

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[9:14 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, let's commence. There are some minor things we can certainly do. On the inside pages following the agenda you can just do a checkoff as to what has been dealt with. The first item stays on the table. The second item relates to the review of the security for the building. The third item we dealt with yesterday: the billing for taxis and airport parking. Consultant, security: that's ongoing. Discuss constituency services order guidelines: that one was done as well. The next one is done as well: the RITE line hookup. The only thing we have continuing there is whatever issue it is that the Member for Grande Prairie will have to deal with at our next meeting.

Next page. The first one was dealt with yesterday. Then we have Grande Prairie's item that we just mentioned. The next item is dealt with: the attendance at conferences. We're just doing the tidy-up sheets following the agenda to make sure we've got them. Constituency reference: that also was dealt with yesterday; that was adding Dunvegan and regularizing the names of constituencies. This next one was dealt with as well, wasn't it? A month ago? Travel bonus points: that's one we're coming back to -- discussion yesterday. That's probably our first item. And the benefits subcommittee has given their initial report. So the committee has managed to tidy up most of the items.

I wonder if our first item, then, could be dealing with the motion from yesterday that went to table, the matter of travel bonus points. Rocky Mountain House and Edmonton-Highlands were in some discussion.

MR. CAMPBELL: Maybe, Mr. Chairman, we could change this, maybe modify it to say, "MLA and staff bonus travel points can only be used if they qualify for a trip made under a Members' Services order," and that would get away from the point of listing all the different things that would qualify it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MS BARRETT: That sounds pretty reasonable. Would you not think that you want to say -- is that for within province travel? I mean, we're not the ones that -- I guess we are the ones that authorize round trips to home and all of that. Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that's the way to work it in under Members' Services orders.

MS BARRETT: You're right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That addition comes in under -- where do you want that inserted in the motion?

MR. CAMPBELL: I guess it should come in after "events": "and the points can only be used to qualify for a trip made under a Members' Services order." That would leave out "funded by the Legislative Assembly."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So there's "MLA and Staff Bonus Travel Points be defined . . ." Okay.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, if I might make a suggestion. I have discussed this with the hon. member, and I've had a second thought since I discussed it with him, because of the inclusion of the staff. And that is this: staff travel is not in itself ac-

tually authorized specifically by a Members' Services order. It is paid for out of Legislative Assembly funds. If the committee wishes it to cover staff travel as well and to have the best generalization without having to list all of them, I think I would suggest that we should word it that "the travel bonus points should only be applied to travel funded by the Legislative Assembly." Then that would cover both members' travel authorized by a Members' Services order and staff travel, which comes under the general administration budget. That's because of the inclusion of the staff in the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other thing is to not include the staff at all, because that's done under the direction of the Clerk and the Speaker. Just take out the staff.

MR. M. CLEGG: The other thing, Mr. Chairman, is that it's possible for some travel to be authorized under the Legislative Assembly Act. There are some sections of the Legislative Assembly Act which authorize reimbursement of travel expenses when attending CPA, and that is nicely covered by an order of this committee. So, again, the more general phrase "funded by the Legislative Assembly" might be better.

MR. CAMPBELL: Well, I see that we've made a complete circle here, and I don't even see any Indians.

MR. M. CLEGG: But we don't have to list any of the purposes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike Clegg, if you'd like to come on over here and draft this thing.

MR. CAMPBELL: There are three words that I've noticed you should never forget when you're involved with this: might, maybe, and possibly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it was a nice try.

MR. CAMPBELL: I'm glad that I had a different lawyer; I never would have got divorced.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I don't believe we had any other items carried over from yesterday.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah, the one that I put forward on the travel. Do you want to circulate it, Charlene?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. This is the report from the subcommittee dealing with the travel for former members. Right. Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: As I remember, some of the discussion yesterday was about: what if people live outside the province? How do we cover that? Things like that. When I read the motion, I'm assuming that in those kinds of cases the mileage kicks in when they hit the Alberta border. If they fly, they claim it as road mileage. Other than that, I think that's the only fair way to do it. We certainly can't pay a trip from an extended distance back. If they're coming back for some occasion, I think it's probably fair that we pay it from the border. So it's moved by myself:

that former Members of the Legislative Assembly be eligible to receive remuneration for accommodation and mileage for travel in Alberta for a maximum of two trips to Edmonton for the maximum duration of five days in a fiscal year.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I still think this is a little bit broad. I had wanted either some stipulation as to the reason that they're coming in -- and I understand that Taber-Warner mentioned, you know, sometimes you can't spell these things out; funerals happen. Right? That's fair enough. Then we looked at some figures yesterday which were approximated on the basis of a Calgary to Edmonton journey round trip, and some money was attached to that. I feel very uncomfortable with something like this because there are absolutely no guidelines here except for, you know, two trips per year and five days in a fiscal year staying here. I don't know how to amend it or which way you would prefer to amend it, but I think we have to have some sort of guideline on it.

