

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[8:43 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, gang. Sorry to be late. Some other thing came up.

All right. Item 2(a) with regard to . . . Yes?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, as we are waiting for Mr. Taylor, would it be advisable to deal with possibly 2(c), Use of Taxis Outside of Edmonton and Area, and 3(a), the identification cards?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's go to 3(a), because 2(c) also involves Mr. Taylor. Right?

MR. BOGLE: That's correct. He brought the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's go to 3(a), identification card possibilities.

David.

DR. McNEIL: The proposal with respect to ID cards suggests two options, one where we implement an ID card for identification only at the option of the various areas within the Legislative Assembly Office and the caucuses. The estimated cost of doing 500 cards is around \$600. The other option is to have a much more complex system of ID cards, where it's used as a security clearance mechanism. It would involve, I would think, extensive liaison with the Solicitor General's department and Public Works, Supply and Services before we could get something this complex off the ground. Our recommendation, in light of some of the needs that have been identified, was at least in the short term to proceed with the implementation of ID cards for identification only and not as a security mechanism.

MR. HYLAND: Just one comment. I've noticed after having one of those last cards that nobody seems to want to take it for identification because there isn't a number. No matter how idiotic the number is, people want a number on an identification card. Just the picture and the name don't seem to mean a whole lot. They seem to want a number on it or they think it's a forgery or something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess the advantage of the number is that you can get people to sign for them as well. Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: What's the purpose and need for these cards?

DR. McNEIL: Well, a number of purposes or needs were identified. One was to provide members and staff with ID for access to the building after hours. You know, some people use business cards. People who don't have them sometimes have difficulty getting in, especially if it's a new commissioner and they don't recognize the individual. Sometimes it can be useful in gaining government rates at hotels. I've had difficulty in the past with just a government card in not being able to get into a hotel. An ID card looks a little more legitimate. Those are the two main reasons, for identification only.

MR. WRIGHT: You've got me convinced, Mr. Chairman.

MS BARRETT: Well, I would just add that when I was on staff here, sometimes I would also need to get into the library after hours, and boy, if I didn't know the commissioner around

here, I had to beg and plead, prove that I had a key to our office, and all sorts of things just to use the library. And it was my job to use the library. So I could have benefited from one and originally did have one. Then they stopped using them. So I think it's a smart idea, but with numbers.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. What I'd recommend is the employee number on there.

MS BARRETT: Good idea.

DR. McNEIL: So there's a specific . . . Plus the fact that most people forget their employee number, and it would be a handy reference to have in your wallet.

MR. WRIGHT: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Motion to proceed with identification cards.

MR. BOGLE: The only point I'd make is that as there are several options on the types of cards, until we're equipped for a more sophisticated card -- i.e., a computer entry -- I would assume that it was the mover's intent that we go with the less expensive card at this time.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, the cheapest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But that it still has a photo on it.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So a motion to go with . . . All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

MS BARRETT: We're a lazy group this morning, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps we meet too early.

MR. BOGLE: Gordon, can we just go back to the regular agenda?

MR. WRIGHT: I guess, yes.

MS BARRETT: Can we wait five more minutes? I'll run down and get my calendar, because we needed to do that. I forgot to bring it. So that would give time, I hope, for him to show up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're the one who asked us to bring our calendars.

MS BARRETT: Yeah; seeing as how I was the one who asked, right?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I know item 2(c) was initiated by Mr. Taylor, but I'm wondering if that's a matter we could discuss in the meantime.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you got a solution to it?

MR. BOGLE: Well, I think the point was made yesterday by a number of members that the use of a taxi, whether it's in Edmonton or Calgary or another centre, should be permitted. I guess one of the points I would make is that if I were a Calgary

MLA, in order to get to Edmonton I would have one of two choices. I either drive my car to the airport, and I can claim mileage for that. I can then leave my car at the airport and claim for the day or four days that the car is there before I return, and then I drive home, and again I claim mileage for that. Or if we ensure that everyone understands the appropriate use of a taxi, it would allow me to take the taxi from my home to the airport and again when I return home. We may not be talking about increased dollars for the actual budget. It's just giving members another option, which is a sensible option.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me self-evident that you can't really complain about traveling to and from the airport. The question in my mind is whether it should be a general taxi travel purpose. I do point out that for the Edmonton MLAs there is no such restriction really. When my car is in the garage being serviced, I just take a taxi back to the Legislature or back home, I guess, if I went that way, but that option is not available to someone in another city.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what do you want it to be, group? Just to and from the airport or within some kind of reasonable boundaries? How are you going to keep track of that?

