weeks by government to consider the implementation of a universal gasoline credit card for government use. May I respectfully suggest that in introducing a universal gas credit card, it would be most practical if in fact such a card for MLA use were to be tied in with any program that the government were going to implement, and respectfully suggest to the committee that perhaps the administration be directed to keep a watchful eye on the developments of the government's Treasury committee on that subject.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, to the Clerk. I wonder if, in your discussions with Mr. Burns, you got any idea of how long they're going to be. Is it one of these committees that's going to study it for six or eight months or a year and then report? How soon would we have an answer?

MR. STEFANIUK: I have no idea, Mr. Chairman, although the implementation of the card would, I imagine, take some time, whether it be done by Treasury or by the Legislative Assembly, because the implementation of a universal gas card would require negotiations and agreements with every oil and gasoline supplier to participate in the scheme. So regardless of who did that, the length of time that would be required would be the same, but I don't imagine it happens too, too quickly.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that I think the submission provided to us is very helpful. Each area of study has different ways of solving it. The concern I have with the MasterCard, Visa approach still remains in that it's the interest costs. For those -- it says here, according to the Deputy Provincial Treasurer, "a few ministers," or, in my own case, as chairman of AADAC I have a card that's already been frozen, because AADAC could not

in fact move quickly enough to pay a \$68 bill. So there is a problem there.

The only other solution that I can think of -- and we didn't discuss this at the last meeting -- is a travel advance, which eliminates the problem of the fact that government cannot react fast enough to pay the bill. But I don't like that. So if the government approach will lead to a Canadian-type of approach -- for the Clerk -- such that the invoice is submitted and in fact paid by the government on behalf of the MLA directly, that's fine. But if it's going to take a long, long time, I would prefer that we went with the approach you've developed here, which provides us with an addendum which I think shows in the memo the kind of form that could be signed by each MLA. Then he or she would be free, having signed that obligation, to manage his or her own travel expenses.

I notice, for example, Mr. Clerk, that the Legislature Esso card does not have an expiry date -- that always causes me lots of interesting problems with my Esso dealer -- whereas the En Route card does.

I don't see any problem with going with the Visa, MasterCard approach, having the obligation that we sign this affidavit, ensuring that we submit our customer copies as noted and manage that way. If over the next six months to a year the government develops a new process, we could review it, but I like the idea that you've developed in your memo and Mr. Clegg's proposed form.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're all back on track here? Thank you, Greg.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, this is what Mr. Taylor and I were -- he was asking. Don't these other companies charge interest if you're late? I would think, with all due respect to the other government departments, any expense moneys or anything that I put through to Legislative Assembly, probably because of the staff handling it, goes through a heck of a lot faster than most other expense accounts that go into government in whatever form. Your living allowance cheque or even your members' services cheque or your trust fund -- sometimes seven to 10 days and it's paid. I don't see why we couldn't go with a credit card made out similar to these: Legislative Assembly and your name on a MasterCard and the bill comes directly to the Assembly. You don't have to

handle it. That way, unless the Assembly changes a whole lot in their payment scheme, they're turning over their payments, I would assume, fairly fast and avoiding interest. They could all come in and be processed and paid out that way. It would be no different from any of these three cards I've got in front of me now, which would be subject to interest if we're late paying for it. I would assume they are, because my personal one is.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, surely the way to go is not a way that creates a special deal for MLAs but simply rationalizes and makes more efficient the method that the government pays gas for all of those who use their own cars on government business. It seems that the federal government has worked out a system which surely can be copied. In the meantime, we'll put up with the way we have, unless it's going to take an awful long time. I'd like to recommend that number 5 be the model for the government to look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A problem for the Legislative Assembly, of course, is trying to keep track of who is charging what on their cards. There's no doubt about it; while I haven't had a chance to go and start thumbing through a few of the accounts, it's a problem. Especially with the En Route card, we've had people making some charges that shouldn't have been on that card. Then you have to go and chase them down and all the rest of it. We're not there to supply a convenience card for somebody putting expenses on that should not have been on the card in the first place. But that's just a comment.

MR. BOGLE: For clarification, I want to know whether or not members may purchase an item for a car -- i.e., a tire, which is not something we can claim for -- at the same time as an oil change or a grease job is done. I assume members do what I've done on occasion, and that is separate out on the receipt. I did it recently with a headlight that had to be replaced, and the garage went ahead and replaced the headlight. It was all on the bill. I merely identified that portion of the bill as my own responsibility and paid for the bill with two -- I used the same credit card, but I ran it through the machine twice, once for the headlight and once for the oil change and grease

job. Is that not the standard norm that we are using?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, when the oil company credit card that is issued to the member is used by a member for other than an authorized commodity or service, the charges pertaining to the unauthorized commodity or service are extracted from the bill. The bill is paid in total by the Legislative Assembly, and the member then must be invoiced to reimburse the Provincial Treasurer for the unauthorized portion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The way you've described it is the better way to go. It gives our accounting staff a better chance to be able to find it.

MR. STEFANIUK: If I may, Mr. Chairman, except that when a member pays directly to the oil company, our statement will still show that charge. The result may be a duplicate payment to the oil company.

MR. BOGLE: Except in my case I'm not using your card; I'm using a MasterCard.

MR. STEFANIUK: It's a personal card. Then that's no problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then we need to instruct all of our members to do that.

MR. BOGLE: When is the last time we had an orientation for new and old members on a whole variety of things?

MRS. MIROSH: Never since I've been here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us sift out, first of all, what the variety of things are. If we're talking about the credit card thing and the use of services, that was up to your caucus to explain to you folks before you came into the House. I understand that the Clerk met with the other caucuses to explain various procedures. I don't know whether that took place or not, but there's always time for another reminder, I'm sure.

MR. STEFANIUK: I was just going to say that on orientation, Mr. Chairman, our office responded to requests for orientation programs and consulted with certain individuals in government as to whether or not an orientation

program was desirable by the government caucus. A response was not forthcoming, but orientation programs were given for the three opposition caucuses.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm wondering whether we're not overcomplicating the issue. I understood that Mr. Gogo's proposal of a Visa was nothing more than an easy and simplified way of getting a universal credit card, because Visa now is, in effect, universal. So I don't think we have to go through all this huge bureaucracy of what the Mounties are doing and back and forth. I thought it was suggesting that instead of getting Texaco, Esso, and all of the other cards, we have a Visa, which would be paid directly by the government. Surely Visa doesn't charge any more interest than Esso or Shell or any of the others. They all charge interest, too, if you're late. I thought it was a very simple and wise system to get around having to carry a handful of cards or to go through the Mounties' system. It's a universal card.

As far as what charges are going to be made on a card, they're all bad now. You can walk into Mohawk and buy anything from a barbecue to your mother-in-law's nightie on an Esso card or anything else. Gasoline credit cards today are almost universal what you can charge, so there has to be policing, number one. Number two, there has to be honesty on the part of the MLA. I don't think that a Visa is suddenly going to open up a whole cornucopia of shopping privileges across Canada that the other cards didn't get, because there are so many of these shopping centres now where you do get gasoline. I think a very easy system is to go ahead and give the Visa, the special account, and that's your universal card.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, per item of the minutes, because of the report we have today and the comments raised, we will, through the office, try to ascertain how soon this group intends to report back. Then we'll keep on pushing with it and encourage them to report as fast as they possibly can.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, that may be the way to go, and I'll certainly go along with what you're suggesting as a consensus. I would like to disagree with the Member for Edmonton Strathcona's comments and agree with the member that this is not the way to go. It is not

a government process that the MLAs are involved in. As we see in this report, those are directed — as I'm sure the federal government has found — for provincial employees driving a variety of vehicles. They have a voucher system today. They're looking at whether or not they can have a common gasoline and other lubrications and so on with their own card. What was presented was the idea that we not have a variety of cards but that we have one card. Maybe the Parliamentary Counsel wants to modify it, but there is a proposed way of dealing with it. The Clerk has indicated that it can be done.

I'm prepared to move, if you would accept a motion, that we proceed rather than wait for something that may not occur and may not fit an MLA's requirements in the first place. I'm prepared to make a motion if you will accept it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have the motion framed so that the committee can discuss this.

MR. TAYLOR: I agree with that. It simplifies the system. It doesn't complicate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Whoa. The committee stops so I can have a motion properly worded, please. Why don't we take a two-minute break and put it together?

[The committee recessed from 2:08 p.m. to 2:17 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we have a motion with respect to this item, or some direction for the Chair?

MR. KOWALSKI: I move we table it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to table. No discussion. Those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like a show of hands on that. I'm not going by decibel units.

MR. TAYLOR: By tabling this, it mean it's

dead, though.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Table means until the next meeting. Motion to table. Those in favour, a show of hands, please. Opposed, a show of hands, please.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, on a motion to table, can't you ask why?

MR. STEVENS: It's not debatable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Anyway, the motion is defeated. You can't ask why afterwards either.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, you summed up just before we left, and I was going to propose a motion and reflect on your advice on whether it would be appropriate. Perhaps you might have a personal discussion with the Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Chairman, and see if the committee the Clerk has advised us about would proceed with their investigation and report back as quickly as possible. You might discuss with him what we're trying to do, and we can be part of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. HYLAND: I think, just as my hand went up, Greg may have covered it; just if we go that way, to lend our support to a universal credit card if that extra support is needed. Before I put my hand up or as I was doing it, I think Greg covered it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I don't think we need a motion from the committee. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Point of order. My God, is this question period?