MR. BOGLE: I have, to use the words of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who is unfortunately not with us today, a friendly amendment that I'd like to propose to the motion, because it seems to me that the intent is to ensure that a former member is afforded this opportunity at the same rate which applies to current MLAs. Therefore, I think we need to include in the motion -- and it might logically occur after the words "accommodation and mileage." If we were to say: "at the current members' rate, for travel in Alberta." So I'd like to put that amendment forward.

I'd like also to address the concern that was just raised by Edmonton-Highlands. While it's not stated in the motion, I think when we're plowing new ground -- and we certainly are with the intent of this motion -- it's incumbent upon us to come back and review the situation from time to time. Whether we wanted to include it as a further amendment in the motion or whether we want merely to flag it so that, say, a year from now we would come back and review it to determine whether or not guidelines need to be put on it, I'll leave that to Edmonton-Highlands' discretion. I understand and I appreciate the concerns that Edmonton-Highlands has raised.

The other side of the coin is also troublesome. I'd rather allow us to operate with it for a period of time, examine how it's being used, and if we find that there is a requirement to put some guidelines on, then do so. I would hope that former members would use the same kind of discretion they used when they were members, in terms of how to apply themselves.

I've wandered off my original amendment, which dealt with the amount that a former member could claim for, and that would be at whatever the rate provided to members of the day happened to be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now on the amendment, Edmonton-Highlands and Cypress-Redcliff.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Yeah, I think the amendment is a definite improvement, and I will certainly support it. I wonder, though, in the absence of Nick, Westlock-Sturgeon, can his EA can speak to say what he believes? I understand that he doesn't have a vote, but could I just ask him to see if there was any guideline from Nick with respect to this motion at all?

MR. RUSSELL: He would be supportive of it.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: I think that Bob cleared it up in his last few comments. The words he used were "current rate," and I was a little concerned with the word "current." If it's the rate paid to MLAs of the day, then we would never have to change it. I'm just concerned that using the word "current" would mean that it's at \$75 now. If we say, "the rate paid to the MLA," then as it changes, that changes.

MR. BOGLE: At the members' rate?

MR. HYLAND: Yeah, something like that.

MS BARRETT: At the time of travel.

MR. BOGLE: At the time of travel. Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the new wording of the amendment.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. There's a call for the question. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, please say no.
Call for the question on the amended motion?

MS BARRETT: Just one further comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Surely.

MS BARRETT: I think that it would be nice if we could in approximately a year from now have a report on the use of this and, if at all possible, ascertain the nature of the visit. I mean, sometimes you don't want to pry; I understand that. If we can review it a year from now, it would be good to see in what way it's being used, et cetera. So I'd like to see that happen, if we could put a note down for a year from now, Louise, and then I'll support the motion.

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, and then when they're doing it, they can put in "purpose of trip," in general terms, specifically, you know.

MS BARRETT: Sort of an administrative thing. It doesn't have to be in the motion; I'm not arguing with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
All those in favour of the amended motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Okay. That also, then, has budget implications because ... Oh, effective date? January 1?

MS BARRETT: Sounds reasonable.

MR. BOGLE: January 1?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The general consensus of agreement: effective date, January 1, '89. Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Chairman, a question as to communication with former members regarding this policy.

MS BARRETT: It should go through the Speaker.

MR. BOGLE: Yeah. I think if some care is taken in the way we communicate, we can address the concerns that we all have about usage, and that can be contained within the letter to all former members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We shall try.

Okay. For information purposes to the committee, all the Members' Services orders changes that we effected yesterday were signed yesterday, so they're all complete.

All right. Do we now have a motion? Who's reading the motion?

MR. HYLAND: Who had it?

