

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

[9:45 a.m.]

MR. McINNIS: Motion to approve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Call the meeting to order. You have the agenda before you. Are there any additions or corrections you'd like to make at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

Those in favour of approval of the December 22 minutes, please signify. Opposed? Thank you. A fast disappearing vote. Carried by a vote of three to nothing.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. You say there's an agenda in front of us.

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. At the beginning of your binder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 3(c), minutes of our last committee meeting.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, the budget book.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MRS. MIROSH: No, the Members' Services Committee.

MR. WICKMAN: The other book wasn't returned to me, unless it was returned late yesterday afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Discussion or comments? Those in favour of the approval of the January 18 minutes, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you. Much better. Terrific.

MS BARRETT: Or early this morning.

Business Arising, 4(a), Transportation and Administrative Services Orders. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. WICKMAN: Or early this morning.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move this matter be once again tabled, possibly until just after lunch this afternoon. Well, phrase it that way: move to table until this afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was yesterday afternoon, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Motion to table. No discussion. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: I had to go and pick mine up.

Item 4(b).

MR. WICKMAN: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I came straight here this morning.

MS BARRETT: Ditto. Sorry; let the record show she moved to table until this afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You don't need to apologize about coming straight here this morning. How were you yesterday afternoon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Those in favour of that motion, please signify.

MRS. MIROSH: You missed that, Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, may I ask on timing . . .

MR. WICKMAN: What's that? No, I just pretended I missed it; that's all. I left at 5:30, and it still wasn't here. What can I say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member. Just tabling . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a motion to approve the agenda.

MR. WICKMAN: I have the right to ask a question on timing, do I not?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Moved by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Ask afterwards.

Robert, would you like to take these to the gentlemen of the media.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is to table until this afternoon. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Sorry.

You will recall that at the last meeting, because of changeovers in the system in the office, we didn't have time to get the minutes out to you in time for the meetings of December 21 and 22. So item 3(a) on the agenda, Approval of December 21, 1989, Committee Meeting Minutes: is there a motion to approve or errors or omissions?

MR. WICKMAN: I was simply going to ask the wording of the motion to table until this afternoon. I don't see that heavy an agenda. Should it not just have been tabled until possibly the end of the agenda?

MS BARRETT: Motion to approve.

MS BARRETT: Good question. You always have to pipe up, though, before the motion is made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands, approval of December 21 meeting minutes. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Motion carries four to zip.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I attempted to.

Item 3(b), the December 22 minutes. Fascinating reading both of those days. Great demand for those minutes. What is your pleasure with regard to the December 22 minutes?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I know. But once the motion to table

is made, there's no discussion. Them's the rules, including *Robert's*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect to your comment, hon. member, I believe there are some items that unfortunately are going to take a bit of time.

Again, a reminder that we're adjourning at quarter to 12 sharp. Then the installation of the new Ombudsman is in the Carillon Room at 12 sharp, followed by the lunch in the Speaker's suite, and then we're back here at probably 1:30 on that agenda. Thank you.

Item 4(c). Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: We've asked Blue Cross to do an analysis of the impact on the cost of the extended benefit program of former members versus present members. Right now there's an indication that with the fact of having former members on the extended benefit program, there's a potential for increasing the cost, and I would hope that by mid-February we'd have a more detailed analysis of that situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. May we go on to 4(d)? All right. Public Servants Pension Indexing. This is an issue that had been raised by Taber-Warner. In your minute book, 4(d), the blue page.

MR. BOGLE: Pat moved that we table the motion pending a review of which pension groups should be covered by such a meaning. Has the administration done that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Has the administration had the time to . . . That was because of the seven pension plans.

DR. McNEIL: No, we haven't done that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So that one is a carryover as well. Thank you.

All right. Item 4(e).

DR. McNEIL: Nothing further to report here due to the absence of the chiefs of staff, various chiefs of staff and their vacation plans in the past months. We should be able to get to that in February.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. Edmonton-Whitemud may well be correct in that sense. We might be back to some other items before coffee break.

Item 4(f). This is the House television coverage issue – ourselves, the CRTC, various television cable stations and so forth. First, for information, Robert, would you hand out the sheet with regard to the footprint of ACCESS Network. You'll recall that at the last meeting we had Brad Trumble in from Videotron about the difficulties they were encountering with the CRTC. Members are also aware of the fact that Videotron and, before them, QCTV had been covering the House since '72, which made us among the first in the Commonwealth, and we've probably had the longest continuous coverage. But at any rate, QCTV then encountered this difficulty with the CRTC.

Once the signal has been picked up here in the House, we then have it handed over to ACCESS. This sheet that has now been distributed to you shows the communities within the province that are able to pick up question period via ACCESS if the subscriber is hooked up to a cable company. All right?

Now, you also notice there – it's that little note right on the top of the page – that the footprint is primarily Alberta and Saskatchewan, but beyond Alberta sometimes they're picking it up in Manitoba, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Montana, and Idaho. That was one of the things we undertook to get to you for the last meeting. Do you find that's not happening on some of your stations listed in your constituencies?