MR. TAYLOR: Maybe I'm too late. I circulated this . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, there's no such thing, because that is exactly the next item of business. Item (j) is your correspondence to the committee which I

received this morning.

MR. TAYLOR: Item (j)?

MR. STEVENS: He just told you he was going to bring it up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please continue, hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Sorry. I'm working from an agenda you only gave me a few hours ago. I didn't realize you had another one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. I understand that, Mr. Taylor, and I apologize to the committee. A lot of that comes back to the snowstorm that's on my desk, with the other items I'm trying to deal with. That's why you didn't get it before.

MR. TAYLOR: It's quite all right. I had laboured long to try to get the whole gist on one sheet of paper, knowing the attention span of my committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Congratulations to you. Do all members have a copy of this letter?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment. We have some here to be distributed. Let's get these rolling. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon has taken due note of the fact that the Member for Barrhead is relieved of his jacket to be able to deal with the item on the agenda: the mystical item printed in invisible ink, 3(j), correspondence, Mr. Taylor.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, the problem I have is that I'm very concerned about two factors. One is getting the best deal for the MLAs. Secondly, I think we have to conduct business in such a way that we're beyond criticism. I think locking any contract out to anyone through an intermediary who is being paid on a commission basis from whoever receives the contract is just basically wrong, whether it's a road contract or an insurance contract or any other. The people who are advising you — the architect or whoever is reading out the thing — shouldn't be able to get a commission on the basis of the cost, the basis

of the people supplying a service.

Secondly, what bothered me a bit is that I had calls from some insurance companies — I can't name them all, and some didn't want to be named; some didn't mind being named. One was maybe the biggest service writer in the province, London Life Insurance. They were the ones who told me they do not give commissions to intermediaries. So, although this was an ex-MLA and a good firm and that, and they may have been asked, they would not bid. So I think we are being denied access to some of these insurance companies that do not pay commissions or finders' fees to brokerage houses. Consequently, we didn't see what one of their bids would be.

Lastly, I think it's incumbent on us as MLAs — and this is why I suggest retaining somebody. There's nothing wrong with retaining the groups we have now on a fixed fee. I think we should be able to see or prove to the people of this province, if anybody examines our books, that we did indeed inquire of provincial insurance companies whether or not they wished to bid on it or wished to bid on a portion of doing the services.

I think the whole process has been done with the idea that we're using somebody to look into it, and they're going to get a commission from the other side. I don't think that necessarily gets us the best plan or has saved us money. I think it leaves us open for criticism and is of particular concern that we did not cover the marketplace, that some of the major suppliers of these services were not encountered because of the system of using the commission we are giving to this group.

Lastly, of course, I don't think there's any proof to know that the commission may not have varied from contractor to contractor; in other words, for their own reputation as well as others, to make sure that McPherson & L'Hirondelle Associates are not giving the job to one group or another because that commission is higher than another group. I think that would be worth while noting.

To get around all these types of things that I'm sure we're going to get into if we proceed this way, I am recommending that we not implement motions as passed, that instead, if the committee agrees, we go back to the same group and negotiate a fixed fee with them. With that fixed fee for that, they will then go out and solicit offers. But we pay McPherson &

L'Hirondelle, not the insurance companies.

MR. WRIGHT: What company did you mention, Nick?

MR. TAYLOR: London Life was one, but there were a couple of others that told me they didn't want their names used.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, forgive me. Hon. member, you have in fact made two motions. We'll deal with the first one, which is basically to suspend any implementation. You have two distinct things that are really happening with it.

MR. TAYLOR: But it's relevant to being able to vote on that first motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Depending what happens to that, we'll see whether or not there is a second motion. But your first motion is along the lines of recommending that the committee suspend any implementation on motions passed at the last meeting relating to the insurance and benefits plan, period. Discussion?

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to note for the members who may not be aware of this that after the initial presentation by McPherson & L'Hirondelle, I was contacted by a reporter for the Red Deer Advocate, who questioned me as to whether or not it was appropriate for this committee to even be considering a proposition as presented by a previous MLA, given that he would have inside knowledge of the deficiencies of our overall insurance system and that he may stand to benefit from any kind of package we approved.

My response then, as now, is this. Without a code of ethics in law preventing such a presentation and given what I'm going to assume is an average intelligent quotient of beyond 70 for the members of this committee and our ability to deal with the facts as presented and question the presenters themselves with respect to what kind of shopping around they had done, which I believe was done during the last meeting and, indeed, the previous meeting, as a matter of fact, embracing queries not solely with respect to private insurance companies but also with respect to the public insurance system, which covers us in many instances, I fear that while recognizing the legitimate

concerns as expressed by Mr. Taylor, we could now be in a situation of penalizing some people for our own approval and our own scrutiny of that presentation.

I believe that Mr. McPherson and his partner made it pretty clear that they did do very comprehensive shopping around, some of which is articulated in writing at the front of their initial report, much of which was enunciated orally during our last meeting. I suspect that we could go on with this for about a year and that we still may not be satisfied that we have found someone who is so objective or stands to gain nothing prior to making a decision that we really would hurt ourselves.

I think it's wrong to do this now, and moreover but finally, given that there are no specific provisions within statute which prevent previous members from doing this — an item to which I personally object, but this is not a partisan committee — I think we have to go along with what we agreed to. We spent a lot of time on it, and I for one don't want to have to spend another several meetings on it.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I too was struck by that feature of the way we'd gone about this last time. I tried my hardest, and I hope I succeeded in detecting whether there was some insufficiency in the reasons for the particular recommendations they gave, in view of the fact that if they found that our existing plan was reasonable in all respects, they get no money at all.

But I must say, Mr. Chairman, that the presentation both written and oral seemed to me — and of course I'm no expert on these things — to add up to a good case for accepting the recommendations we did accept, regardless of their methods of remuneration. So I think it would be wrong on the score of the facts themselves, apart from being merely inconsistent and embarrassing them and us by revoking our previous resolution, to do that.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, the concern I would have would be partly the same as the two members speaking previously. Secondly, now that we have accepted that, all that the other companies sitting out there — and especially if we go on the lower bid — have to chop off is a tenth of a percent or less to stay underneath, because what we've accepted is public information now. I guess the rates are now

probably public too. All a company would have to do, if we went out to the public again, is underbid it. We might well end up -- we might. Maybe we wouldn't. Maybe the company named doesn't deal through commissioned agents; they deal direct. I suppose if they were asked previously by that group, they could have notified the Assembly that they would wish to deal direct. There wouldn't have been anything stopping them.

Maybe they weren't notified as a group, but I remember one of the questions we asked was how many Alberta insurance companies had been asked, and they gave us a list. If memory serves me right, they also asked if the group was willing to take parts thereof or the whole program. I don't know how many groups; I suppose we could find that out. The answers they got back were the ones they came back to us with that were interested either in part or in total of the operation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Along that line, I checked with one of my constituency directors, who is the head of an insurance operation in Calgary, and he looked at the whole package and couldn't believe it. He wouldn't bid at the rates we've been able to achieve through this presentation. He confirms that the proposal is indeed good. The listing we've just scanned here: approaches were made to 14 companies in terms of the bid process.

Any other discussion?

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to close it off, because I don't think you have heard the last of it. First of all, I think this committee has been maybe a little relaxed even almost to the point of negligence to accept a principle of awarding a contract where the one who advised where the contract should go gets a commission. I'll fight that one for a long time. I just think that's a principle you've violated here. I don't think there's any question about it, and I don't think it's a principle you're going to be able to defend in public. I'll challenge anybody to defend that principle of letting a contract where the advisor as to who will get the contract -- and a great deal of judgment goes into this thing -- where the person giving you the advice gets a commission.

The second is that I don't know if we've got the cheapest bid. I don't even think that's an argument here. I'm not trying to get into the

case of whether it was an ex-Conservative MLA getting another reward because he was an ex-Conservative. That's something entirely aside on that. That point has never been made by me. It may be made by others as more publicity comes onto this.

The second thing I want to get across is the question of the cheapest bid. I feel that we have short-circuited our members from maybe if not the cheapest -- I don't know -- but the best plan. These things are very hard. It's not a simple open and shut case of X dollars for health insurance or anything. This is a very complicated, inter-related package, and I don't believe we have had a chance to look over the packages that could have been submitted. I know the Member for Highlands says that she's in a hurry. Well, I don't know. By the time I got the thing and did some calling to check on the thing, there was no possible way that I could have a plan in by when you people voted. This thing was rushed as far as I was concerned, one of the few things this committee has rushed about. I saw the proposal one time, and it was voted on something less than two weeks later, which is no time to get through to see other bids, although it did give me time to do some checking out in the marketplace to find that some of the major suppliers of these types of things hadn't been approached and told me that they wouldn't go into this type of thing anyway. If they had been approached, they didn't want to pay a commission or pay anything under the table to anyone. They wanted to have it all up front.

I can't change anyone's mind. I think that's it, but I really think, as a person who has been in business for some years, we've broached a very important principle, and that is paying somebody on the point of view of commission on whoever they award it to.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, in light of the foregoing, a certain famous quote comes to mind from another political leader, and the quote was: "I had no choice." It seems to me that what the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is getting at is the impropriety of dealing with someone from the private sector who makes a commission for winning a particular contract. Having had a very good friend of mine involved at a very high level of selling insurance, I came to understand over the years that that's what that business is. I'm sure the member

understands also that the business collects money for investment and understands all the rest of it. The business is to make money. They make money off money just like banks do. I might not like it; in fact, I don't like it, but it seems to me that one way or the other that is exactly what we're stuck with. Whether or not a person may have a vested interest at the first or second glance I think is irrelevant to the overall nature of the business. We do not have a public insurance system, so to speak, by which we could work around any sort of commission motive coming into play. Even then I'm not so sure. I believe you can make money by selling under a public insurance plan in some countries; I'm quite sure you can.