MR. CAMPBELL: Okay. Let's try this again; two out of three. Travel bonus points earned from travel paid out of Legislature committee, MLA administration, and House services budgets may only be applied to such travel.

MS BARRETT: I still need clarification. Okay. We may need Mike to interpret this; I don't know. Mike, my greatest concern in this is that, as Leader of the Opposition, Ray travels, obviously, quite a bit in the province. Now, if he's traveling as the opposition leader, accumulates points, and is then invited because he is opposition leader to, say, a conference outside of Alberta, is he allowed to use those points under this motion for those purposes?

MR. CAMPBELL: That's not my reading of this motion, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Okay, well that changes things from yesterday then.

MR. SCARLETT: Only if he's got two cards.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. SCARLETT: If he's got a card that he's using for his travel as an opposition leader, paid by opposition caucus budget, and if those bonus points are accumulated and applied to travel, that's fine.

MS BARRETT: But that doesn't make any sense, because the reason he is given that card as the opposition leader is because he's the opposition leader, if you see what I mean.

MR. SCARLETT: Every member is authorized five trips outside of the city. So he does have MLA-related travel approval.

MS BARRETT: Correct. But he has, on top of that...

MR. SCARLETT: So he's earning points.

MS BARRETT: No. He has on top of that, you see, travel like

a cabinet minister, for instance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Part of the question here is: does he have one card at the moment, or does he have two?

MS BARRETT: He has one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And did we not think yesterday that if he had two, that would help to sort out part of this?

MS BARRETT: Yes. But what Rod has just said is that on the second one, the travel would be funded by the Official Opposition budget. And that is not the current status. That's the problem here, and that's what we're trying to rectify in the way of a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, but is it the current status, or is it not?

MS BARRETT: Sure it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's caucus travel.

DR. McNEIL: There's the caucus travel budget, which we pay for the leader's travel.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. HYLAND: He has unlimited travel.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

DR. McNEIL: Okay, within; I'm speaking about out of province.

MS BARRETT: Absolutely.

DR. McNEIL: He has unlimited travel within the province.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I mean, that's my concern. You see, the issue here is that as the equivalent of a cabinet minister, he's bound to do a fair amount of traveling. He is also bound occasionally to be invited to conferences outside of Alberta. If he were a cabinet minister, by virtue of that travel as a cabinet minister he would be allowed to use those points when traveling outside of Alberta. What I am seeking is the same sort of rule — fair is fair — in the motion, and I'm not sure that that's there, although I thought we had talked about this yesterday and come to a consensus that we could work it in that way so as not to exclude that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But isn't there also another thing? Using your example, the minister of X department's travel outside the province is paid for by his department, not the Legislative Assembly.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I understand that.

MR. HYLAND: Except travel that he would accumulate within the province on departmental business would count as points.

MR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Chairman, I guess we should probably table this, have the chiefs of staff work on this, and maybe come

back. Is that agreeable, Pam?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CAMPBELL: In that way we'll have somebody to blame.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I'm not sure you can table your own motion. I don't think you can. So Cypress-Redcliff has the motion to table. Thank you. Those in favour of the tabling motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MRS. MIROSH: Tabled till February?

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Now, any other items that we can deal with?

Okay. Initial discussion under 5(d). You have the sheets. Right.

There are at least two items of our business yesterday and today that have budget implications that will have to be factored in. One is that travel for former members. What was the other one?

MR. BOGLE: Computers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Computer costs. Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: And possibly fax machines, depending on what information comes back to the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right.

Now, the general question with regard to the computer installations. We see that as being over a two-year period, or whatever.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I wanted to make the observation on the computers that I didn't feel we agreed to any period of time. I think once we get into our budget, we'll then determine whether it's two or three years or more. But clearly we've made a commitment for the first eight offices, and we'll proceed as dollars are available on a pro rata basis.

MS BARRETT: I think it's crazy. I think we should plan for the upcoming fiscal year. You get your best deal that way for sure. When you make that sort of purchase, you can have them placed rather easily -- I mean, it's not very difficult -- and centralize the training courses. The reason I say that is not just for the money, although that is a good reason. The other reason is that it's fair; otherwise you're going to be excluding people who want to be computerized. It's not like you're going to save any money by stretching it over a couple of years. You can't. You won't. So if you're going to computerize and you're looking at whatever it is -- half a million dollars or whatever, which is not very much compared to what it cost to computerize this place with the NBI system -- then why not do it as quickly and efficiently as you can? I just don't see any reason for not doing it all within one fiscal year.