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, not to be pedantic about this kind of an item -- I appreciate how important it is and may very well be. But the fact of the matter is that all Members of the Legislative Assembly do have an expense allowance. Albeit it is very insignificant compared to expense allowances found in every other province and every other territory in the country of Canada and that Alberta continues to lag behind in that regard, the fact of the matter is that one of the reasons for the expense allowance is to take care of certain incidental expenses. That's a matter, I think, that we should recognize and we should be prepared to look at.

How much more filling in of slips is going to be required? How much more little pedantic bureaucracy is going to be required by having somebody set aside now to take a look at untold numbers of taxi slips for one member going 14 blocks here and 17 blocks there? It seems to me that the purpose of the expense allowance is to cover some of these items, and we should be addressing that matter, and the taxi cab fares should fall within that whole category. This is not a new statement made by this particular person. I've made this before on previous occasions in the Members' Services Committee. On the one hand, we don't need to have more bureaucracy and more paper filling. It seems that all we've done this morning is just create new forms.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair still awaits a motion.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, then, to get the ball rolling, I'll move that in places other than Edmonton taxis be permitted to and from the airport or other travel points; that's to say, like the bus depot, I suppose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, so it's going to be basically to and from point of embarkation.

MR. WRIGHT: Good phraseology.

MR. TAYLOR: Embarkation or debarkation?

MR. WRIGHT: Disembark.

MR. BOGLE: Question

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, that's the motion. There's a call for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, before you proceed with the question -- I assume that most people are in favour of this. I'd just like to be on the record stating once again -- although I won't do it today because I don't think people are of a mind to pursue it in this way -- that I think the issue really should be: are we entitled to take up to two taxis a day on MLA business? If we're allowed to, the rule should apply throughout the province. But, I mean, I'll vote in favour of this motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All those in favour, please raise a hand. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Might we go to item 2(a), Discussion Regarding Expense Allowance. I gather there's a paper to be distributed. Grande Prairie.

DR. ELLIOTT: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're distributing some information on this topic which shows the position of our MLAs in Alberta with respect to other jurisdictions. I think if we just lay it low here for a minute until we get the paper out, then we can all look at the backup material that I'm providing here in this handout. At the top of page 2 we have a ranking of MLA expense allowances that presently shows our position with respect to other Canadian jurisdictions. The bottom half of page 2 shows the ranking of MLA indemnity payments relative to other jurisdictions. The motion that I will be submitting, Mr. Chairman, is that MSC 3/86 be amended by striking out section 1 and substituting:

1 The expense allowance provided for by section 39(1)(b) of the Legislative Assembly Act shall be 50% of the indemnity allowance provided for in section 39(1)(a).

The tables I just referred to on pages 2 and 3 identify what that would do to this information.

When you're prepared, Mr. Chairman, I will make that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll take it as a motion right now. Thank you.

Is there any additional discussion with regard to this? Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak strongly in favour of the motion that's been put forward by the Member for Grande Prairie. When members look at the attached rankings, they note first on the indemnity side that Alberta ranks sixth out of 13 jurisdictions in Canada, those jurisdictions, of course, being the 10 provinces, the two territories, and the federal government. But when we look at the expense allowance side, we rank 12th out of 13, and that's an embarrassing, appalling situation.