AN HON. MEMBER: It's happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The document that is coming around to you now was prepared by Parliamentary Counsel, because we sent a letter off to the CRTC after our last meeting. A copy of a letter which I sent to the chairman of the CRTC, Mr. Spicer, was sent to your offices. This, then, was the legal opinion which came back to us, which basically says we have no right of appeal. Page 2:

Unfortunately, with the case at hand, there is no question of law and the jurisdiction of the CRTC is not in dispute. In my opinion, the decision is absolutely final.

That's after contact had been made with CRTC staff in Hull. Again, that one is information.

Robert, perhaps you could just make a comment about your contact with Jim Edwards.

MR. R. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I spoke to Jim Edwards yesterday, who had been cc'd on the letter to Mr. Spicer. His comment was that he thought we had presented a valid case, and the concluding portion of the letter was to hold their decision over until Videotron's next licence renewal. Mr. Edwards obviously cannot intervene with the CRTC, it being the semi-judicial body it is, but he did feel that a good case was made and had taken the liberty of contacting the vice-president of Videotron in Montreal based on the historical precedents that had been set with Videotron covering it.

The distinction in the decision of a class 1 cable carrier is based primarily on numbers of households. At the time QC started in Edmonton in '72, they were not class 1, but since they have expanded into other areas of Alberta, they are now classified as class 1. The interpretation of that is if Videotron only carried question period here in Edmonton, they would not be in contravention of the community channel and the community programming. It's once they go beyond Edmonton that they then become class 1, and our Legislative Assembly is precluded under class 1.

MR. S. DAY: The question as it appears to me, Mr. Chairman, is: are we just going to roll over and die on this? I appreciate Michael Ritter's legal opinion, but I'm sure Mr. Edwards does not need to be reminded that the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction over CRTC through legislation. I am very aggravated that that body can sit down there and pass this type of ruling on interpretation that literally snuffs out a program which the ratings show – as surprising as it is to all of us – why people would, at late night when they've got other choices, watch this illustrious cast of performers . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Speak for yourself.

MR. S. DAY: I am. I'm one of the illustrious cast.

But the fact is that the people of Alberta watch that in significant numbers, and a decision from this central Canadian body has snuffed that out. I would hope that we are not simply going to accept that but would put our collective minds together

and find a way to do an assault on this highly arbitrary decision.
I hope I've made myself clear.

MS BARRETT: No way. You want war.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, to answer Stockwell Day, possibly in your civilized fashion and the assault he implies, how about exercising some rights under this section 17 referred to in Ritter's memo? Now, I'm not sure - I can't read legalese that well - but it looks to me that in the latter part of that reference, we can seek to appeal through a court. It even looks like the court or the judge thereof under special circumstances can allow that, n'est-ce pas?

MR. S. DAY: I looked at that, and there's one consideration in terms of the time. We'd have to look at whether that's been passed - they talk about a one month here - and it comes on a question of law or jurisdiction, which apparently neither of these is.

MS BARRETT: I understand, but maybe you could make this special circumstance.

MRS. BLACK: But it says "or," Stock, "or within," so the operative either/or. So I think the last part of that sentence we could, in fact, slip in there under the "or."

MS BARRETT: Not only that, but we did request through this committee almost the minute we got the decision. So we certainly made our objections known fast.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Edmonton-Whitemud; then, I think, Parliamentary Counsel and Robert.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I see the CRTC as a body similar to many other bodies that are established by the federal government, by various provincial governments. The provincial government establishes many of them by legislation throughout the province; for example, development appeal boards where their decisions are final except on the basis of some error in procedure. In other words, the merits of the decision cannot be questioned, and that's the situation we're faced with right now. It's been made quite clear to us that this decision is final. To try and find some error in law when our counsel is telling us it's not there - and when you look at the time line, I don't think that's the avenue to go.

The House convenes on March 8. I think we have to prepare for that. We had some options presented to us at the last meeting that would ensure that we could continue to have that type of coverage, and I think that's the direction we have to go. I think we have to look at giving to the public what they're entitled to, and that's coverage.

Now, the motion was made by the Member for Barrhead on tendering for this particular service. Has there been any action taken on that? Has there been any response, or are we not beyond the time line? The other option is to go back to QCTV and negotiate a deal with them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that point, Clerk, about the work that's been done on the tender.

DR. McNEIL: We've prepared a request for proposal to go out

- two of them actually. One would cover question period, and the other would be gavel to gavel coverage. I don't know whether the committee wants to review that at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we should pass out the ones for question period only.

In this regard, we did not put it out to tender until we had this meeting so this committee could review. Also, we wanted the week to see if there was going to be any kind of negotiation and so forth with regard to CRTC. Actually at this point, Robert, do you want to make that comment about CRTC?

MR. R. DAY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry, I should have included it previously. Mr. Edwards felt there was a good chance that Mr. Spicer would be responding shortly, that the committee had stated a good case - no guarantee obviously, but . . .

MR. S. DAY: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Spicer would be responding to what?

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the letter which I sent to him at the behest of this committee after the last meeting. That copy was sent to all members, but it was really asking them: was there some way to pull back their decision so we could have Videotron come into the House?