I reiterate those points, Mr. Chairman, inasmuch as I think we're dealing with a certain factor here that cannot be gotten around, just by the nature of the business itself. In the second place, when I said that I didn't want to have to deal with it again and again, I did so in the context of the member not having been here at the last meeting. Certainly I had questions that I would have liked to have had discussions about at certain points, and I have had with members of my own caucus on some of these facts. But the bottom line is this: we do not have a code of ethics statute in this province that we can refer to to make the most objective case in this instance. It's a Bill that we have sponsored and will continue to sponsor, but in the absence of that sort of Bill, I think we make a very subjective decision to overturn a decision that has been collectively decided before in the absence of the member who now raises the objection.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I want to share with committee members one of the reasons I felt it imperative that we move — not with haste — but that we move on filling something that colleagues of ours on the Members' Services Committee some two years ago had agreed to, and that was a long-term disability package. The chairman of this committee, our Speaker of the Assembly, discovered that in fact that had not been done, while it was the intent of the elected members to ensure that private members, nonmembers of cabinet and non-civil servants, enjoy the same kind of protection afforded to others, that we move on the issue.

The discussions we had were fairly thorough

in my view. On two different occasions we spent sufficient time asking questions and receiving information back from both Mr. McPherson and Mr. L'Hirondelle. In light of the fact that we have 83 members and that if something were to happen to one of our members and they were not covered, I believe that would certainly place some additional strain on my conscience relative to the role this committee has been charged with for members of the Assembly.

On the other hand, if the suggestion from Mr. Taylor is that he'd like to see a further review of the whole package and whether or not some other insurer might be interested, I'm not sure how often or how regular there are reviews, but to me that would be very much in order. If some other company or group of companies a year from now is prepared to provide the same coverage at a lower premium cost, we'd be remiss in not examining that carefully. But notwithstanding the kind of media attention that has been alluded to, I'd be hard pressed in my own conscience to allow members to continue to go unprotected when it was the intent of our predecessors some two years ago that they be protected, knowing the kind of protection that's afforded to both members of the public service and of Executive Council.

MR. KOWALSKI: As I recall, Mr. Chairman, it was several months ago that you brought to the attention of the members of the Members' Services Committee that a review would be undertaken with respect to the benefit plan we're now talking about. I recall as well that you indicated as well that you had contacted the firm McPherson & L'Hirondelle Associates of Red Deer to undertake such a review. It's not my understanding that until today has the competency of that particular firm been raised in the Members' Services Committee. Perhaps as a point of clarification you might advise me whether or not members of Members' Services Committee have raised the question of the competency of this particular firm until this point in time.

MR. TAYLOR: Competency is not raised now.

MR. KOWALSKI: The answer is no.

The second point, in looking at the minutes of October 24, 1986, point 8, notation 33.86 indicates that this particular firm was invited

to review the benefit package proposals prepared for presentation to the committee. The proposals were provided to the committee. The minutes indicate that extensive discussion then followed, with concerns expressed as to what impact the proposed benefit package would have on the overall insured group, and how the proposed benefit package compared with those in effect in other Legislatures.

There is a further notation in the minutes.

The Chairman served notice to Committee Members that this matter would be the first matter to be discussed, and resolved, at the November 14, 1986, meeting.

I refer now to the minutes of November 14, 1986. There is of course of a list of who was present. I would also point out that under point 5 of the minutes of that particular day

extensive discussion followed, with Committee Members further questioning Messrs. McPherson and L'Hirondelle concerning the proposed benefits package.

Furthermore, there is a notation in the minutes that

the Chairman drew Committee Members' attention to correspondence received from the firm McPherson & L'Hirondelle Associates ... dated November 12, 1986, which contained responses to unanswered questions concerning the benefit package discussed at the October 24, 1986, Committee meeting.

It would seem to me, Mr. Chairman, that we've now spent several months on this particular matter. I would further note that in terms of the decisions arrived at on November 14, 1986, it is my understanding that minute 5 has 5(a) life insurance, 5(b) accidental death and dismemberment, 5(c) voluntary life insurance, 5(d) dependant life insurance, 5(e) supplemental health care, 5(f) dental, and 5(g) long-term disability, and it is my recollection that in essence the committee members carried the endorsement of these recommendation unanimously. So it would seem to me, Mr. Chairman, that we have in fact spent a great deal of time on these matters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon, followed by a comment by the Chair, and then the call for the question.

MR. TAYLOR: Are you asking me for the

closing comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please.

MR. TAYLOR: In closing, first of all, I've never questioned the competence of the group. I might have been wiser, probably, to toss the idea out as to who we were going to retain. Nevertheless, from what I gather, I think they are quite competent. I'm talking about the system we've ensnared ourselves in here.

Secondly, I don't see how you can say you've covered it for months when you go from October 24 to November 14. October 24 mentioned it was brought in, but I must admit that even at that time when I was told we were investigating this system, it didn't occur to me that we would be employing an intermediary body that was going to be paid on the basis of commission on who he or she granted the contract to. It never even occurred to me until the end. I found out at the end of the first thing in a straight person-to-person conversation. It boggled the mind that there would be somebody getting paid that way. Nevertheless, that's gone ahead.

I'm not necessarily trying to say that we have the best or the worst plan. I'm just saying that I think we've violated a very basic principle of public contracts; that is, telling the person giving us the advice that he gets his commission from that side of the fence. I know the Member for Edmonton Highlands said commissions are it. I agree; they're in there to make money. But the system you use — an agent is either your agent or the other fellow's agent. In this case, he becomes the other fellow's agent if he's being paid by the other fellow, and he's not our agent. In other words, if we were to hire him and he were to give the evaluations and everything to us, he should be paid by us regardless of what plan he got, regardless of what it was.

In other words, it should be a contract made by us and the agent giving us advice, and then the people that bid, knowing they will not be paying the agent, they will be bidding on a straight ground-floor level, and we'd have no worry then that there was any pressure or influences on our own agent. Our own agent is working for us one hundred percent. In this particular case there's always the concern of whether or not he's working for us or working for the insurance company that's presenting a

plan and that is in effect paying his salary. In other words, you pay the salary of that agent that does the evaluation. I'm not questioning their competency; they're probably fairly competent.

Secondly, though, I think just the fact that there are companies that will not do this system of bidding, will not bid through a middle agent, deprives us of many others. I know it goes against the grain of this committee to maybe reverse a trend, but I don't think you've studied for hours. I got the things on October 24. I went out and started to submit to companies. I think it was a rush that was almost unseemly, to have it done by November 14. I couldn't be here was the thing. I know darn well that October 24 to November 14 was not time enough to get the bid on all these factors for 83 people. I started to look into the thing.

Lastly, when it comes to the reversal of the plan, or you might want to call it holding the implementation, I ... On a point of information before I finish, how long is the contract for? Are we now signing a contract for five years, two years? Is the bid we have here conditional on the fact that they have our business for five years? Is it on the condition we've got it for 10 years? I submit that this was done sloppily, and I'm trying to be as kind as I can in saying that the thing be held up. What kind of a contract have we let? A one-year contract, six-month contract, five-year contract? Do we know?

MR. WRIGHT: A point of information, Mr. Chairman. It's just like any other. If you don't pay the premium, it's cancelled. That's how you do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a yearly basis.

MR. TAYLOR: In other words, there's no bid ... No, it's not; not on life insurance, if you don't pay the premium, it's cancelled. But not casualty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, please. The committee has been more than fair in allowing this discussion to take place. Two meetings ago it was made manifestly certain and clear as to what the discussion was going to be at the last meeting. Whatever the case, you were not able to be there. The committee actually is going against the grain with respect to parliamentary

tradition in having the issue raised again, so I think this afternoon is being more than fair in terms of making the case. If you'd like to sum up the case, that would be good, but I don't think we can afford to spend this whole afternoon churning around on this when we have some other items with regard to the agenda that really are going to take up a lot of time.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Speaker, I'm closing out debate. It may not be important in your mind, but it is important in my mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me; I didn't say that. Let's be manifestly clear. I did not say that. There are some other questions on the record that I'll refer the ...

MR. TAYLOR: But you're giving the impression that you're wasting time, though, Mr. Chairman. I submit that's not so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm given the impression, Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, that you were engaging in dialogue with other members instead of through the Chair and that you were being distracted from the points you were supposedly making.

MR. TAYLOR: All right then. We've got the point, though. I didn't get an answer, except through the Chair from the one lawyer present on the panel, that this is a contract that can be cancelled at any time. I would like to make a point and put in the minutes that I have inquired as to the terms of this contract. I want that recorded. Could you please? Would the Chairman covenant to reply to me as soon as it's convenient as to the term of this contract? Okay.

Lastly, the idea that we're in any danger was refuted and challenged with a great deal of heat by Mr. Stevens. Of course, he's not here to bring the case up, but he took that case up very strongly at the last meeting. He said there was no hurry, that it was not true.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was two meetings ago.

MR. TAYLOR: Two meetings ago. He said it was not true that we were in any danger. To be told now that we have to rush through something, which to me is against the true principles of letting out a contract for public

money, under the guise that we're in any danger, seems to fly in the face of the person that was in charge of personnel services for four years for this government. That statement is quite clear. So I let my case rest, but I am not at all happy with the behaviour here, not at all happy.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, may I request unanimous agreement to speak one more time on this matter, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Thank you very much, members.