This committee has been given the mandate to address that matter. We were given that mandate a couple of years ago, and for a variety of reasons, primarily because we didn't feel the timing was right, we did not move on it. But I don't think we can fulfill our duties and see statistics like this. Now, the end result of the motion, if approved in its present wording, would

be to move the aggregate; that is, the combination of the indemnity plus the expense allowance would move Alberta from ninth position to fourth position. I believe that is very appropriate and therefore support the motion.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, this is an awkward, awkward issue. I know it is true that I, for instance, cannot save a penny -- and I'm earning more now than I was when I was a researcher -- compared to when I was a researcher. The reason is because it costs a lot more for an MLA to do her or his job. I give you one example. I never had reason to buy a computer at home before, but because I have a computer in my Leg. office and a computer in my constituency office, if I wanted to be efficient, I had to buy a computer at home, and I had to buy IBM compatible, which meant I had to spend a fair amount of money. I mean, I couldn't get the constituency budget to pay for that. What are they going to do, you know, when I leave office? Are they going to have two, three computers? How many can they use in one office? So, I mean, realistically I had to pay for the thing myself.

My problem with this motion is not that we should go broke in this job. I think it should not be a millionaire's game quite frankly. My problem is that it's so hard to vote on these things by yourselves when we ourselves are controlling the agenda. I know that it's a cumbersome process to pursue judicial committees and all the rest of it, and I know that they will very possibly be recommending the same sort of overall payment range for MLAs, but I just feel in such a conflict of interest that I either can't vote on this issue or I'm going to have to vote against it, Mr. Chairman, not because I don't believe that some of us aren't going broke, you know, in this job, but because I think it's such a compelling conflict of interest.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I have difficulty with the method, not the result. I quite agree that we should be ranking somewhere in the top four or five in Canada because we're in the top four or five governments. But, after all, just a year ago when we raised our basic thing, we made quite a fuss about the judicial report, the Miller report, that we were sticking to that, and now we throw it out the window. I believe we have to do it either of two ways. One is by referring it to a judicial committee. I know it's slow, but I think it does remove our hands from it. Or if we move it, it's only effective after the next election. In other words, it can't be argued that you're raising your own salary. You're raising the salary of people that are coming behind you. If you win your own election, okay; I suppose that's that.

I think those are the only two legitimate ways to raise it without causing harm, so consequently I would have to vote against it. I must confess that I would certainly not be out there beating the drums and telling people that we're overpaid, that it's wrong, or anything else, but I just think the method we're going at is the wrong way.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, I repeat some of the comments I made a couple of years ago when we were dealing with the salary portion or the indemnity portion, so called, of our remuneration. I stand on the Miller report. That was the last independent assessment, and we just haven't done what Mr. Justice Miller recommended. In the first place, he was of the opinion that even then the indemnity concept was unrealistic, that it was out of date, but the terms of his mandate did not permit him to investigate that. He gave an opinion based on the terms of his

mandate, but we haven't even lived up to that in protecting the 1979 figures for inflation, in point of fact. In addition, the sittings are now about twice as long as they were then, which would make a difference to the figures. In the third place, there has in fact been no general review in the examination of the indemnity concept.

I share with others, with all of us I suppose, a diffidence at legislating your own salary. It's full of the potentiality for abuse. On the other hand, it's also full of the potentiality amongst right-thinking people for embarrassment, which leads them not to do what's right. I'm convinced in this case that those who would be against an increase in members' remuneration are being penny wise and pound foolish, because I dare say there's not a single person around this table, amongst the elected members anyway, who does not know people who would make excellent candidates for or Members of the Legislative Assembly of this province who will not run, much as they would like to, because they can't afford the sacrifice involved. That is quite a considerable class of people who would make excellent members of this Legislature and would serve the province well who with the best will in the world cannot stand for office for that reason.

For that reason I'm not all that concerned about where we rank compared to others, although there has to be some reasonable relationship, I think. What I am concerned about is the concept of indemnity. If we really are supposed to be paying an indemnification for what we lose by becoming members, then the figures are out of kilter, as Mr. Justice Miller was in effect observing. While it is not the indemnity part that we're dealing with today, it is the other part which complements that, and the same observations apply. Consequently, I strongly support the motion, and I believe we have to face the issue squarely as to how best to attract to this Assembly those who are willing and best suited to serve in it on behalf of the people of Alberta, and vote for the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I have to say that I agree with the previous member, and I think in two ways he hit the nail on the head: one, in the brief review of the Miller report; and second, his alignment as to how long a session took in 1979 and how long a session takes now. It is called a sessional indemnity.