So that's the letter you've put in front of them now?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that we're looking at alternative ways to continue the service, especially while we're waiting for Mr. Spicer to respond to your letter, and we need to provide this service for Albertans. It still leaves this other question, which I see as the larger issue here, of the people of Alberta losing a service at the arbitrary ruling of this committee. I appreciate Mr. Wickman's response about certain bodies not being able to be questioned, but I think the people of Alberta have difficulty with that and would see this as somewhat of a Ceausescu-esque move, if I can use that term. I would like to make a motion that a subcommittee of this committee be struck to investigate means of having this decision changed. I say that, Mr. Chairman, in light of the fact that we do have to have these other innovative approaches to continue the service, but I'd like to make a motion that such a subcommittee of two or three members be struck to look at a way of having that decision changed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How many?

MR. S. DAY: Three.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Working together with the Speaker or the Speaker is one of the three, or what? It seems that comes under . . .

MR. S. DAY: Working with the Speaker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MS BARRETT: So three plus the Speaker.

MR. S. DAY: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Speaking to the motion, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, I have no objection to the Member for Red Deer-North wanting to have a committee to plot war against the federal government. It seems some of us have been fighting the federal government for quite a few years. But we do have to make some plan to make sure the broadcast is available this year. Fundamentally what's happening is that the CRTC has said the cable company can no longer charge the production costs to their community programming budget. So we're wrestling with the problem not of access to the airwaves – and no pun intended there – but how we pay for the production costs, and I think we have to try to find out what alternatives are available. There was one alternative presented by the existing operator. They presented a figure of how much they would charge to continue to do the service under the new regime.

But I think that notwithstanding war with the federal government or rumours of war, we should be preparing at least to the extent of finding out who else might be interested in providing the service and at what cost. For that reason I suggest that we go ahead with the committee but also go ahead with the proposal call so that we know where we stand come this session. Otherwise we could be plotting war and have no coverage, and I'm not sure whose interests that would serve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner. [interjection] Because if you come back in, you're closing off the debate on your amendment. Taber-Warner, and then Clegg.

MR. BOGLE: One key point that needs to be restated: no one is talking about denying access to the Assembly for coverage. We're talking about whether or not the Assembly should pay for that coverage. And I still have difficulty with the principle. We have other members of the media here. We don't pay any of their publishers so that they cover the proceedings of the Assembly. We don't pay radio stations for coverage of the Assembly. I have some difficulty with the concept that we should be paying one form of media to provide coverage.

So access to the Assembly is not the question. It's whether or not we pay for the service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Parliamentary Counsel, and then Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I just want to close off one little corner in response to the question the Member for Edmonton-Highlands raised on the meaning of the last phrase in section 17, as to whether we do have an avenue of appeal. I support entirely Michael Ritter's opinion, which we did discuss before we issued it, that there is only an appeal on a question of law or jurisdiction. Appeals are generally available on jurisdiction, law, fact, and logic. We would really want to go on the facts and the logic side. I would agree that there is no question they have jurisdiction; we are not complaining that there's an error of law in this particular case.

The phrase "under special circumstances allows" in my view relates to the time limit and does not relate to opening up an

appeal on logic or fact. I think the dominating limitation of section 17 is on a question of law or a question of jurisdiction. That's the only comment I wish to make on that point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would support what Mr. Bogle has just said relating to we should pay. The question is about the payment for the service. What really bothers me is that Parliamentary Counsel just said that some of the actions are on logic, that the appeal is on logic or law. When I think of Mr. Spicer when he was the commissioner for languages or whatever the title was, he was very stringent in his ways of protecting what he perceived to be people's rights related to language. Now he's chairman of another board. In my opinion – when I say "in my opinion," obviously in some others' around the table – he's infringing on our rights for coverage of the Legislative Assembly. So that's a major change in what I would see happening, and I can't see how you can change that much. When you think of some of the other decisions, whether they were logical or not, they were forced. This is illogical, I would say, and it should be changed. We should be able to prove to him that it should be changed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to get something straight here. If we establish this committee, which is the motion we're dealing with right now, does that mean that we don't send out this proposal?

MRS. BLACK: No, we haven't touched that.

MR. S. DAY: I stated that.

MS BARRETT: So the purpose of this committee would be to . . .

MR. S. DAY: To challenge this ruling itself. As I stated before, it has nothing to do with the fact that we should be pursuing alternate means in the meantime of providing coverage.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay. Fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to the last meeting when the representative was here from Videotron. In his documentation and his presentation, he'd pointed out what the additional cost would be to Videotron as a corporation by shifting from that one channel to another channel, a channel that incidentally would compete with the House of Commons' coverage and possibly to some degree – I'm not sure – city council, although city council I think can be shifted to another channel. But he never did come right out – and he was questioned on it – and ask for those dollars. He never did imply that if the company didn't receive some payment, they would discontinue the service or would no longer be interested in it. In fact, he admitted that they as a corporation were providing a service to people that are hooking up to cable and paying very, very good rates for cable and more and

more watching the media, that there is an awareness by cable operators that they've got to start providing a higher level of service to their clients if they are to retain the number of subscribers they have. There was a good program the other night on CBC, the *Venture* program, that talked about it.

So I think we are in the driver's seat from the point of view that we should be able to go back to Videotron and say, "Look, we want to know: are you prepared to continue to provide this service or not?" It may not be necessary to pay. If we do have to negotiate something, if they don't buy that, if we have to go to a tender call, so be it. I disagree with Mr. Bogle. I don't see this as comparable to normal-type media coverage. Media coverage is a little different. This is broadcasting, televising the entire question period as it is to allow the public to watch it and determine themselves what they think of the questions and the debate and so on and so forth. So I think you were talking apples and oranges to suggest that we don't pay other members of the media. I don't consider Videotron media from that point of view. They're simply transmitting question period to Albertans.