Mr. Chairman, what occurs to me here and I think what I object to is something that I personally satisfied myself on, but I'm not sure that the member raising the whole matter has done so. In paragraph number 2 in his letter dated November 20, 1986, he says:

I was contacted by a couple of insurance companies that said they do not give commissions to middlemen and therefore they did not bid.

I went through this process with the Red Deer Advocate in a very careful way, and I note that Mr. McPherson, who no doubt read a report — I never did see the article about it — says that in terms of confusion . . . He responds, I'm quite sure directly to me, when he says:

With respect to the question of remuneration, we wish to reiterate that we will not be charging a consultant's fee to the committee for recommendations flowing from . . .

et cetera. The point is that inasmuch as the consultation goes, inasmuch as what I believe Mr. Taylor is calling the middlemen, no remuneration was ever agreed to or authorized by this committee.

But the second part of this equation, so to speak, is that even if we retained our own insurance agent on this matter, all insurance agents, as agents, have an interest in procuring the type of insurance that the client seeks, and as agents they do benefit from it. I've been on record before saying that I have some difficulty with a previous MLA having conducted that part of the business, but not so much that I didn't trust the ability of that agent to go about and do a real market examination. I'm no authority

on insurance, but I was satisfied by the end of the last meeting that a thorough examination had been done and had been reported both in writing and orally. I think this is the essential point of contest between the member and, for example, myself, that really becomes academic at a certain point, given the nature of the industry itself.

I'll try not to request any more options to speak on this matter.

MR. TAYLOR: It's not so, Mr. Chairman. There are people that act as consultants to clients. Not everybody is an agent. They may be one and the same, but they can't take the commission out of both sides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the record I would remind everyone that when this process was initiated by myself back in July or August, I spoke to the House leader for the loyal opposition and also spoke with the vice-chairman of the committee on behalf of the government members, to give them full knowledge of the fact of what the process was that I was embarking upon on behalf of all members of the Assembly. At that time I felt that when I had spoken to the House leader on behalf of the loyal opposition, that then carries the day with any of the opposition parties with regard to the matters pertaining to this committee.

At all times we were aboveboard as to what was going on. It's a unique situation to be able to have someone who has insurance expertise and also has had the experience of being in the House. I was fully aware of the political sensitivities with regard to all of this matter. I would again underline the fact that from the beginning it's been entirely aboveboard. It's been aboveboard at every one of the discussions that has taken place in the life of this committee.

It's manifestly evident with regard to long-term disability for the average member that we have absolutely no protection whatsoever in place for those members. That means that as long as we procrastinate on this issue, we are, in my opinion, being derelict in our responsibility to the members.

All those in favour of the motion as proposed by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, which is that the committee suspend any implementation of the motions passed at the last meeting

related to the insurance and benefits plan, please raise a hand. Opposed, if any? The motion is defeated.

MR. TAYLOR: Could I ask that it be recorded, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It certainly is. As the member who is sponsoring the motion, it is recorded, and the fact that it was defeated is also shown.

MR. TAYLOR: I just want to reply that I want it recorded that I voted for my own motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed, if you didn't vote for your motion, then it would be quite strange. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, on this matter or related thereto, I wonder if you would entertain a motion that would see one of the concerns addressed by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon in a fashion that would be satisfactory to all members inasmuch as calling for a reasonable limitation on this particular contract so that it could come up for a regular review. I have no particular time period in mind, but I think there is a valid consideration to be made at that point, and I would gladly make the motion that this come up within -- I don't know -- one or two years for a very specific review. Might I do that?

MR. TAYLOR: One year would be fine.

MS BARRETT: Would one year be fine? Mr. Chairman, I now move that the review be . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. It's the benefit package.

MS BARRETT: . . . that the working of the overall insurance plan, the changes in the insurance plan as approved at the Members' Services' meeting on November 14, 1986, to be conducted no later than December 31, 1987.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Did I do it, Louise? Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Do we also investigate special rates for those who do not smoke?

MR. CHAIRMAN: A separate issue.

Is there a call for the question with respect to the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Let it be seen that it carried unanimously.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Hon. members, with regard to this item in the transcript of the meeting of November 14, 1986, at the conclusion of the discussion with regard to the comprehensive insurance package, after Mr. McPherson had spoken, the chairman said:

Thank you. In light of the motions being passed, I will instruct the necessary paperwork starting on Monday. With the knowledge and, I trust, the consent of the committee, I'll instruct that you [McPherson & L'Hirondelle] indeed help to carry it forward with the necessary department of government.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

I subsequently then met with the minister responsible, the Minister of Labour, on the following Monday and, indeed, things are in process. I do not wish to have any of the actions of this committee fall between two stools because the chairman didn't do his work.

Okay. I would like to show under the items of other business that we have some items which do need to be tidied up today, and so we have them on notice here. Item 7(c) is with regard to the \$75 per day allowance. On review from the Parliamentary Counsel, it may well be that we have to make a further modification to the motion that was passed at the last meeting, whereby if the Assembly is meeting in a partial month that the 10 days can still be covered in that month, because, as our motion reads at the moment, we're only covered for the days in a month when the Legislature does not sit. So that's one of our tidy-up items, plus having to pass -- what do we call them? -- I believe a

Members' Services order.

In addition to that we need some discussion with regard to the allowances that are allowed for Mr. Kowalski, Mr. Taylor, and myself, and then another thing with regard to \$100 per day. [interjection] Which one? 7(b)? Oh, that's that one there. Thank you. So we only have four more to do there.

All right. Coffee has arrived. How about if we stretch for a minute, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and then we can go on to at least the beginning of item 4?

[The committee recessed from 3 p.m. to 3:09 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I need you to help educate me with the way you go through the budget estimates for Members' Services. What's your pleasure with regard to item 4, '87-88? Do you want to go through all of that in great detail today, or . . . How's by you?

MS BARRETT: I'd be easy for a motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Which one are we on?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's that?

MS BARRETT: The approval for a continuation of last year's budgets for next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Approval of the '87-88 budget estimates as presented.

MR. TAYLOR: I would even second that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have a motion, seconded by the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, one of the most important responsibilities of the Members' Services Committee is to, in fact, go through the estimates of expenditure of the Legislative Assembly. By tradition, we've always followed a situation whereby the estimates have been tabled in the Legislative Assembly and they have not been debated in the Legislative Assembly. The responsibility in the past — and it's tradition and tradition only — has essentially been a situation whereby the Members' Services Committee would review the estimates of expenditure in considerable detail

and, once having concluded that and having approved the budget by motion, the estimates are then filed separately from the estimates of the government per se. So I think it is incumbent upon us and inherent upon us to undertake a review of these estimates.

Second to that, what we have in front of us are very, very sparse amounts of information with respect to the estimates. We have adopted a tradition — and again, I repeat, have only adopted a tradition — that, in essence, when it comes to dealing with certain matters that are identified in the estimates, and I take you to page 1 of the summary by element of the 1987-88 budget estimates of the Legislative Assembly, we have agreed in the past that we will not undertake an item-by-item review of the various caucuses.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: That would include the government members' caucus, the Official Opposition caucus, the Liberal opposition caucus, and the Representative opposition caucus. Dollar figures, global figures, will be presented and the committee will then make a decision one way or the other as to the amount of the global figure and then move on and would not go through a specific review of each of the items contained within those global figures.

The last item I wanted to make — and it may very well be being resolved right now with the circulation of paper — was that I found the document that has been presented to us, and which I took home over the weekend and spent some time looking at, to be very, very sparse in terms of information with respect to the other votes that we would have within those estimates. I don't know if in fact the paper that's now being circulated will contain all the information that I'm looking for, but I would defer further comments until I've had an opportunity to see exactly what it is that is being presented to us here. But I think it is important to have this annual review of all the specifics with respect to all of these budgets before we move on.

I should point out as well, Mr. Chairman, that because of the unique aspect of these estimates and because these estimates are filed separately from the government estimates, the ordinary time frames that would be required of government departments is not a time frame

that this committee in the past has found itself bound by. In terms of the departmental estimates that I have to prepare as a minister of the Crown, I have to follow some pretty tight guidelines that are beginning now, but in terms of the time frame that the Members' Services Committee has followed in the past, although it was contrary to the general hopes of the Provincial Treasurer in terms of his budget documentation procedure, we tended not to have ours wrapped up until the February time frame of a particular fiscal year. I know that undoubtedly led to a series of memos coming back and forth, but be that as it may, the Members' Services Committee is a special committee of the Legislative Assembly.

I just wanted to make those few comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The fact that we have a motion is necessary for us to be able to discuss material before us. So that's very useful. The second thing is that for a variety of reasons, part of which is some of the paper blizzard in the other office, the rest of the material was not supplied until now. But having perused the exact wording of the Legislative Assembly Act, I entirely agree as to the matter of the responsibility of the committee to do its homework with regard to the whole operation of the Legislative Assembly.

The time frame information I guess is helpful because I would hope that even though past performance, Member for Barrhead, was indeed sort of Februaryish, hopefully we can continue working in this committee in trying to speed up the process. It's also much more useful for the department as a whole to be able to make the necessary adjustments. So I would hope that even if we did sort of a preliminary discussion today, we would be back before Christmas to get on with this again and to carry it forward.

Any other comments from members at large?