I would like to propose an amendment to the motion to allow those who feel uncomfortable at taking the proposed increase in expense allowance, the tax-free allowance, that the Member for Grande Prairie has suggested. It would be to move that

a member may in writing indicate his intention to opt out from receiving any portion of the adjustment to the expense allowance.

I underline that the member would have to act to opt out. It would come automatic, but they would have the choice of opting out.

MR. TAYLOR: I have difficulty with the amendment, Mr. Chairman, although it probably could work on a very short term, from the point of view of people taking it or not taking it. What'll end up is that you are going to have two types of MLAs running in the next election: those that say, "Elect me and I will keep my hand out of your left pocket," and the other one says, "Oh, I'm going to take it." In other words, I think you set up two levels down the road that turn out to be most confusing, and I think it reflects illy upon all the people running because you

make it an issue in every election because it's an option -- every by-election and everything else. Therefore, the millionaire or the guy that has -- I used to say an oil business -- a good business, dry cleaners or something like that, is going to get up and say, "Elect me and I won't be taking this." In other words, you have two levels. So I think what you do is set in motion something far beyond, especially for the next election, that would cause a great deal of problem. So therefore I'm against the motion. I think we should either all go with it or none.

MR. BOGLE: In a number of ways I agree with the sentiments of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. However, we are dealing with one of the two most sensitive things that members have to deal with. The other is when we come to boundary redistribution for our constituencies. Those are very, very sensitive issues. They're so personal. The difficulty I have -- and I would ask the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon to reflect on one of his own member's comments when we debated readjusting or bringing back the integrity of the Miller report relative to our indemnities two years ago. One of his members, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, vehemently opposed the move. Yet it's my understanding that the member is taking the increase along with everybody else. That's a great position to be in. You can publicly stand up and criticize and complain yet quietly take the increase. On the other hand, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods in my view has been very honourable in the way he's approached the subject. He spoke against the measure, and he does not take the increase, as I understand it. Now, he's putting his money where his mouth is.

I wish the amendment to the motion was not necessary, but if some members feel that for whatever reason they cannot support the motion, then at least the amendment as put forward by the Member for Cypress-Redcliff requires all hon. members to think very clearly about their position and, if they feel strongly enough about it, to work through the Clerk's office and sign the necessary documentation. Then they can stand on whatever pedestal they want. I invite them to come to Taber-Warner and tell the electorate that they, in fact, are not taking the increase and the Member for Taber-Warner is, and I'll debate the issue with them in terms of the workload and the time elements and other factors.

So to sum up, Mr. Chairman, yes, I agree. I wish this amendment was not necessary. On the other hand, if we can't deal with an issue like this, where there is general support and some members are staking out a position, then I see no alternative.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, you can tell when a tense subject is under consideration; we refer to each other by riding instead of by first name. You can always tell the tone of these meetings.

This makes life even more awkward for me because if I speak against the main motion, as I do, then I have to speak in favour of the amendment because it will at least allow me . . . I mean, I agree with what Nick said. I don't want this to be an election issue hereafter, but I also know that I can't vote in favour of the main motion because I don't support the process. At the same time, I know that I myself would charge on my expense allowance only that which I can log to be expenses associated with doing the job -- like a computer, for instance, like a purchase that was necessary, or things like that. So I just need to be on the record as saying that I guess I have to support the amendment and then vote against the amended motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Can I make one of those I hope not too irritating amendments to the motion to amend that we're speaking about? First, after "his" add "or her" and then at the end -- don't write this down; I just going to suggest it -- "in part or in whole and for such time as he or she may from time to time require," which I think is perhaps implied anyway. But then, the more important one is: "during the 21st Legislature." So that would preclude people from campaigning in the manner you speak of.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, could we have just a brief break when we can discuss this informally?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The committee recessed from 9:12 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, can I amend my motion, with everyone's consent?

MR. HYLAND: It isn't a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's an amendment by Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Do you want me to me to stick it in, Gordon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the two of you can agree to do it.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah, I think we agree.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we don't get into the business of amendments to amendments.

MR. HYLAND: Where the member said, "indicate his or her" in the second line, and it would say for the "duration of the 21st Legislature."

MR. WRIGHT: "Member" in the first line becomes "members," and "his" becomes "their." At the end the only thing we add is "during the 21st Legislature."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that acceptable to the mover?