MR. BOGLE: Surely that's part of the discussion we'll have

when we're into the budget.

MS BARRETT: But I thought we were being tested now as to assumptions.

MR. BOGLE: Well, that's why I wanted to put my oar in the water as I did yesterday, that we're not tying the hands of our budgetary process with a built-in cost. We've got a number of costs that are built in, that we can't change as a committee. Well, I think it's premature to go into it in any further detail.

MS BARRETT: Then why are we talking about it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're talking about it because I decided to talk about it. I needed to know for the staff's sake what kind of scenarios they need to look at. Part of it then means that they'll have to look at more than one scenario.

David.

DR. McNEIL: I was going to say we can develop alternative scenarios to look at the cash flow requirements.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, so we can try to stage them, or how much it would cost and put it all in at one lump. Okay. That's the reason for raising it.

MR. HYLAND: We also need to know the ongoing cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The maintenance and operation costs.

MS BARRETT: Well, I can speak to that; I mean there's almost none. You buy a few floppy disks, you know? You can go to the Future Shop and get them for 28 cents each. That tends to be ... Really, if you have laser printers, they don't require ribbons or anything like that. Once you've got your hard drive, once you've got your program, you've got it. Additional costs, I'm sure, can be borne by the constituency offices. Somehow or other, I managed to pay for my floppy disks out of my own pocket, and I'm not broke yet. It doesn't come to anything.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

David, would you like to give us a general overview of what we have at the moment?

DR. McNEIL: Okay. In terms of your binder, under 5(d) the first memo from the Provincial Treasurer to the Speaker relates to their intention this year to include the Legislative Assembly estimates in the overall government estimates new book. I thought I should put that there for information. I've had no discussion with them on this, but this is the direction it appears they want to go, which places a certain constraint on us in terms of timing with respect to having our estimates completed so that they can be included in that. That date, as I indicated yesterday, is around February 15.

MR. HYLAND: I know, in reading the memo, what the Provincial Treasurer's intention is and why he wants to do it. We don't create that many, I don't think, of the Legislative Assembly estimates. We're only talking about three extra pages and two covers. As I remember, when we went to the separate book, wasn't it for a purpose, in that it set the Assembly by itself? Because it is something by itself; it's not part of government. It's the Legislative Assembly, composed of government mem-

bers and opposition members. I would like to suggest we go to the Provincial Treasurer and say that we would like to stay with the old system, where we were in a separate book, and maintain that. Because it's not going to make a whole lot of difference in cost, I don't think. I'd be interested to hear other members.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I'd like to echo the remarks made by Cypress-Redcliff. My understanding is that the estimates that are put forward for the Leg. Assembly are not produced in the same numbers. We are not a department like other entities of government. Our estimates include not only the areas that this committee is responsible for but other elements that come under the Legislative Assembly, like the provincial Auditor General and the provincial Ombudsman. Those offices do not report to ministers or to the government of Alberta; they are answerable to the Legislative Assembly. I think we should give some thought as a committee to whether or not we wish to advise the Provincial Treasurer that we concur with his recommendation or that we wish our estimates to remain as they have in the past, in a separate document.

If there are some thoughts, some recommendations that our administration has that support the Provincial Treasurer, I think it would be helpful if those comments were put on the table. Because maybe Cypress-Redcliff is missing something; maybe I'm missing something in terms of the rationale for it.

DR. McNEIL: I don't have any particular arguments in support of the request.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think the point is well made. It's difficult enough trying to keep the Legislative Assembly seen as an entity apart from government and its departments in particular -- no matter the size of it -- and then to try to keep that separateness at the same time. It's certainly there in the office of the Speaker, and that's a constant challenge. What I also find happening is that the longer I'm Speaker, the more I become -- not neutered but neutralized. So the whole business of seeing a Legislative Assembly as being apart -- and it's exemplified also, for example, when you have a visiting ambassador coming and we have that short, courtesy visit in the Speaker's suite. You realize even more that the office is there representing all the members of the Assembly.