MR. BOGLE: Well, just to be clear. We were told a few moments ago that the ratings are high. Videotron subscribers are paying for the service through their monthly subscriptions. So let's be clear. We're talking about double paying.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, that's why I said we should go back to Videotron and ask them point blank: are they going to discontinue the service? If they are, then we've got to look at the other alternatives, and I would suggest that maybe they don't want to discontinue the service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, hon. members, coming back to the issue, which is to strike the subcommittee to work together with the Speaker's office as to what we've already been able to get going in terms of this last week, really. So do we want to set up the subcommittee? Whether it passes or not, we'll still be able to continue trying to receive some response from Mr. Spicer of the CRTC. We could also then go forward, if it's the will of the committee, to put out a proposal to various television companies about covering question period.

MS BARRETT: If it's the will of this committee as opposed to the subcommittee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right; the will of this committee.

MS BARRETT: Yes. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So we have the motion from Red Deer-North to strike a subcommittee of three. Call for the question on that?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you. Membership will be three. Volunteers? You're volunteering?

MR. S. DAY: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
For the New Democrats?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I'll volunteer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll sit on it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Day . . . Red Deer-North - I've got to get ready for the House - Edmonton-Highlands, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. McINNIS: I would like to move that the proposal call for question period coverage be implemented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: I'd like to speak to that. I think the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud mentioned the idea of negotiating with Videotron. I think that would be a lot easier if there were other players in the game rather than simply the one operator. They presented us with their total costs. There was a hint that, well, maybe they'd be willing to negotiate. I think they might be more willing to negotiate if there were other players in the field, and this is simply us taking the step of being armed with information when we come to make decisions about how this is going to actually work come March 8, because I think we want to make sure that we do have the coverage that Albertans have come to expect.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. On the motion. If we are going to try and re-establish Videotron as our main media source presenting question period, I do have some concern that possibly, as presented in this proposal 1, the term of the contract may eliminate them by way of negotiation if it was someone else, because it goes from March of 1990 to December 31, '92. I'm wondering: is this our standard contractual agreement, or could we have an interim contractual agreement that could be used in the event that we are successful in getting Videotron back?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. We put it as sort of a three-year contract. We thought some stability might be an advantage to the bidders, but there's nothing to say that we couldn't put it till the end of December of this year. There's no definite requirement for the length of the contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. S. DAY: On that point, Mr. Chairman, I share that concern. If this subcommittee of little Davids, which we've just struck, is able to convince the CRTC goliaths in their wisdom to alter their decision, I wouldn't want to see us bound with an extensive contract. We need to have some leeway there. That's why I share that concern about the length of contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What's the will of the committee? To make it '91 or '90 or '92? Do you want to run it for the one year?

MR. HYLAND: Obviously, with the coverage that this has had, I think that with the knowledge in the industry those bidding would know that we have asked for an appeal and we still don't have the response. By that time maybe we will have a response

by the commission. They should be told of this, I think, so that they know what's under bid.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So in respect of this, is that in favour of 1990?

MR. HYLAND: I would think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, that's in '90. Can I do a show of hands? Those of you who prefer 1990 . . .

MR. McINNIS: A question before we do that. Some of the equipment that's presently used is owned by Videotron. Another operator would be looking at investing in some capital equipment. If you have a one-year term, it sort of loads it in favour of the one that has the equipment already. I suppose one option would be to leave that open, leave it up to the bidder to propose a term, in which case acceptance of the contract could imply the term with the three years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk, on that note.

DR. McNEIL: I would think that anybody bidding on this contract would have the equipment already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's too extensive.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, two points. First of all, the motion presented by Mr. McInnis I think is redundant when we've already got a motion that we've already agreed to. It's very clear in terms that it's already been accepted by this particular committee. It directs the Speaker to issue a proposal. We did that two weeks ago. I don't know why we have to have another motion to reinforce what we did two weeks ago.

Secondly, this contract I think is extremely well done. I think it covers virtually everything conceivable, and if we are talking about asking for proposals, then it does not preclude anyone - anyone, including Videotron - from doing that. Surely, in fairness to anyone who would give a proposal, they would have to set up their own system, and the longer term period that they would have that they could work under, the more advantageous it would be to get a quality presentation.

Thirdly, the contract period certainly has, under point 1 and several other points in here, opportunities for a review if this particular committee felt that there was something unsatisfactory about the coverage being provided or some lack of fulfillment with respect to the proposed contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, I would apologize to the committee. The Member for Barrhead is indeed right on the point that the motion was with regard to question period coverage. But what I had asked the Clerk to prepare here was one for question period and one for the total coverage of the House. That's why we had the two proposals here, and that's why I have as Chair fallen into this situation of entertaining a motion which was indeed covered before. So I apologize. Perhaps Edmonton-Jasper Place and the members would allow it to be withdrawn.

MR. McINNIS: So you don't feel any motion is required?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, but the omnibus motion has been passed by our last meeting. This one, then, would be that this particular wording of this contract be the one, this particular

tender . . .

MR. McINNIS: That was my motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, then we'll add those in particular.