MR. HYLAND: Yep.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. We're on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment? Opposed? Carried.

MR. BOGLE: Is that unanimous, Mr. Chairman?

MS BARRETT: It looks like it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It appeared to be unanimous.

MR. BOGLE: May we have a five-minute caucus break, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. We've dealt with the amendment. Now we're going to be back to the main motion as amended.

[The committee recessed from 9:17 a.m. to 9:23 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're back now. The question is now on the motion as amended. Those in favour, please raise a hand. Opposed? Carried.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, could we have that recorded?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Okay.

MS BARRETT: No? Nick, you don't want it recorded? It's true; we spoke against it. It's okay.

MR. TAYLOR: You spoke against it, and you got it . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion as amended is carried. Thank you. And the effective date, I gather, is right away. Thank you. Item 2(b).

MR. BOGLE: Nick, this is yours.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. I had a small amendment I wanted to make, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, you can't make an amendment.

MR. TAYLOR: Sorry; I should have got it to you. "The highest level attained multiplied by the years or part years." I wanted that to say: "highest level attained averaged over a three-year period." In other words, the way it reads now, if somebody got a big jump in the last month that would apply. Most of these that I've looked at have "the last four years" or "the last three years" or something.

MS BARRETT: A very good point.

MR. TAYLOR: I think it takes away any chance of monkey business, making somebody a cabinet minister in the last two weeks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're now back in another coffee break, people. Because if you're going to move the motion, you might as well move it in the way it's supposed to be worded.

MR. BOGLE: May we have a brief break while we talk about this?

[The committee recessed from 9:25 a.m. to 9:29 a.m.]

MR. TAYLOR: If the correct interpretation is just the basic allowance for the MLA and does not take in any cabinet minister or secretarial or whatever other appointments that he earns, I find the motion quite acceptable. I withdraw any objection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So you now formally move the motion.

MS BARRETT: As is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Westlock-Sturgeon, you now formally move the motion?

MR. TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Okay. Discussion. Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Taber-Warner.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, yeah. Bob was saying that the origin of this comes from Ontario, and I'd just like him to repeat that history because I think it's very instructive.

MR. BOGLE: It's my understanding from speaking with the Progressive Conservative Party Whip from the Ontario Legislature that the original re-establishment allowance in Ontario was developed about 10, 12 years ago, and initially the allowance was put in place for members who were defeated following general elections. Several years ago the plan was amended to include all members who either chose not to run again or were in fact defeated. The elements of the program treat all members equally in that if it is the Premier of the province who is defeated or chooses not to run again vis-à-vis a member of an opposition party, both would receive exactly the same re-establishment allowance, assuming both have served the same length of time.

The other key element of this program is that there's a cap on it. You're limited to one month's benefit for every year of service to a maximum of 12 years. It's important we all remember that members do not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits, and therefore this allowance is to help those members get back into other forms of activity. I'm sure a number of you or maybe all members of the committee have spoken with former members who will tell you the shock that does occur when you cease being a member and go back into the private sector or teaching or some other position in society. There is a transition period.

Another important element in the program, and it's one I feel good about, is that unlike our pension plan, where a member is not eligible to receive pension if that member has served one term only . . . The requirement is that -- is it five years, six years? It goes beyond the first term; you have to be elected a second time. Five years? Unlike that, the Ontario program recognizes that a member who has served one term and leaves office either by his or her choice or by the electorate's choice, has the same challenge in getting re-established that someone who's been in public office for a number of years has. Therefore, there's the minimum six months' benefit provided and the maximum 12 months, and that's an important fact to remember. So the only variance in the plan is that if a member served for four years, that member would not receive four months' benefit; they'd receive the six-month benefit.

I support the motion as put forward by the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, and I commend him for bringing it to our attention and supporting it in our earlier meetings.

MR. TAYLOR: Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, one thing I would add to Bob's comments is that the logic of making this a universal policy as opposed to one that applies only to members who have only

served one term is because, you know, you would be implicitly saying to members who serve only one term that there is a reward for, say, not being a good MLA and not getting re-elected. That's just too bizarre. At the same time, I think the other part of the logic is straightforward, as explained by both Nick and Bob. But I have one question. If this has been approved twice before by this committee, why are we doing it a third time? We approved this last year.