MR. TAYLOR: In view of the tough times we're having, or a lot of the community is out there, I think maybe an effort should be made either to hold the line or to try to cut. I notice the Speaker's office has reduced by 5.5 percent, and the Liberals have increased theirs by 11.5. It doesn't look that good, does it?

I'm wondering whether there shouldn't be an effort by the opposition and some of these other committees to see if we can use the same guidelines of cutting everyone by at least 5

percent -- asking whether they'd look at it. In other words, I don't think there's anything wrong with asking the Liberals, NDP, government members, legislative interns, Alberta Hansard, and the Legislature Library to come up with a budget with a 5 percent cut. Hansard has done it and the Speaker's office has done it, but maybe some of the rest of us could show a bit of that kind of . . .

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, it's my understanding that departments in government have looked at various scenarios. The most reported are 5 and 10 percent cuts. Have there been those kinds of scenarios developed for the various elements that come under the Legislative Assembly? I'm now excluding the caucuses, because I don't imagine they've done that yet, although they certainly could. Has that been done for the various aspects of this element?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The whole discussion with the managers has been . . . Initially some of them were coming forward with having 7 percent increases or whatever, and the instructions were 0, minus 5, minus 10 scenarios. So some of it is already reflected in this.

MR. BOGLE: For instance, under the Legislature Library I would like to see the 5 and 10 percent reductions and where the reductions would be made, at least what recommendations are coming from the staff through you, Mr. Speaker, on where those reductions are to be made. It's the very last one. I just used that as an example.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's an interesting example, because I'll give you a case in point. Over on the research staff we have a lawyer who now will not be having her professional fees paid by the Legislature. Also, travel with regard to research staff is now nonexistent.

MR. BOGLE: I noticed both of those things a moment ago in looking through the material, and that's helpful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things about handing the information to you now: it's not fair. That's why I think preliminary discussion and all that on a detailed basis may well have to

wait until our next meeting, but I am again at the will of the meeting.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, first of all in response to an observation made by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, I believe that in his observing that his own caucus budget is shown to have an increase of 11.5 percent, what he will find is that the global formula that this committee itself struck close to the beginning of the legislative session for 1986 and which was passed by the Legislative Assembly would show that in fact the 1987-88 estimates for the caucuses of government members, the Official Opposition, Liberal opposition, and Representative opposition are in fact static. I believe the percentage change he observes is with respect to the forecast, given that the initial starting up of the new caucus configurations resulted in somewhat underspending compared to the budgets which had been approved by this committee and allocated by the Legislative Assembly. So I'd like to clear that point up first.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a bid to members that with respect to the expressed desire of the Provincial Treasurer to see alternative scenarios presented by each department, in those matters there may be given a number of optional programs in which any department may engage but that the services of the Legislative Assembly in all its various components, I maintain, not change. They are not programmatic. We are not in the business of either constructing public facilities or offering certain public programs that may be subject to that sort of change, which is the reason for my having moved the motion I did. Of course, we are all up for the kind of consideration, I suppose, that has been articulated by other people at this table, but I think it's important to keep in mind that we are a static function in most respects year after year, different from other government departments, I would argue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A good comment, because basically what we have reflecting here is the adjustment for better than half a year. Basically, what we're looking at for the various caucuses is really zero, holding the line.

A couple of other things here. If you look at your summary page, under section 1, in terms of general administration and members' indemnity,

right there we as an operation through our administrative office have no control over that, because we have to adjust to the decisions of this committee, and rightly so, with regard to the allowances and so forth. So that's one where there's little control building this.

MR. TAYLOR: Which one was this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In your big binder. I have it under the Legislative Assembly Estimates Summary. Have you got it under some other exotic page? By the time you then run down to Legislative Committees, after Representative Opposition. There, for example, that's one place where it's shifted because we don't know how often Public Accounts is going to meet outside session, so we have to then bump that kind of figure in. So that's happening there. But on the instruction of the last meeting of this committee, I did write to all the chairmen of each of the committees to see if they could re-examine their budgets to see if there was some way they could knock the figures down. To date I've only had a reply from one of the committee chairmen. But there again, that's just a function that we met so recently that they haven't been back to me.

You'll also notice with respect to legislative interns that we're now actively soliciting more outside donations. We've been able to come up now with a donation of \$5,000 from Petro-Canada, which piggybacks onto the \$5,000 donation from Benson & Hedges, and it now seems almost virtually confirmed that we'll have another \$5,000 donation from Pacific Western Airlines. Those aren't great amounts, but at least in there are some examples where there are some other ways we can try to get some funding. Those are just examples with regard to the summary page.

MR. TAYLOR: Would you help me here, Mr. Chairman? I was slow getting to the page. Did you feel anything could be done in general administration and in legislative committees, where the draw would be minus 5 percent rather than . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, with regard to legislative committees, the letter did go out and contact has been made with all committee chairmen, but they haven't all replied at the moment. So I

think there's some room there.

With regard to general administration, through the Clerk and through our meetings we have been keeping the challenge before them in the direction to tighten it up. But again, that's where we then come in where you roll together . . . Technically it isn't correct, but if you roll together members' indemnity and general administration, there is some overlap there, which we just have to go with what the directions of this committee are to administer.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm going to try to talk to my caucus, realizing what the Member for Edmonton Highlands said, that part of this is deceptively high, because we were not even in the Legislature before it came around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. That's your part.

MR. TAYLOR: But even at that, I think we should be taking a 5 percent cut, which may only reflect maybe a 3 percent increase. But I don't know. I'm going to talk to them about it because it seems to me eminently unfair to raise hell with the government all the time without taking a little cut on your own.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A most generous statement on your behalf, I'm sure.

MR. TAYLOR: Who knows? I might get defeated.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, on the subject of general administration, I simply wanted to alert the committee to the fact that general administration includes such items as members' various allowances, and the increases that were approved by this committee earlier this year were prorated for the previous year's budget to reflect a partial year. The adjustment of those allowances at the approved rates for the entire year, 1987-88, results in some increase — again, as the chairman has said — over which we have no control. We are directed by the decisions of this committee.

Additionally, I think members of this committee may want to be aware of the fact that more recently we are in receipt of certain directives from Treasury relative to adjustment of staff salaries. We understand that settlements have been reached with certain

divisions of employees in the public service, and we are instructed now to reflect the value of those settlements in these budgets, because it is not anticipated that there will be an amount globally available for salary contingency as may have been the case in some years gone by, so that these budgets again have taken into consideration those settlements which have very recently been affected and announced. But they still do not take into consideration settlements which may be forthcoming within the next week, month, or several months. Obviously, those will have to be granted and will have to be absorbed in whatever budgets are approved. So that is the sort of difficulty we run into in general administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona, did I miss you on this topic?

MR. WRIGHT: You did, but it was all right, because my colleague had said what I was going to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I apologize.

MR. BOGLE: I wanted to ask a question, Mr. Chairman. Was it your intent just to deal with this in a very preliminary way today and to set one or possibly two days aside in January — I say "two days" only in the event that it couldn't be dealt with on one day — so that the budget could be dealt with in a detailed way? What is your pleasure?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I mentioned earlier, it's whatever the will of the committee is.

MR. BOGLE: Because I would appreciate getting back. Notwithstanding the comments from Edmonton Highlands, and again, not wishing to appear to be picking on any group, I'm looking at the Legislature Library: 24 permanent positions. Now it may be that that is necessary. I would like to see scenarios that would see a reduction. What was the staff in the library five years ago, as an example? There are some questions that I believe there are some ready answers for. It may be that there's an explanation that there hasn't been an increase in that staff in the five-year period, but if we're able to deal with a maximum amount of information when we next meet, possibly we can get through this exercise so

that you can comply with the Provincial Treasurer and the Treasury Department and we can go on about our business.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I certainly wouldn't object to a specific day in January being set aside for consideration of the full amounts of budgets. Was it you planning to go on holidays then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no, no. I'm just thinking as to when somebody else from the loyal opposition is going on holidays and therefore wouldn't be available during December, when I would rather get it done.

MS BARRETT: Right. This particular person from Edmonton Highlands would just about kill to get a first holiday in two years — just about. So I like Taber-Warner's suggestion for a January date.

MR. BOGLE: Gee, and I thought you were going to say you liked Taber-Warner. [laughter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: She was heading south, but she didn't say how far south.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's kind of a cuddly kind of guy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's not burn up time here this afternoon then if that's it . . .

MR. TAYLOR: There are some nice villas for cheap rent in Taber-Warner.

MS BARRETT: I want sunshine, Nick.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not here to promote Taber-Warner. Good gracious. It's a constituency. How about trying to structure a committee meeting in the first week of January?

MR. TAYLOR: Like you, Mr. Chairman, I prefer December, but if compelled, I'll take January.

MS BARRETT: Yes, you oilmen probably get regular holidays.

MR. TAYLOR: I don't go very far. The banker travels with me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand. Great panic here about Ukrainian Christmas. Surely they realize the chairman has enough sensitivity to that.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would think that would be an ideal time, because I couldn't think of a better place to go for a Ukrainian Christmas party.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The first week of January.

MR. HYLAND: As long as it isn't the Wednesday.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I do believe it is really important to have the Clerk present when we go through these estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, sure.

MR. KOWALSKI: It may very well be that the first week of January is not a good week.

MR. WRIGHT: If it's Ukrainian Christmas you're talking about, the first week in January happens about January 15 on the Julian calendar.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that you're caught on the sixth and seventh. Please, Calgary Glenmore, what's the first week in January? Give us the dates as to what days of work, please.