In terms of this committee, while we have other legislative committees that do have representation from all parties, this is the one in particular that really is the umbrella committee. As you point out in the matter of the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, and the Chief Electoral Officer, they're officers of the Assembly, so this committee is indeed a separate entity as well. I think indeed you make good points that it should be separate documents. If that's the will of the committee and you want to put it into a motion, that would be very helpful in terms of my conversations.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the committee does like in other years and that it be that the estimates are published in a book by themselves.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Even at our cost.

MS BARRETT: I can certainly support the motion, Mr. Chairman, but I think the reason I would is not the reason that's been stated but more that I know from experience that we of all committees -- possibly of all departments; I wouldn't know yet -- get

into last-minute scrambles on things that relate to projections that we might not have been able to make accurately and so forth. I would think that's the essential argument, compared to the other reasons. We don't have to be seen as independent like the Auditor General or the Ombudsman. I'm not sure that's really the essence here. But for the sake of ease for this committee I can't say it costs that much more, so let's go with it and make the recommendation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a comment. We're seen as an entity apart when we have to try to worry about hiring in various caucuses not going astray.

Those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Please, David.

DR. McNEIL: The second document. A question was raised last meeting as to what guidelines had been issued by Treasury regarding the budget development for this year. What you see before you is the only document that's been sent out to departments. I was not sent this originally; I got it subsequently by asking for it.

Basically, there have been no specific growth or limit guidelines placed on any departments. This and the accompanying detailed forms are the only things that have been issued to departments. As you can see, it indicates there's further direction, but it has not been issued as yet. In terms of my latest discussion on Friday with the director of the Budget Bureau, he's not anticipating that anything further is issued.

There was a memo from the Provincial Treasurer to ministers that went out in October. I haven't seen the memo specifically, but my understanding is that Treasury Board wanted to be assured that committed increases are necessary for the new budgets and asked departments to re-examine new initiatives and prioritize them. The Treasury Board expects that operations where savings or productivity improvements will reduce the budget will be realized. That's all the information that I am aware of that the government has issued with respect to the guidelines.

Are there any questions, observations on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does that provide any answers?

DR. McNEIL: In that context we have initiated the development of a budget which really is a layman's budget, and our intent is to maintain existing programs and budget for those increases that we are aware of. I thought I could mention some of the factors overall that we're aware of that would impact on the budget and then briefly mention some of the things in specific votes that we are aware of, so that the committee is at least aware of what we know now.

There have been bargaining unit settlements for this year and next year which overall approximated 3 percent increases for both nonmanagement and management staff. The bargaining unit settled at 3.6 percent effective April 1, '88; next year on April 1, '89 at 3 percent; and another 1 percent in October of 1989. So those are adjustments that we'll have to accommodate in the budget. The management adjustments: a merit adjustment of 3 percent in June and a range adjustment of 3 percent

effective in June. We don't know what, if any, would be the adjustment for managers next year. Those will have to be accommodated.

Overall, there's an increase of 30 percent in Canada pension, unemployment, and workers' compensation contributions for all staff. So rather, this year it's 5 percent of the payroll; next year it's 6.5 percent of the payroll. So there's a fairly significant increase there.

Should I continue with this?

MS BARRETT: This is useful.

DR. McNEIL: Okay.

In looking at a number of our elements in terms of decreases, because of the way we had to budget last year, we project our Legislative intern budget to decrease by about 15 percent. That reflects the fact that we have budgeted for four interns next year, whereas this year we budgeted for six for part of the year and four for the remaining part of the year.

[Mr. Bogle in the Chair]

The Speaker's office: there's no increase projected. *Hansard*: no increase projected. Legislature Library: no increase projected. That's in terms of maintaining. We have some ideas that we will present as B budget items for the consideration of the committee, but in terms of the base budget, we're projecting no increases in those categories.

General admin: a very slight increase projected. MLA administration, all the funds related to most of the allowances and so on: we project a slight decrease there, and that's excluding what we put in as a B budget for the computerization of constituency offices and so on. That reduction comes about because of reductions for the implementation of PHH cards, where we project savings; RITE line savings; savings on the telephone listings, which we discussed yesterday.

There is a question about how we budget for the MLA travel allowances, the 52 trips and the travel within the province. In the past we've budgeted based on the maximum possible under those allowances. This year we would be better to budget based on estimated actual expenditures, given that we're in a restraint mode. I guess I'd like some advice from the committee on that approach.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you like it at this point in time?