MR. TAYLOR: I think I flew the concept first.

MS BARRETT: Oh, it didn't actually pass.

MR. TAYLOR: It was more a concept. The idea was to go out and study all the others. We came back with all the provinces, and I believe six or seven out of the 10 provinces had some form of re-establishment. So then it was a case of picking the best one, and I must confess that I thought this was best. Then the thought occurred to me as I was falling asleep last night that the basic pay -- I didn't realize. That's been solved, so we're okay.

To me it's not the best one. I shouldn't say best; it's not the highest.

MR. BOGLE: It's not the richest; that's right.

MR. TAYLOR: But it's a suitable compromise. Some of them are a lot higher. I can't remember. I think we circulated them to everybody.

MR. PENGELLY: Yeah. Quebec doubles their salary, I think.

MR. TAYLOR: Yeah. So it's a reasonable one, and it's one that's in keeping with the spirit, as Bob points out. With the first year term, they're not getting pension, not getting unemployment insurance, so it's not a big deal.

MS BARRETT: Gotcha. Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: Well, very briefly, the only other thing I would add is that the initial motion allowed us to gather information. We gathered the information. Another motion was put forward. We then had to take the request back to get an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act that would indeed allow this committee, the Members' Services Committee, to do what we're doing today.

MS BARRETT: We didn't have the authority before?

MR. BOGLE: We did not have the authority to do it.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. Okay.

MR. BOGLE: We amended the legislation. It was approved unanimously in the Assembly. We now have the authority as a committee. The motion will be the final step in implementing a program which, as has been stated by the mover, is not the richest in Canada. There are two other provinces that have richer programs, but this is believed to be the best in terms of providing support for former members.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question. All those in

favour, please raise a hand. Opposed? Let the record show unanimously.

The Chair has been advised that item 3(b), which is the only other one here, has been dealt with internally in the Liberal caucus.

Additional items?

MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to make an amendment. Yesterday it went by. I don't think it's reasonable to expect the Speaker of our House to be getting by on Berlitz courses in French, and I would like to make a motion that we approve any expenses the Speaker may incur in continental North America, attending any French immersion . . .

MS BARRETT: That route.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, if he comes back speaking with a drawl -- French drawls are all right. But anywhere on the continent that teaches French immersion to whatever extent he wishes.

I don't think, in speaking to the motion, Mr. Chairman -- did that come out all right? You will be expected, maybe not always, to be fairly quick, and there may be more people trying their fractured French. Diefenbaker French is possible. So it's only a reasonable part of your training to give you the best possible training you can get. I'd like to move that. That's one of the reasons I move it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, as I was joking earlier when Nick announced his intention to move this motion, I was going to ask for a friendly amendment that would include the opposition House leaders. Of course, you understand that that was a joke. I would like to learn more French, and I'd like to do immersion French, quite frankly, but to be serious about this, I'm not going to move such an amendment.

I just want to speak in favour of the motion. Language has caused nothing, but -- what do you call it? -- sore tempers in the Assembly in the last year and a half, and it's been a rough ride getting it all sorted out. I think it's very clear now, not just for this Speaker but for successors he may have, that at all times the Speaker must be, at least in the oral sense, sufficiently bilingual to function in the Assembly. It's clearly an impossible task not to be now that we have the automatic right of using either of the official languages in Alberta's Assembly, and I therefore speak strongly in favour of the motion.

MR. TAYLOR: May I, Mr. Chairman, have the floor? I forgot to make one argument that maybe is unnecessary.

MS BARRETT: Well, you're going to amend it, eh.

MR. TAYLOR: The one argument is that the federal government finds it expedient and correct to fund Alberta judges and justices in immersion courses, to the extent that they wish to take them. The Speaker of our Assembly, in my opinion -- I'm not a constitutional expert, but from what I read -- is certainly in that general judiciary category, and if it is felt that it is good for the public that one branch should have access to French immersion courses, I don't see any reason why the Speaker shouldn't qualify in the same way.