MRS. MIROSH: Monday is the fifth, Tuesday is the sixth, Wednesday is the seventh . . .

MS BARRETT: Thursday is the eighth. [laughter]

MR. TAYLOR: It's the Ukrainian calendar she's looking at.

MRS. MIROSH: Yes, it is.

MR. KOWALSKI: I really object to these racial slurs.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, what about a Friday meeting, Friday the ninth?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's January 2?

MRS. MIROSH: January 2 is a Friday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh well, that's tying in two weeks.

MRS. MIROSH: That's not very good, is it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us look at January 8 or 9.

MR. TAYLOR: January 9 I have blocked off again. Fridays are bad ones for me. I've already missed one Friday, and I'm still trying to recover from that one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thursday, January 8?

MS BARRETT: Thursday the eighth is fine with me.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Yahoo!

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll start in the morning at 9 o'clock. All hon. members, including the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, are fully appreciative that this is a budget day, and there will be no absences.

MR. TAYLOR: Thursday the eighth.

MRS. MIROSH: What time? Nine?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we have a problem. Yes?

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I'm expecting to be away on holiday myself then, but there's not going to be a time when everyone is going to be here other than a time probably much later on. So I give notice of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: I'll take your vote on your budget.

MS BARRETT: You will not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton Highlands, when are you away and back?

MS BARRETT: I'll be back by the eighth. I'll be back long before. I might even be back by December 19, who knows?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was thinking that December 19 or 20 was a good time to do it.

MS BARRETT: If you'd like. That probably wouldn't be a problem for me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, January 8 because of the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon's commitment.

MR. TAYLOR: The morning?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Plan on the day. At that stage we'll have our various managers here, so you can ask them all the questions you want to.

MR. HYLAND: We did that once before and got through it all in one day, didn't we?

MR. STEFANIUK: It depends on the mood of the committee.

MS BARRETT: We'll be in a good mood.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, could I make one other suggestion, now that you've provided us with information with respect to these estimates, that perhaps it would be incumbent upon all of us in the next number of days to in fact spend some time looking at these estimates and, in the event that one of us would want some information, that we contact you prior to that meeting of January 8, so that when we arrive here on January 8 we basically have as much information in front of us as possible. I recognize that there will be some items that will have to come back again, but in an attempt to speed up the process on the eighth, we should avail ourselves of that opportunity to request as much prior to that date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I'm always glad to hear from you folks.

MS BARRETT: A matter of formality, Mr. Chairman. It occurs to me that I might withdraw a previous motion that I made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Is there unanimous consent for the withdrawal of

the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: What the hell was it?

MS BARRETT: That we just go ahead and approve this as is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just as a general direction, sharing with the whole committee, I would hope that next year we could try to move this ahead so we can get it done in December rather than in January.

Item number 5, Automobile Allowance: Mr. Wright, has there been occasion to deal with this one yet, from the last meeting?

MR. WRIGHT: I didn't really think that I was to do anything myself with this. Was I?

MR. HYLAND: I think you did express concern, and I thought it was dealt with. You expressed concern, and that was it, wasn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd like to pull back to your minutes for a minute. Here's someone who reads faster than I.

MR. WRIGHT: Certainly I asked a question about it, but I thought someone else was going to...

MR. CHAIRMAN: 86.171:

Mr. Wright proposed discussion of the concept of a flat rate for the use of one's automobile as opposed to mileage charges

...

This is to be at a future Committee meeting, and I assume it's going to be at a future committee meeting when you have a chance to...

MR. WRIGHT: Then I simply repeat my concern. For those of us who weren't here or who may have forgotten, my concern is that we have an allowance based on mileage in the gasoline payment provisions. We also have a provision for automobiles, which is based also on mileage, yet it is for the maintenance of an automobile and, I suppose, a contribution to the purchase of it too. That is an expense which

hardly depends on mileage, yet it is linked to mileage in the rules. I haven't looked at them since I was here last. It seems there is an anomaly there, and it should be corrected. I'm sorry if it was up to me to try and do something about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll have it continue on our order paper here for you to have a look at that.

MR. WRIGHT: In order that something might get done before next time, Mr. Chairman, what's your suggestion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe that according to this you are going to prepare a description of a proposal for the committee, to raise at a future meeting, and there would be a discussion. You can co-opt somebody else from this committee to develop it, if you wish, rather than take up the time of the committee in open discussion now.

MR. WRIGHT: Okay.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I believe mileage was put in for a fairly good reason. Unless the Income Tax Act has changed, I found with employees that mileage, if floated through the Income Tax Act, has not been a benefit quite easily, but when you give payment to somebody for a car, you immediately become a contractor. The income tax people went through all the rigmarole of, "You've got income coming in; what was the cost of the car, what's the depreciation, how much mileage did you do?" and all that crap. Whereas if you paid a person mileage — of course, you didn't go out there and take it down — it's quite acceptable. It's not income in his hands; it's an expense in our hands. I know what you're talking about, and it's easier to do it, but you open a Pandora's box of income that has to be accounted for when you make a flat payment. In other words, you become a contractor.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, the Clerk has just handed me a note — it's from somebody; from him, presumably — that says that the public service is reimbursed at the rate of \$4 a day for the use of personal auto. That's not a flat rate.

MR. TAYLOR: Four dollars a day plus

something else or just \$4 a day?

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, for use of an employee's personal automobile in the city there is a flat rate reimbursement of \$4 for any given day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Better you should have the kilometre rate.

MR. TAYLOR: That's another filing of a form.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We love to do that.

MR. HYLAND: I was just going to say that the difference between the public service employee that gets paid mileage and the mileage we get paid is four or five cents a kilometre; I forget which. They're not the same. Ours was lowered because of the gas credit cards. That was done rather specifically so that they wouldn't both be the same, plus the gas credit card.

MR. WRIGHT: Anyway, sure, I'll prepare something for this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. If you would be good enough when you've got it prepared to also pick up the phone and speak to Cypress-Redcliff and Westlock-Sturgeon before we come back to a future meeting? Please and thank you.

Item 6, Mr. Bogle, cab fares.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I raised this matter last week so members would be aware that I wanted it placed on the agenda this week. At the present time members may claim on their expense forms for a trip from the airport to the Legislature Building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Forgive me, hon. member. Could I wait to make certain everybody is listening so we don't need to hear it twice, although I'm sure you're going to do it lovely both times if it has to be. Could we try again, please?

MR. TAYLOR: Just because my hearing aid's on the other side doesn't mean there's an echo.

MR. BOGLE: Moving right along, I would like to see the ability for members to claim based on submitted taxi receipts for trips to and from their residence in Edmonton. I would extend

this to those members who have their permanent residence here, just as those who have a temporary residence here, the right to submit receipts for taxi purposes. As I explained during our last meeting, if I choose to drive my automobile to Edmonton, I can claim for the round trip between my permanent residence and my temporary residence here. I can also claim, on a kilometre charge basis, for the kilometres I put on my vehicle in the city. I'm suggesting that rather than inconveniencing during the cold winter months or on those occasions when I might be coming to Edmonton for one meeting on one day, a member should have the right to choose. So you would use one or the other. I haven't yet made a motion to that effect, and I realize that's the reverse of our normal procedure, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to get some further feel from the committee to see if other members feel this is worth while or not.

MS BARRETT: What the heck. Just for the record. Mr. Chairman, I think the members of the Assembly who live in Edmonton would find it a very rare occasion indeed on which they might want to submit such bills. But if the Member for Taber-Warner wants to make a motion, I certainly won't fight it, on the basis that we're not the folks who have to catch those airbuses and do an awful lot of travelling in order to be members. I think it's a very reasonable sort of expense for us to pick up on behalf of members, particularly from out of town. Maybe extending it to in-town members is just a kindness. I suspect it wouldn't be used very often, but one might want to extend the same benefit. [interjection] Well, exactly. That's right.

I certainly wouldn't object to that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: May we pause for a moment and have a motion framed?

MR. BOGLE: I'll move that the use of taxis be expanded to include travel within the provincial capital by Members of the Legislative Assembly and that the specific wording of the addendum be approved by the Speaker of the Assembly. I hope the intent is clear, not to leave it completely open ended but to give members, whether or not they be permanently housed in Edmonton, greater flexibility in the use of taxis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For business purposes.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, for government business.

MR. HYLAND: Legislative Assembly business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And that they must submit receipts.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, it's on that basis.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might be able to share with the member the information that for public service purposes taxi receipts are required if they are in excess of \$6 and not required in those cases when they are under \$6. May I also respectfully suggest to the member that his motion include some words to the effect that the Members' Services order relative to transportation be amended accordingly, which will then give the chairman the authority to sign the necessary order authorizing [inaudible].

MR. CHAIRMAN: Except that part. Okay, I'll have to work out the mechanics of it. It would sure be a lot easier to have the receipts no matter what the amount.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I have a little difficulty with the motion proposed. I thought we were talking about travel to and from the Legislative Assembly and the member's residence in Edmonton. Surely, if you are on Assembly business and need to take a taxi, you can claim for that anyway under the existing rules, can't you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. HYLAND: My understanding of it is that if you're on a committee like this, a legislative committee, you're allowed to claim those. But when the Legislature or normal -- say, one of the 10 days a month you're allowed to get from your home to your office and from your office back to your home. That would be out of town. That's it. It could be a combination, like myself or Bob's: travel, air fare, and taxi. But beyond that, you couldn't go from here 15 blocks away and meet with some department or some person on Assembly business and back to your office. That's out of pocket or by shanksies.