MR. McINNIS: That this proposal call be implemented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.
Parliamentary Counsel, on that.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to suggest that the committee consider putting a slightly different wording in the pricing section of this tender, because the way it's written seems to imply that we have already accepted that there would be a charge, whereas in fact it seems to be, from listening to members speaking, a view of this committee that there is a very legitimate scenario that the company would be willing to carry this without charge because of other benefits to them. Perhaps we should rephrase this to say that the tenderer should specify whether they would find it necessary to make any charge for carrying out this service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All right. Then perhaps you will draft a revision to that particular section.

MR. WICKMAN: With stars like the Member for Barrhead, they may pay us for the rights.

MS BARRETT: If Stockwell's right, yeah, that's right. We're going to get guild rates any minute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Edmonton-Highlands, then Calgary-Foothills.

MS BARRETT: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I don't want to move the amendment unless I can see that there's agreement to this. But it seems to me that by the time this goes into the paper this weekend, that would leave five working days for people to go scrambling to get their tenders in. Should we extend the deadline by a week? It says February 9.

MR. R. DAY: Mr. Chairman, Pam, it is the intent to have these delivered to those in the province who are capable of providing the service, not to put it in the newspaper.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it'll go directly.

MR. R. DAY: It goes directly; it will be very quick.

MS BARRETT: As in this afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly by tomorrow morning.

MS BARRETT: Keep the couriers busy.

Okay. If it's not needed, that's fine. If you think a week and a day is enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Foothills, quickly.

MRS. BLACK: The question's been answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

So the understanding of the Chair is that we still leave December 31, 1992. Is that agreed?

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because if we wish to terminate, we'll find some other . . .

MS BARRETT: Do we need a motion with respect to the pricing element, or is that fine?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We took that as general agreement on the pricing. That's going to be redrafted, and we'll bring that revised form back later in the morning. So this motion, then, we will hold until we have the complete revision done for you. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

I believe, those of you who have been watching coverage of the issue – the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out the CBC coverage on *Venture* the other night – there's this ongoing struggle that's been heating up in the cable TV industry, and perhaps this is just one element of what's going on in that struggle in Ottawa.

We have one other piece of information to distribute to you. It gives you the cost breakdown in a number of the other Legislatures, and it also gives you the comparison with where we are in Alberta together with the most recent updated figure as to what it would cost to establish our own in-house system. I want to be perfectly clear that this is not the Chair making that request; it's just information for you to have.

All right. It's the pleasure of the committee to have a five-minute stretch and then come back to budgets.

[The committee recessed from 10:27 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. Hopefully, we'll get the draft of that television document here before noon. Thank you.

Moving on to item 4(g), the '90-91 budget estimates. It's my understanding that we have items 7 and 8. We have another item that related back to this, that carryover business for the committee to determine. With regard to new sheets into this whole binder, Clerk, are they still . . .

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, the adjustments that were made reflected the committee's decisions at the last meeting. The MLA Administration budget was changed to reflect the changes in the constituency office allowance, promotional allowance, and communications allowance. I have a summary page of that to assist members who don't know what that was, as well as the changes in the Government Members and the Official Opposition Members, reflecting an increase in the caucus budgets of 15 percent. The other request that was made, that the payments to members that were placed under the caucus budgets be moved under some other category, was done. They were put under MLA Administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what we have here is an update as of the last meeting. Portions of it are still a draft; for example,

item 7 in our binder with regard to the Liberal opposition. So this is not a finalized document, but it does bring some figures up to current status, because of previous motions of the committee. So when the final decision is made today or whenever about the total budget, the update will occur.

DR. McNEIL: One other point. I received a memo from the Liberal opposition requesting certain figures be presented in the Liberal opposition budget this time, and what is there under section 7 reflects that request.

MS BARRETT: So the comparison to the '89-90 estimate – in fact, \$441,000 was what was approved by the House last year, correct?

DR. McNEIL: That \$441,000, plus there was \$7,000 and a little bit approved for the leader's allowance.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So it does constitute 19.2 percent then.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct, and the \$16,000 is the money that was approved by this committee and then put in the special warrant for the Liberal caucus budget in 1989-90.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. With regard to section 7, Liberal Opposition, do we have a motion?

Before we start, the Chair is going to make this observation: last time the Chair and the committee were, I think, excessively lenient in allowing certain arguments to be made on a very repetitious basis. This time around hopefully we'll have a motion we'll be able to speak to once or twice, and then we'll be able to vote.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to move that the budget for the Liberal opposition for the 1990-91 period be established at \$525,658, which reflects an actual expenditure increase over last year of 15 percent, which is in line, of course, with what the PCs and the New Democrat caucuses approved for themselves at the last meeting.

Mr. Chairman, I take great pains again to point out that the \$16,000 that is referred to as a special warrant is dollars that this committee approved for the Liberal caucus budget during the last fiscal period, acknowledging that there were four new members in the House elected after the previous budget had been approved. This committee deemed that in fairness to those four they should not have been affected by a previous decision. Therefore, the \$16,000 was issued in terms of a special warrant. In terms of an actual increase in expenditures, it's a reflection of the same 15 percent figure that was used by the two other caucuses.