MS BARRETT: Hear, hear.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak in favour of this motion. I think it's a very positive motion. I recognize that the motion indicates: within the geography of the boundaries of continental North America. Speaking to that, I would sincerely hope the Speaker might be able to find such a useful course that might be located within the boundaries of the province of Alberta. We have many, many strong Francophone communities within our province. I can think just off the top of my head of communities like Bonnyville, Legal, Falher: places like that with a strong Francophone community. I think they would feel honoured. It would be of significant prestige to that community if it were known that the Speaker would be there for several months becoming immersed in a detailed course of language enhancement. So I would very much support the motion presented here.

MS BARRETT: And you'll join him there, right, Ken? For the entire duration? So amended.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, since most of the names he mentioned are in my constituency, I'd like to advise you that I already have enough Conservatives in there without having any more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, one comment I would add to this is that Speaker Lorrain from Quebec and I had talked in the last two years about trying to do an exchange program. They had 10 MNAs who wanted to learn English, so they were into an English program. I had suggested to him in this last year or so that if at any time he wanted to send some of those Members of the National Assembly here, we would try to work it that they could stay for a period of time with one of our MLAs, because part of it is the vocabulary of the profession, the vocabulary of the parliamentarian, which is, as you know, somewhat esoteric. So that offer from my part still holds with regard to the province of Quebec. In the course of this week, when I go to that CPA function in Charlottetown, if Speaker Lorrain is there, I'll raise the issue with him again.

It's very interesting. This motion talks about continental North America, but I would see it as being a Canadian thing. Indeed, the course I took three years ago was here through the Faculté Saint-Jean. But the only other thing I could see would be to go for a period of time, whatever that would be, with either Ottawa or Quebec City, but it's certainly an idea now that we'll do some follow up on to see what programs one may or may not be able to qualify for under the federal House and under any federal funding programs.

I must admit that at this moment, after our longest session in history, I'm a little bit too tired to contemplate having to get my head into another book for a little while. I think, as a lot of you, that I'm a little bit tired of *Beauchesne* and *Erskine May* and Standing Orders. However, the motion is appreciated.

Those in favour of the motion?

MR. KOWALSKI: Are we voting on the amendment first?

MS BARRETT: The amendment that you go with -- I'm going to voluntarily withdraw that amendment. Listen; I have to work with the Speaker. I wouldn't put him through two or three months of sitting with you in all those Alberta ridings. I withdraw my amendment, Mr. Chairman, and call for the

question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair never recognized the amendment.

All those in favour of the motion? Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Any other items? Date of Next Meeting: is it permissible to roughly leave it at the call of the Chair and have a tentative date of Wednesday, August 24, in case we find we have to deal with some items? But more than that, we would then sort of look at some day in late September or early October.

MR. PENGELLY: David, on that date we are having caucus in Calgary.

MS BARRETT: We've got caucus as well on the 24th and 25th.

MR. PENGELLY: In Calgary?

MS BARRETT: No. Well, what a good idea. We could follow you around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A week later?

MR. TAYLOR: October 7 we have caucus in Calgary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wednesday, August 31?

MR. BOGLE: Is Tuesday better for you, Ken, than Wednesday?

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Tuesday, August 30, as tentative.

MR. BOGLE: And if we don't need it, we will wait.

MS BARRETT: Right. But I think it's good to have the date. It sure helps me in planning.

MR. BOGLE: For agenda items?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. BOGLE: I have a notice of motion I'd like to distribute now. This is to cover the question of Members' Services allowance guidelines. That's the three funds that have been established to support members. There are some proposed guidelines, which are being circulated. I know that considerable work has been done by the chiefs of staff of the various parties in consultation with the administration. I would hope we can review the proposed motion and determine whether or not that's acceptable and then deal with it at our next meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other items?  
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I hope you don't think this is frivolous. I've talked to you and to other members of the Assembly about this. Is it possible to get a small fridge somewhere upstairs near the Chamber so that we can keep cream for our coffee and juice for members in the lounge? I know it sounds

frivolous, but for those of us who hate that white powder junk and hate watching our milk go sour on hot summer days, I'd just like to fly this recommendation one more time. Pretty please.

MR. KOWALSKI: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: I'll find one second hand.