DR. McNEIL: I just raise that question. Maybe I could go through.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All right; let's continue on.

DR. McNEIL: The House Services budget: that's the security, Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and all the CPA travel. We project an 8 percent increase there, excluding the funding for the CPA conference. Our estimate at this stage for that conference, a six-day conference with approximately 220 people in Calgary and Edmonton, is \$175,000. That House Services budget is projected to increase: funding for CPA membership fees, which has not been previously budgeted for, and budgeting for equipment purchase and maintenance, which had been included in another budget, in the administration budget, previously, so there's a transfer there. We incurred fairly significant increases in the

security staff costs because of the need to provide them with appropriate disability coverage and medical coverage, which they had not had previously. When I say "significant," I mean in the range of 8 percent.

Legislative Committees: a slight decrease, excluding a B budget item for the Public Accounts conference, which will take place just prior to the CPA conference. Under Members' Indemnity those increases that were due to any increases in allowance that come about because of changes in census or Members' Services orders.

In relation to that question I also have a proposal about revising the budget structure slightly this year. We really have two categories that are basically dealing with the same type of item. You see the second two there: MLA Administration and Members' Indemnity, which this year were separate votes. In effect, those deal with similar kinds of items. MLA Administration and Members' Indemnity relates to allowances, indemnities, and so on that go to members, and in terms of having fairly distinctive categories within the budget, this MLA Administration would capture those payments of various types, both in terms of indemnities and allowances, that go to members. I thought I'd perhaps put that on the table in terms of the reaction of the committee.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: I don't think I have any other general points, other than, as I say, we hope to present the budget as a maintenance budget and separate out those things that are one-of-a-kind expenditures, like constituency office computerization, the CPA conference, the Public Accounts conference, and so on.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff did have a question on MLA air and car travel. Before we go back, based on the information that you have and that you shared with us today, there are certain areas where there are built-in costs that our committee has very little choice in. In other words, we have to accept them as they are. What impact do those certainties have on the budget at this point in time, in percentage terms?

DR. McNEIL: In percentage terms those certainties are about 5 percent.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Five percent. All right. So if it's the will of our committee to ensure that we do not get into double-digit increases -- and the Chair is not looking for a motion, merely a consensus -- then we need to know the constraints that we're operating under.

Any other general observations before we go back to specific parts? Today this is merely an overview so that we have time to think about areas of concern and priority. Are there any general observations members wish to make before we get to the specifics? All right then, can we go back?

The first member to have his hand up on a specific was Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are related to the MLA travel, and here I think the Clerk suggested that he's going to look at a different method of calculating; i.e., what's actually happened versus putting down the 52 flying trips and 52 road trips. You sure as hell can't make ... That's 104 trips to Edmonton, one by road and one by car, in a year, in a week.

MS BARRETT: Not a week.

MR. HYLAND: Not a week.

I think that will bring that aspect into more realistic so that we know what's going on, because we've had -- what? -- about two or three years now of trial on it. Even though for the one, some of the mileage wasn't budgeted for, we haven't exceeded the total pot. So that will at least line us up. Those estimates will be in line with what's actually happened versus what could happen, which you never know.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Anyone else on this specific point? So what we're really talking about is zero-base budgeting on some of the MLA administrative areas where we do have some historical background to look at. Because, as the Member for Cypress-Redcliff has said, a member can travel by car or by plane, but he certainly isn't doing both in a given week. Therefore, there should be some savings on paper that will make the actual figures we're looking at more realistic. I think it's important to recognize that the more realistic our budget is in areas like this, the greater the likelihood, Edmonton-Highlands, that we can assist with the computerization program.

MS BARRETT: Good. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I thought that would get your attention.

MS BARRETT: It did.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any other comments on specifics?

MR. HYLAND: Well, the two conferences: did you say they're B budget? Because they're committed.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. I thought we would present them in that way to separate them as something that happens once in a while as opposed to something that's an ongoing cost; hence the distinction with B.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah. And we're looking at one in 10. It just happens that they both hit us at the same time.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, we had a one-time expenditure during the current fiscal year on the Olympics. We're going to have a one-time expenditure in the next fiscal year on both of the committees.

Did I see a hand up for Calgary-Glenmore?