I want to point out that that does not leave us in a situation of parity, when we go back to the earlier budgets that had been approved in 1986 and 1987. I have copies of minutes there where there were great, great struggles to come to agreement on that formula. I have minutes recorded here that demonstrate there was a period of time that the New Democrats fought for this recognition of parity for all members from the various caucuses. It was spelled out clearly that the leaders' allowances were always seen as a separate item. I can refer back to 1987, where there had previously been budgets approved of \$40,000 per member, and on a motion of Bob Bogle's, I believe it was, that was reduced to \$32,000 per member. In other words, this committee took a 20 percent reduction during that fiscal period

for each member. I have no objection to that happening, but the important thing is that it was done on an equalized basis, so each caucus felt a reduction of 20 percent per member. When we talk in terms of reductions, when we talk in terms of increases, that's the important factor, that they be done on an equalized basis, respecting formulas that have been in place before. I maintain that that position is very, very important. Unfortunately, we've lost that. Even with what we have in front of us, we have still lost in the neighbourhood of \$21,500. Last year the Liberal caucus saved the taxpayers \$21,500 because of the motion that had been made. That \$21,500 is going to be saved again this year because this committee has not accepted my arguments on parity on a per member basis. So we shouldn't forget that.

The other point I wanted to make, Mr. Chairman – and again I want to make it clear that when I came to this committee at its last meeting, I requested a 5 percent increase in all three budgets. I still feel that's the proper approach to take. Whether we all take 5 percent more or whether we all take 15 percent more, we're being treated equally. It affects us all from the same point of view. Reflecting what's happening out there in today's economy, I still feel that was the appropriate figure. Unfortunately, the two budgets have been approved, reflecting a 15 percent increase for the other two caucuses. So I feel that from our point of view of trying to provide the type of opposition that has to be provided, we have to keep on par when we talk in terms of those dollars. From that point of view I can rationalize what's happening here. I don't like it, but I can rationalize it. On that basis I move that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of questions. I would have to go back and review the minutes. I don't remember the member making a motion for 5 percent. The motion I remember the member making was 25 or 24 point something.

MS BARRETT: Twenty-four point four.

MR. HYLAND: The other motions were withdrawn, one of which was put for the amount that was initially in the book by the Member for – I forget if it was John or . . . I guess it was Pam.

MS BARRETT: No; I kept moving their motion for them.

MR. HYLAND: And it was withdrawn upon a request. I don't remember any motions for 5 percent, but I'm floored by the request for 15 percent or 19.2, whichever way you cut it, even if you use the lower figure after. I watched *Provincial Affairs* last weekend, and it was an interesting exercise. Then I watched it again a couple of times to make sure I heard what I thought I heard: the member saying his caucus only wanted 5 percent – now we see the 15 percent increase – and berating the rest of us for having a 15 percent increase in our budget.

I guess my question to him now. Is he now going to go back on *Provincial Affairs* the next time it's the Liberals' time and say: "Well, folks, according to our good fiscal management, I was wrong when I said 5 percent. I really wanted 15, but I really didn't want to tell you I wanted 15 because you wouldn't have liked me?"

MR. McINNIS: I'm impressed that the Liberals feel they need some additional money to do the job on behalf of the people. But just looking at the motion the member's put forward, this gives their caucus members everything in the total of \$65,707 per member, compared with \$58,327 for the New Democrats and \$41,400 for the government members. So I certainly think the increase puts them in a position where they have no remaining excuses for not doing the job that's expected of them. I'm willing to support that, but I'm not willing to support the idea that they can take 15 cents and call it a nickel, right?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Right.

MR. McINNIS: I mean, if it's going to be 15 percent, it's going to be 15 percent, and you've got to take political responsibility for it. I'm kind of shocked to hear that as recently as last weekend this figure was still being called 5 percent. In fact, there is an element of catch-up here, and I support it, but I think we have to dispose of the nonsense that somehow 15 cents is a nickel. It's not.

MR. S. DAY: Well, at the risk of sounding facetious, Mr. Chairman, which I am not being, to follow up on Cypress-Redcliff's comment about *Provincial Affairs*, I do have a slot coming up this month, and I would be happy to consider making that available to the Liberal member if he wanted to apologize to the public for his statement, which was misleading.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I went back through the minutes of the last meetings, and seven times it's recorded in those minutes that I made reference to the 5 percent. I had the motion here; I had it typed; I had multiple copies of it to hand out. Mr. Chairman, you did not accept the motion because another motion was on the floor that had been put forward by a member of the PC caucus. So I never did have the opportunity to bring that forward.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment. That slightly skews what really happened in the meeting, hon. member. There were plenty of opportunities for motions to come forward. As a matter of fact, you did not have the presence of mind or whatever to move a motion on behalf of adopting a budget for your own caucus. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands had to do it. It was then withdrawn by the unanimous consent of the committee so that you could indeed put forward a motion – which you did; I have it before me – which represented a 24.4 percent increase, which is not 5 percent. Then, in order to keep the discussion alive, the Chair had to vote against another motion that would have closed off debate, so that we then could come back today and have this discussion.