MR. BOGLE: I wasn't intending to raise it as a notice of motion, but there has been some discussion of a fridge in the members' lounge behind the Assembly and that something should be provided other than coffee and hot chocolate and tea, that we should go to bottled juices, as an example. The only reason I wasn't bringing it forward today is that we haven't had a chance, as our own government members of this committee, to talk about it, and I thought we should ask the Speaker to have the administration look at whatever cost implications there are. It's certainly in the same vein that you just raised, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So prior to the next sitting, though. I mean, that's when it becomes important. If we could have it dealt with by then. Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we don't need a royal commission on this matter. Would you kindly use your best offices to instruct your administrators to put in a machine with a whole bunch of bottled juices and waters and the rest of it, and have it so that we could just roll on? Surely that's the kind of thing we can have done.

MS BARRETT: I agree with Ken. Bob, can we just go with that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then when it comes times for our budget, we'll just increase that area. It'll make for a lot more, but that's okay.

MR. BOGLE: We'll look at that when the time comes. We may find it in another corner of your budget.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, right. Well, Ken, will you just move that then?

MR. KOWALSKI: I so move.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now the Chair will call the question.

MS BARRETT: Well, I was asking you to call the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.  
Grande Prairie.

DR. ELLIOTT: I was just thinking of a way, Mr. Chairman, that I could help pay for the cool drinks in the back of the Assembly. I would like us to consider at some future meeting our use, as members, of the telephone for long-distance calls. It's a touchy topic to bring up because it almost sounds like I'm pointing fingers, but I'm not. I'm just suggesting that long-distance telephone is an expensive part of our activity, and I'm wondering whether all of the hon. members are really aware of what

long-distance calls cost. As the Member for Grande Prairie, I have not seen my slip for quite a while. All I know is that the first one I saw, I was absolutely shocked at what I was costing the taxpayers in long-distance calls. I don't have a fast answer for it except that maybe we should consider it at some future time.

MR. TAYLOR: I was surprised to find that you have to do a little bit of fighting to get your own phone bill. I think everyone should get their own phone bill, even though it might have been paid by the time you get it. It not only makes you aware of what you do but also our staff make calls, and I think it sort of wakes you up a little bit to see what your staff does. At least, once I started getting mine and looking at it, I was able to use some control on my own but certainly a heck of a lot on staff, because you could spot what was going on. You know, five phone calls to the same number two or three times a week is usually not business. So that type of thing you could just draw gentle attention to and straighten out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. On the discussion, Mr. Chairman, I agree it's always a good idea to be made aware of what expenses we're incurring, but it does occur to me that I wouldn't want to see a limitation on communications per se. Communication is the nature of our business. All one has to do is go and look at 73 days worth of *Hansard* just from one sitting to figure that out. You know, it's a terrible thing for a politician to admit, but we live by our words. I mean, that is the nature of the beast. We do communicate, period. So I wouldn't want to see any restrictions. Although I'd certainly welcome any mechanism that would make us aware of the long-distance system and encourage people always to remember that we have the RITE line system available to us when we're calling from the Leg. and when we're calling from elsewhere if we're calling to government numbers. You know, that sort of info pack to make us aware would be, I think, really welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, of course, that . . .  
Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'm sorry. Not on this matter, Mr. Chairman, but I just wanted to say something.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just on this matter, we were really concerned when we discovered that we had at least one member who was using it at six times the normal rate. That just isn't fair to the whole system.  
Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we've just gone through the longest session in the history of the Legislature of Alberta. I just wanted to say, before we adjourn, to the members of this particular committee that I've had the good fortune of being on this Members' Services Committee since 1980, and I'd like to say to all my colleagues that the last two days have been very, very enjoyable. In retrospect, looking back and seeing some of the acrimony this committee has gone through, I want to thank my colleagues on this committee for being, I think, very, very responsive and very, very responsible. Recognizing that we've been here for over four months now, I think we've ended very amicably and very positively. I think that's a credit to all the

members and my colleagues who sit on this particular committee and, sir, to you in the leadership you've displayed not only in the House but as chairman of this committee as well.

MS BARRETT: I second the motion.

[applause]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, gang.

I assume that we are now going to stand adjourned until we see each other again. Have a good summer and a safe one.

[The committee adjourned at 9:54 a.m.]