MRS. MIROSH: I just wondered if there's any consideration being given to increasing MLAs' constituency allowances. To the Clerk.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: In fairness, I'm not sure that's something the administration would have looked at at this point in time.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh. Okay.

DR. McNEIL: No. There will be in terms of any built-in costs.

There are formulas by which some of those aspects are calculated for the constituency allowance. So in terms of postage increases and things like that, increases in the size of the constituency, the number of electors as a result of a more recent census, and so on: those are automatically built in when we put it together.

MRS. MIROSH: What about rent increase?

DR. McNEIL: Well, that's not part of the formula.

MS BARRETT: That's something we can deal with.

DR. McNEIL: That would be something I would think the committee would want to review to see whether that amount that's allocated now is sufficient.

MRS. MIROSH: It's just a matter of interest.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, that's the kind of thing the committee will look at, but what the administration has presented to us is a budget with the built-in increases that we have very little, if any, control over. That adds up to a 5 percent increase in our budget. We have to decide where our priorities are as a committee in terms of our own restraint.

Are there any other observations on specific elements as presented by the Clerk?

Well, there's one area I would like to comment on. I'm extremely pleased that the administration is recommending to our committee that we combine the MLA Administration and Members' Indemnity into one vote. I think that's a very realistic move. Clearly, if we're trying to communicate to our constituents and Albertans as a whole the role of an MLA and the work done by an MLA, it seems logical that in the expense code we identify not only the salary, which is made up of the indemnity and expense allowance, but also the other benefits that are provided, whether it's through the Members' Services allowance, the travel portion, whether by car or plane. By getting all of those elements in one area, I think we've got something that's fairly realistic and tangible.

MS BARRETT: I didn't realize that was the implication of this. Does that change the public accounts? That's what I'm concerned about. Will that have an effect on the way we file with the public accounts?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No.

MS BARRETT: Absolutely none. So the distinction with public accounts will still show indemnity, out of town...

MR. HYLAND: Living allowance.

MS BARRETT: Living allowance. Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: Oh, it will still show the separate account codes.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

DR. McNEIL: All this does in terms of the budget structure is present different allocations of money for different purposes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But it's in one vote.

DR. McNEIL: For example, right now under MLA Administration you've got your members' travel allowance, but under Members' Indemnity you have your daily allowance in session and out of session.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. Okay.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's clarifying.

DR. McNEIL: Why one is in one and one is in the other, there's really no purpose for the distinction.

MS BARRETT: That's fine. I have no objection, as long as it doesn't change the public accounts.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any other specific questions or comments members wish to make? Are there any other general?

MS BARRETT: This is a general discussion, getting us ready for whenever we start to meet and work with details. My general observation from the Official Opposition perspective is that at the minimum we would like to see the 20 percent cut we took two years ago and lived with again last year restored. We had to lay off staff. Our phones didn't ring any less; we didn't start getting any less mail because of that. In fact, if anything we get more. It's just hell. So I'd really like to see us looking at restoring those caucus budgets to the '86 level we originally had.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's been the committee's practice in the past to deal with all elements of the budget and save the elements in Government Members, Official Opposition, Liberal Opposition, and Representative Opposition to the end. I'm assuming that if we follow the same practice, there will be ample opportunity for discussion on the budgets for the four caucuses.

MS BARRETT: Okay. The other thing, then, is to pick up on what Dianne was saying. I'd also like to see a review of the constituency budgets as soon as we can. First of all, my riding is the one that's consistently, every year — this has been a problem, and it was a problem for Dave King too, you know. It's underenumerated. Too many people won't go into the inner city core. I mean, it's a rough district. Some of those rooming houses: believe me, you've got to have guts to go in there. Anyway, it's constantly underenumerated. But I still have to deliver mail to every one of those people. I can't exclude them just because they weren't enumerated. I'd like to see those little problems looked after.

The same with, you know, increases in rent. I'm assuming that Calgary-Glenmore had to pay an increase in rent. There are some of those things that I think we should talk about and not wait until February 14.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, what I want to suggest just prior to turning the Chair back to the chairman, who has rejoined us, is that we'll have to set dates for our next meetings, and when we do that, that the Speaker devise with his Clerk a strategy whereby we can deal with the parts of the budget in a detailed sense, the parts that are givens, roughly, basically the 5 percent increase that we have to deal with.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Then we can go back and give members an opportunity to identify areas of concern they have, and we can do that on a vote-by-vote basis. But Calgary-Glenmore can address the question of constituency office funding, which is part of a global Members' Services allowance, and Edmonton-Highlands and other members can bring in their concerns.