So now if you'd like to proceed with your other comments and keep them factual, it would be appreciated.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I had the motion here. The motion applied to all three caucuses. Once the one motion was approved for the PC caucus, that motion wouldn't have made sense. Secondly, on the reference made to the *Provincial Affairs* program – and I'm really pleased that there are so many members of the other caucuses who make a point of watching what we're doing in the Liberal caucus. I think that's good; it shows a certain political astuteness on their part. I made it quite clear – and I do have that recorded – that the Liberal caucus proposed that all caucuses should receive a 5 percent increase

on an equalized basis. And that is very, very clear. I did not make reference that we in the Liberal caucus were prepared to take 5 percent while the other two caucuses took 15 percent. The motion that was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands that proposed a 15 percent increase in the Liberal budget, which I voted against, did not take into consideration the \$16,000 special spending warrant that had already been approved. To achieve that \$16,000 that we had already gained, that had to have been incorporated first, and that's why, Mr. Chairman, you have the two figures on this particular documentation that talks in terms of 19.2 percent and talks in terms of 15 percent. A 15 percent increase in terms of our baseline would not have given us 15 percent more than last year; it, in fact, would have given us 10.8 percent more than last year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Other comments? Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I take it, Mr. Chairman, when you boil all of that down, it's the 15 percent not the 5 percent that we're voting on. Is that correct?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I made the motion very clear: \$525,658.

MR. McINNIS: One other question. At a previous meeting the member outlined a scheme whereby certain members of the Liberal caucus donate their salaries to the Liberal Party in return for a tax receipt, which money is then forwarded by the Liberal Party to the Liberal caucus office. Are those moneys included in this budget or are they not?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, it was pointed out at a meeting – not the last meeting; the meeting prior to that – in response to a question put forward, if I recall correctly, by Bob Bogle, that the extra honorariums that had been approved for the House Whip and for the House leader in the Liberal caucus were donated by her to the Alberta Liberal Party.

MR. BOGLE: And from there?

MR. WICKMAN: I think beyond that it becomes internal business, quite frankly.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, the statement was made on the record that the money was then paid by the Liberal Party to the Liberal caucus. I don't know if that means the appropriation or whether you operate a separate bank account, a slush fund, at the Liberal caucus office.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, obviously the member is asking a question he already has the answer for. So why is he asking the question?

MR. McINNIS: I just want to know if they're included in the 15 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair would observe that that seems to occur more than once, and the hon. member himself is somewhat guilty of that too.

MR. McINNIS: I simply wanted to know if those figures are included in the figures that are before us today in the budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Other discussion? The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, for clarification. If we're looking at the recent sheet that was just circulated here, looking at the proposed comparables for 1990 through to proposed comparables for 1989-90, the figures put out by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place indicated that if these were to be approved, then the allocation for a caucus member in the PC caucus would be \$41,400; the allocation for a caucus member in the NDP caucus would be \$58,327; and the allocation, then, for a caucus member in the Liberal caucus would be \$65,707. That's for verification.

MS BARRETT: That's what my calculator says.

MR. KOWALSKI: A motion we currently have before us says that the Liberal Party would like to move a 15 percent increase, but there's some confusion over whether or not it's 15 percent of something else. Would it be in order, then, to have an amendment to the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, then, I would so move: that the motion be amended – just to make sure there's satisfaction with the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – that the base figure of 1989-90 of \$457,094 be amended by 5 percent and now read \$479,948.70. Then there's no debate over what 5 percent is or 15 percent is or anything else is. It's very clear.

MS BARRETT: Okay. What was that figure again? Four seven nine . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, I would take the base of 1989-90 of \$457,094. It's been adjusted, as I understand, by this 5 percent, whatever. To me, 5 percent would be 5 percent of that, and if I calculate that through, that would then become \$479,948.70.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would amend the original motion of 15 percent down to 5 percent. That's what the amendment is.

MR. KOWALSKI: If there's confusion over what this is, let's just clarify it and get it out of the way, what it really means.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Speaking to the amendment now. Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think my motion was quite straightforward, and when I talk in terms of the actual figure, there is no confusion. I've made it quite clear what our position is: that from the point of view of providing research, fulfilling our function as opposition, we're entitled to the same type of benefits that are given to other caucuses. The amendment simply makes a mockery of a parliamentary process. It lacks respect for what this institution is all about, and I simply can't be party to that type of thing. I think it's wrong. It's astounding that it would even be proposed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Other discussion?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I really want to understand

and give the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud one other opportunity, then, to respond. From his perspective is the mockery the fact that a Liberal caucus member would get an allocation of \$65,707, whereas a Conservative caucus member would have an allocation of \$41,400? Is that a mockery of the parliamentary tradition?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, let me go back to the motions that were made. If we want to carry this on, okay, let's carry it on. I'll quote to you from the minutes of July 29, 1986.

Moved by Mr. Bogle that the 1986-87 revised Legislative Assembly estimates be amended to provide a per-Member allotment for non-Executive Member of \$40,000, recognizing two Members from the [Rep Party] . . . the Liberal Opposition . . . and so on and so forth. And then: moved by Mrs. Barrett that . . . [interjections]
Moved by Ms Barrett . . .

MS BARRETT: Was that a proposal?

MR. WICKMAN: I'll pass, Pam. I realize the honour it is, but I'll pass.

Mr. Chairman, that motion also had a second motion that was: Moved by Ms Barrett that the 1986-87 revised Legislative Assembly estimates be amended to provide Opposition caucuses allowances of \$140,000 for the Representative Opposition office, \$220,000 for the Liberal Opposition office, and \$300,000 for the Official Opposition office.