MR. WRIGHT: In that case, I am in favour of the motion, Mr. Chairman. One consideration is that it might actually save public expense by reducing the need for members to travel long distances in their cars simply because they can have a means of transport when they're in Edmonton that doesn't cost them out of their pockets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call for the question on the motion before us. All those in favour, please raise your hands. It's carried unanimously. Thank you.

Item 7(a), Open House Constituency Offices. Where is the documentation on that? I thought I had a letter somewhere. I did indeed have a letter. Somebody requested it.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, the item is on the agenda to receive from the committee some clarification as to whether or not open houses in constituency offices can be funded out of members' constituency office allowances. The reason it is placed before the committee is to enable us to respond to requests for authorization of expenses in connection with expenses from open houses from several members, recently received.

We are further inclined to place it before the committee because on previous occasions members have been allowed to fund the introduction of a new constituency office out of public funds, but requests for ongoing funding for such things as coffee supplies in constituency offices have been rejected by this committee. It is for that reason that the request is placed before the committee now.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I suspect this involves me to some extent, doesn't it, Bohdan?

MR. STEFANIUK: I'm sorry; I don't have the specifics. I know that several...

MR. TAYLOR: I'm involved.

MRS. MIROSH: Me too.

MS BARRETT: I have a question about this as well, then. I have a constituency office that is large enough to hold my quarterly MLA meetings right in there. At the first of such meetings -- just a week ago, in fact -- I undertook to provide some snack food. I believe

I submitted the bills; I'm not sure. It was my intention to continue to do that, partly because of the nature of the riding, quite frankly, but also because I think that's appropriate, rather than spending the money going and renting somewhere else, which I can save now; it's being covered by the rent we pay on a monthly basis. So if there's any formal motion required or if we're allowed to entertain that sort of thing, I would certainly advance it. I wonder if there's some question about whether or not we're able to deal with this or how broad we're talking about. I'm not sure what the issue is, if it's the occasional events or the ongoing supply of coffee.

MR. TAYLOR: First, as a point of information, did you say the first open house was paid for?

MR. STEFANIUK: In the past, Mr. Chairman, the practice has been to allow a member to charge the expenses incurred in connection with the official opening or introduction of the constituency office to constituents. But subsequent requests for ongoing provision of coffee supplies in constituency offices was rejected by this committee. The previous committee, Mr. Chairman, directed that where there was uncertainty as to the propriety or legitimacy of an expense, the question be brought before the committee for consideration and decision. That is precisely why the question is before the committee.

MR. TAYLOR: The reason I ask is because, like Highlands, I had my bill sent back for an open house, but it was the very first meeting of Westlock-Sturgeon, so maybe I should resubmit it.

MS BARRETT: We can fix it by motion.

MR. TAYLOR: Secondly, to go on, it was the first meeting. But I didn't get too upset about it because I thought that's promotional, and I would just change the name of it and call it a promotion or advertising. What's the difference between coffee and doughnuts and advertising if the advertising agent pays for it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have some collective wisdom from members of the former committee here as to . . .

MS BARRETT: If you can stop them from laughing.

MR. TAYLOR: I was a little puzzled by it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll see if Kowalski can finish laughing. The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think this is indeed a very important point. One of the difficulties of this committee in the past was: where do you draw the line on what is acceptable and what is not acceptable? We've spent a great deal of time, going in a very, very pedantic way, trying to determine what it is that would be supplied to the constituency office allocations. The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is indeed correct that one of the changes we made is the interchangeability of the three allowances that are in place: the constituency office allowance, the promotional allowance, and the communications allowance.

Quite frankly, we had a great go-round on the coffee issue. We spent many, many minutes discussing whether or not coffee would be provided. We concluded that coffee would not be provided, and of course that means the sugar and everything else that goes with it, just so there's no misunderstanding here.

MR. WRIGHT: Tea was okay, was it?

MR. KOWALSKI: Quite frankly, each individual member has an allowance of \$26,000 for his constituency office, and it would seem to me that if an individual, a particular member wanted to purchase coffee for his or her office and submitted the claim against the constituency office allowance, there's really no negative to it at all. It's just that I would hope that the minimum amount of paperwork that would be required of the people of the Legislative Assembly administration would be greatly reduced. I hope that the intent, three meetings from now, if we would approve this, is that somebody would not come back and say, "Well, we think that's a responsibility of the Clerk's office to provide us with coffee because, after all, he could buy it on a global basis and then allocate one pound here and one pound there." That's the kind of thing we would invariably get into, because some of our colleagues will come forward with that kind of request at a later date. We're going to talk

about doughnuts, and somebody else is going to come up with something else.

AN HON. MEMBER: Right on.

MR. WRIGHT: May I move, Mr. Chairman, that reasonable supplies of minor comestibles [laughter] for constituency offices are approved expenses against members' constituency allowance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Further discussion?

MR. HYLAND: Can I ask a question before? I've got to know what that big word means.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It means, yes, you'll be able to eat and drink.

MR. WRIGHT: I think it means coffee and doughnuts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

MRS. MIROSH: So the open house falls in this, and we can claim now? Because mine came out of my own pocket.

MR. HYLAND: As long as you're not paying a whole bunch of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I'm sorry. It is only effective from this date, from today. It's effective today. Sorry.

AN HON. MEMBER: You'll live.

MRS. MIROSH: It's a good thing you clarified it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the last meeting we kept talking about no retroactivity. It means as of this day.

MR. HYLAND: Maybe Gordon's motion had better say that . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: It's inherent in the motion.

MR. HYLAND: . . . to make sure it's inherent.

MR. BOGLE: The motion on the taxis didn't say it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The same with the taxis, the same with everything. Thank you. All right.

Committee Expense Allowances. We have at least two subtopics here.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, it's my understanding that a question has been raised as to the eligibility of certain of our members to claim both the daily allowance -- that is, the \$100 per day for each day the committee meets -- and the living expense, the \$75 a day for out-of-town members. I believe very strongly that whether a person receives remuneration as a member of Executive Council or is the Speaker of the Assembly or is the leader of the third party, they should be treated like other members on the committee relative to making these particular claims.

Therefore, I would like to make two motions, the first of which would deal with the daily allowance: that all members of this committee be eligible to claim the daily allowance in accordance with the same procedures that are in place for other members.

MR. HYLAND: I would just like to put the question out -- and maybe it's covered, maybe not. Maybe the motion has to be changed a touch. Maybe we should consider all committees, not just this one, because it would fall true for all committees; i.e., the heritage trust fund -- no, I guess it doesn't fall true. Where it might fall true is legislative committees. For example, let's go back and look at the Workers' Compensation one that had Grant Notley on it when he was Leader of the Opposition, as well as Bill Diachuk. That one comes to mind. I'm trying to think of any other legislative committees it would affect, but at least that one it would. I'm thinking of some of the other committees. Ray is on them not as Leader of the Opposition but as a member of a committee, and there are other ministers on them. So I think we should . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Since this is the umbrella committee, what is in effect fact for this

committee then will be subsumed for the other committees. Would you agree?

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. WRIGHT: Only if it says so, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BOGLE: Well, let's name them.

MS BARRETT: It says so right here.

MR. WRIGHT: Can't we name them by a class description?

MR. BOGLE: All committees of the Legislative Assembly?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: That's the umbrella.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The mover is ready to move, Edmonton Highlands is dealing with specifics, and Edmonton Strathcona is giving legal advice. Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr Chairman, I think that the issue is made clear by the description on the members' allowance claim for legislative committee service, in which eight specific committees are named. Then there's a final, ninth category called "Special Committee" which can be specified -- the one to which the Member for Cypress-Redcliff referred -- like the one on Workers' Compensation, which is struck sometime during the life of a legislative sitting, I believe, on virtually every occasion. They'd all be covered by whatever motion is under consideration. I think it's just . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Yes. So we have to have a motion for the description of a class which includes all the committees of the Legislative Assembly.

MS BARRETT: It just says, "legislative committee service."

MR. BOGLE: The Clerk gave us that statement by saying "all committees struck by the Legislative Assembly."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. So that would be in the motion, right?

MRS. MIROSH: We have struck some new ones, subcommittees too.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, I don't think so.

MRS. MIROSH: They wouldn't be covered?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they wouldn't qualify.

Okay. The motion reads the \$75 a day, which is the present rate for members.

MR. BOGLE: No; the \$100.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, there's the \$100. I'm sorry. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: But, Mr. Chairman, if it doesn't apply to subcommittees, then it's a bit tough on some of the members of the subcommittees.

MR. BOGLE: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member is interpreting that too finely. For instance, we have struck a subcommittee that may visit other Legislatures. If, in fact, that trip or those visits come about, then clearly the members who make the journey are doing so on behalf of this committee. They would be eligible to claim. My response was if there was a subcommittee struck out there that's unofficial, that's not part of -- or if we included two members of the Assembly who are not part of this committee, those two members would not be eligible. Does that help?

MR. WRIGHT: It's certainly logical, but it runs contrary to what I had thought we said. People said, "Will that apply to a subcommittee?" and the answer was no. Well, I have a little subcommittee here on the purchase of computer equipment, and Mr. Stevens is a member of that. If he's going to come all that way to another meeting of the committee, surely he should be reimbursed.

MS BARRETT: A friendly amendment that the beginning of the motion read "for legislative committees and their official subcommittees."

MR. WRIGHT: "Approved subcommittees."