If we do that in an overview, see what kind of dollars we're looking at and what kind of percentage impact, and then go back and do it with some more detail, certainly there is every opportunity to address fully the concerns that members have about specific elements. But if you're in general agreement and if the Chair is in general agreement, we can deal with the givens first and then go to the areas where there is some flexibility.

MS BARRETT: One other question. Where does the computerization come in? Is that under MLA Administration, or what does that come under?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, that would come under MLA Administration.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks.

[Dr. Carter in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, I thought I was over the flu, but I'm learning I'm not.

Where were we?

MR. BOGLE: We just finished a general overview of the budget, and we've identified the areas where there are built-in increases necessary, almost all of which are beyond the control of this committee. Then we were addressing areas in general. The Clerk shared with us the recommendation that we combine the MLA indemnity and the MLA Administration into one vote, and I think there's concurrence on that concept. The Member for Cypress-Redcliff expressed the desire that there be zero-base budgeting on things like the MLA air travel versus MLA automobile travel, because we know that members can't be flying and driving in the same week to and from their constituencies.

MR. HYLAND: Up to two times; maybe once or twice.

MR. BOGLE: Yeah, that's right. So the idea was that if we can go back over the past few years and look at the actual expenditures, we can develop a more realistic budget.

Calgary-Glenmore and Edmonton-Highlands both raised concerns about MLA offices. I think Calgary-Glenmore's specific concern was with rental increases. Edmonton-Highlands' was with servicing an inner-core riding. It was, I think, generally agreed, just as you came back in, that we would address those parts of the budget in their various elements once we've dealt with the givens. I also asked in your absence if there was concurrence that we would stay away from the double-digit increase in the budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Then, of course, the problem with the enumeration is that then by Members' Services order pegged back to the . . . Okay, thank you.

Where else do you wish to go, then, today?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, we need to set dates for our next

meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So everything's up to date in Kansas City. We've gone about as far as it can go.

MS BARRETT: Could we put it on hold for about one minute? I'd check in my calendar, but it's going to be back in about one minute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. HYLAND: Which calendar is she bringing, '88 or '89?

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm dealing with '89 in the back of my '88.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, just before we get to the question of the dates of our next meetings, I'm assuming we'll have the detailed, proposed estimates at least two weeks prior to the first meeting, because the various caucuses will need an opportunity to examine them so that members have input.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If we can get them to you sooner, we'll do that.

Okay. We're adjourned for a moment or two.

[The committee recessed from 10:15 a.m. to 10:16 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like us to think in terms of February 2 and 3, Thursday and Friday followed, perhaps, by Monday and Tuesday, the 6th and the 7th and, if need be, the 13th and 14th.

MS BARRETT: So 2, 3, 6, 7? Is that what you were saying?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two, 3, 6, 7, 13, 14.

On that Thursday, the 2nd, at what time of day would you like to begin?

MR. BOGLE: Could I suggest that on each of these occasions

the first meeting begin at 1 o'clock? That will allow sufficient time for caucus members to assemble in advance. If there are any discussions between caucuses, they can also occur in the morning of that meeting. Then the following meeting, day two, could easily start at 9 in the morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is 1 o'clock okay, or 1:30 to be sure?

MR. BOGLE: One thirty.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. February 2, 1:30; Monday, the 6th, 1:30; the 13th, 1:30.

MS BARRETT: Why not Monday, the 13th, and Tuesday, the 14th? Why the 14th and 15th?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; I thought I'd said the 13th and 14th. I meant the 13th and 14th. We'll negotiate the time of the second days; 9:30?

MR. HYLAND: So we've got 2, 3, 6, 7, 13, and 14.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Can I put down 9:30 in the notices?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please; 9:30 for the second day. That gives us room to reword motions and things like that.

Okay. We'll take those dates. Any other business? Motion to adjourn?

MR. CAMPBELL: Adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Rocky Mountain House. Those in favour, please gather your books and leave. Carried. Thank you all very much. Have a good festive season.

[The committee adjourned at 10:18 a.m.]