MS BARRETT: Thank you, "approved."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Some of them are much more of a consultative basis than official subcommittee status. All right, that's an amendment.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm not really finished on the motion; I just want to discuss the motion. Maybe it's more of a point of information. I really don't know what we're getting ourselves into. As far as this committee is concerned, I think I can see how often I come as a leader of a third party and — as a cabinet minister. I don't think it'll make that much difference to the Treasury. But some of these other committees, if a cabinet minister, who is now — what is the remuneration of a cabinet minister, \$70,000 or \$60,000 or something like that? Some of these committees sit day after day after day. A cabinet minister has to appear before Public Accounts or Heritage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they don't get paid for that. Just for membership on the committee. They're there as a witness.

MR. TAYLOR: That's what I wanted to ask. Are there very many cabinet ministers on these committees we're talking about? I know there's you on here, but I can see that in general there aren't too many.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Basically, what's happening here is to have clarification so that I can finally get around to paying yourself, the Member for Barrhead, and myself for attendance on this committee. That's the basic thing here.

MR. TAYLOR: That's this committee, but how often is this repeated in other . . . I know it's minor here, but is it . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can't think of another example.

MR. TAYLOR: Is that right? Because I'm just very green on this.

MR. HYLAND: Really, it's supposedly to put in law, if that's the right term, or to put in the minutes what we've been doing for years and understood to be doing for years and understood it to be right. There's no question in our minds

what we're doing. There's a question in somebody else's mind.

MR. WRIGHT: So we're regularizing practice.

MR. HYLAND: Regularizing practice is all we're doing. It's nothing new. We're just regularizing what's been done.

MR. TAYLOR: I'll refrain from voting and sit here and pray instead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I have an amendment which talks about duly authorized and appropriate, officially struck subcommittees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question on the amendment. All those in favour?

MR. WRIGHT: On the amendment as proposed, not as described by . . .

MR. HYLAND: You'd better vote for that, Pam. It's your amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought we had it fairly well together. I didn't quarrel with you about your talking about combustibles.

MR. TAYLOR: Change it to "digestibles."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any? The amendment is carried. All those in favour of the motion as amended, please signify. Opposed? Let the record show that on both the amendment and the main motion, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon and the Member for Barrhead did not vote — nor did the chairman — and that the motion as amended has been carried unanimously. Thank you. That's one, with \$100.

MR. BOGLE: The second motion would again be to ensure that there is no question about those members who do not have their permanent residence here in Edmonton. Those members should be eligible to claim the \$75 per day living allowance that's currently provided to other members. So it's a companion motion to the first motion, to ensure that those members who maintain a permanent resident elsewhere,

other than in the capital, also be eligible for the \$75 living allowance.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I might be wrong -- well, I don't know. Can someone tell me if a cabinet minister from outside Edmonton claims, let's say, the \$75 a day for the days during which we sit in the Assembly or historically does for special meetings of which they're members? Is that correct? Okay, thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The legal opinion we have here is that this is indeed true, but what we're doing is just making it absolutely crystal clear. All those in favour of the motion? Opposed, if any? Carried. I had two abstentions on the motion, Barrhead and Westlock-Sturgeon. Didn't I? Thank you.

Does that look after all the items under Other Business? Are there any other items of business? The date of the next meeting is January 8.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, is there a need for clarification about the per diem allowance motion we agreed to last time in a month in which the House is sitting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: That was (c), "tidy up."

MR. CHAIRMAN: A document is now about to be circulated. Thank you, Mr. Kowalski. I know I mentioned that earlier, but I lost it in my notes.

On the document being circulated to you, if members would turn to page 2, the item is in that long paragraph 2/3. This relates to our last meeting. If you'd like to read that, then we'll see which way we go.

MS BARRETT: Well, isn't that amusing?

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move a resolution on the terms of the last sentence of 2/3 on page 2, except that I think absolutely correctly it should be "inversely in that proportion" rather than "that proportion." We can just say that it would be adjusted accordingly rather than in that proportion.

MS BARRETT: We talked about doing it on a prorated basis. That's the way to do it.

MR. WRIGHT: I thought we did that.

MS BARRETT: No, we ended up deciding that that was redundant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I see Cypress-Redcliff, Barrhead, Clerk. Anyone else want in on this? Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: At the bottom, the second-last sentence should be 10 days, not trips, shouldn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. We're dealing with days, not trips. Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think everybody understands and appreciates that the intent of all this was that in the months in which the Legislature is sitting -- let me use by way of an example that if the Legislature sits from the 15th to the last day of a particular month, we're only talking about that portion of the month from the first to the 14th day. We can talk about a prorating of that, and the Clerk can come back and tell us exactly what that means, or we can basically say up to a maximum of five days in a month in which the House is sitting. The only problem then is that most members like to come here for the full 15 days before the beginning of a session or the last 15 days after a session.

We can come back and just clarify the motion that was read on November 14, 1986. I want to read the motion. It says:

Moved by Mr. Stevens that the Special Standing Committee of Members' Services, pursuant to section . . . prescribe for payment made under subsection (1)(b), a maximum of 10 days in any month when the Assembly is not sitting . . .

We add "and partial month when the Assembly is sitting,"

for a Member's temporary residence in or near Edmonton for the purpose of carrying out his duties as a Member, effective December 1, 1986.

MS BARRETT: You forgot one word, "prorated."

MR. KOWALSKI: That's not the intent of this motion I just made, though. The operative words here are that currently it talks about a maximum of 10 days per month in any month

that the Assembly is not sitting. All I'm saying is, "and partial month when the Assembly is sitting," so it could still be to a maximum of 10, assuming that if a session were to begin, say, on the 15th day of the month, normally people would want to be here for the full — they would probably maximize their stay to get ready. But if it started on the fourth day of the month, of course, you couldn't claim for any more than four. If it started on the second day, you could only claim for one day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The Clerk, and then we'll come back to what the exact wording is of the Member for Edmonton Strathcona's motion.

MR. STEFANIUK: Mr. Chairman, as I recall the discussion of the last week, I believe the intent of the meeting was to allow a member a maximum of 10 days per month during any period when the Assembly was not sitting. If the Assembly sat for a partial month, then the member was to be entitled to 10 days within that month, notwithstanding that it was a partial month. I think the hon. minister has just put forth the amendment which would, in fact, place the committee's intent into force.

MR. WRIGHT: A point of information. You were just reading the resolution from last time.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes, and added some words. I amended it.

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, you added some words.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll pause for a moment and have the two of you have a mutual consultation. This is not an official subcommittee being struck for an extra payment.

[The committee recessed from 4:17 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton Strathcona, please. This motion to be seconded, perhaps, by Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. WRIGHT: With the consent of the committee, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to withdraw the motion I made . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is unanimous consent given?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WRIGHT: . . . and substitute an amendment to the minutes in order to reflect what in fact we intended to say last time, on Friday, November 14. The resolution is recorded at page 41. What I believe we intended to say — and this is my motion — is that the wording of the motion as recorded there be amended to read: "Moved," et cetera, down to "under subsection (1)(b)" and then to continue, "at any time when the Legislature is not sitting, to a maximum of 10 days per month for a member's temporary residence," et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So basically we would have this . . .

MR. WRIGHT: I can explain that as follows: in between the comma after "(1)(b)" and "a maximum," insert "at any time when the Legislature is not sitting, to . . ." Then continue the text "a maximum of 10 days per month" — not "in any month." Cross out the words "when the Assembly is not sitting" and continue "for a Member's temporary residence in or near Edmonton," et cetera.

MS BARRETT: That doesn't solve the problem of the months that we are sitting.

MR. WRIGHT: There's nothing happening there.

MS BARRETT: Yes, there is. That's the whole point.

MR. WRIGHT: No, you don't get it when the Legislature is sitting, do you?

MS BARRETT: But that's the whole point of fixing this, so that in months when we start sitting in the middle of the month, you can still claim your residence.

MR. WRIGHT: Of course, that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That second part stays in. What we have, just for clarification, is that the motion — for purposes of the minutes I think we'll do the motion as a whole, showing the insert. As you have stated, after "(1)(b)," you just insert "at any time . . ." Oh, I see.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, we got into confusion last time by linking the entitlement to months. Now it's at any time when the Legislature is not sitting -- forget about months -- to a maximum of 10 days per month. So the rate is set there.

MS BARRETT: I see. He's right.

MR. TAYLOR: If the Legislature sits 29 days, you could theoretically claim two days.

MR. WRIGHT: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: You wanted me to second that, didn't you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. We don't have to second the motions in this. I just wanted to make certain that you would give your wholehearted support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried unanimously.

MR. TAYLOR: On a point of information, Mr. Chairman, the old ruling -- which is 24 days a year, is it? -- applies up to December 1, '86?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. TAYLOR: To new people such as some of us on the committee who started May 8, was that a prorated amount or is that 24 days from May 8?

MS BARRETT: It's up to your discretion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you put them in.

MR. HYLAND: You have to itemize them.

MR. TAYLOR: You have to say the days that you were here. That'll be easy enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For clarity, this motion is passed, that 24 did hold up until the end of November and this new system comes in on December 1. The Clerk will have a memo circulated to all members. Otherwise, if we

have to wait for the minutes, we have to go through a delay period. So we'd better get it out, please.

Any other business to be dealt with today?

MR. HYLAND: I think we've got number 8 handled, so could I do number 9?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. All those in favour of the motion to adjourn, please stand.

MRS. MIROSH: January is the next one?

MR. CHAIRMAN: January 8. That's budget, remember. We'll have other things, but it's primarily budget.

[The committee adjourned at 4:25 p.m.]