In other words, going back to 1986, and I'm sure going back further than that, it's always been standard, acceptable principle that you deal with the leader's budget on a separate basis, because the resources needed for the leader are different than the resources needed on a per member basis.

What the member has done now is simply group all of that into one category, divided by the number of members per caucus, and he's come up with those figures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

I have Calgary-Foothills, Cypress-Redcliff, Edmonton-Highlands.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I have to admit I've never seen more to-do over a simple type budget to fill out in all my life, Percy. At the last meeting I asked you point-blank: what was the percentage you wanted? That was my question. You said 24.4 percent, which finally got it nailed. Now, we're going back: in 1902, the year the brown cow died, this happened and that happened.

MR. WICKMAN: You defeated the 24.4.

MRS. BLACK: The fact remains, Percy, we're into this year. Already you've convinced people to include a special warrant into your budget base, which is not. Your caucus budget was approved in this Legislature at \$441,000 last year, which is your base number to start with, which according to this sheet gives you a 19.2 percent budget increase. You know, you can throw special warrants and things like that in and massage numbers. The bottom line is you're asking for a 19.2 percent increase. Now, is that what your motion is, or what are you asking for on your caucus budget? You keep playing games.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, she's asking a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not going to turn this into a dialogue. We did that the last time, for two days.

Cypress-Redcliff, Edmonton-Highlands, and we're on the amendment of 5 percent.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, speaking on the amendment, I know that what a person says outside the House, even though it may be on provinciewide TV, does not necessarily bind them to what they move in a committee. But maybe there'd be benefit to review the tape and see if the member did say - or that I heard it wrong - that all he wanted was 5 percent.

MS BARRETT: Well, I was quite surprised, Mr. Chairman, to hear Al talk this morning about Percy on *Provincial Affairs*. I would like to see that tape too, and in fact I'll make a point of doing it.

But I'm going to speak against the amendment. If we approve the budget request and a 19.2 percent increase over last year's budget, or what is being called a 15 percent increase on the bottom line, I want some assurance from the Liberal caucus through its representative here that we're not going to be saddled with a request six months down the road for another special warrant, okay? On that basis I'm prepared to vote against the amendment and vote for Percy's motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any more comments on the amendment? Is there a call for the question on the amendment? All those in favour of the amendment, which will make the figure 5 percent. Those in favour? Opposed? The amendment is defeated. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question on the main motion at 15 percent. There's a call for the question. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? The motion is carried.

My understanding is that the committee has given approval for section 1, General Administration; section 2, MLA Administration; House Services; Speaker's Office; Government Members; Official Opposition; and the Liberal Opposition. We have also given approval to section 9, Legislative Interns; 10, *Alberta Hansard*; and 11, Legislature Library. So the only outstanding issue with regard to the estimates is Legislative Committees, section 8. Are we prepared to . . . [interjection] All right.

I've been notified of a request for a five-minute break.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, is this the budget that we dealt with at the last meeting where we wanted to accommodate some change, shifting certain administrative portions from one to another? I was under the impression, with the exception of the Liberal Opposition budget, we had approved all the rest of the budget at the last meeting. So we tabled the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Section 8 is the one that's outstanding, the Legislative Committees. All right? A five-minute break.

MS BARRETT: Yup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we also have the drafts of the

tendering there.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you could have those distributed. If we could have the old tender document that you have, just rip it up so it disappears, so you know the one you have is the new one.

MS BARRETT: Proposal 1?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, proposal 1.

[The committee recessed from 11:09 a.m. to 11:27 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen. First, I have had a request about recorded votes. Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I know I should have asked for it when the vote was taken, but I wanted to know if it could be a recorded vote, at least as far as I'm concerned, on the amendment of Mr. Kowalski's regarding 5 percent on the Liberal caucus budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do it on the 5 percent and again on the main motion? Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All right, just for purposes of jotting down the names, those who were in favour of the motion of 5 percent.

MS BARRETT: It was the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The amendment, thank you, yes.

[For the motion: Mr. Hyland, Mr. Kowalski]

[Against the motion: Ms Barrett, Mrs. Black, Mr. S. Day, Dr. Elliott, Mr. McInnis, Mr. Wickman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: With regard to the 15 percent.

[For the motion: Ms Barrett, Mrs. Black, Mr. S. Day, Dr. Elliott, Mr. McInnis, Mr. Wickman]

[Against the motion: Mr. Hyland, Mr. Kowalski]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that procedural.

Before you on your desks - I guess that's what you call these tables - you have the revised proposal for the question period coverage which will then go out this afternoon as a tender.

MS BARRETT: Oh, you changed it to Monday the 12th, eh?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Make it Monday the 12th.

Mr. Clegg, if you'd like to speak to the other changes that you made there, one is on the first page.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I suggested that we should

introduce some wording that implies that we didn't really expect to pay for this because it has, in fact, in the past been done without charge. Therefore, on the first page of the document the third paragraph reads:

The Legislative Assembly Office wishes to make it clear to tenderers that to this date the contract work has been provided without charge, as a program opportunity for the producer/broadcaster.

Then in the pricing section we've just changed the words slightly to say:

The tenderer shall state whether any charge would be made for the contract work, and if so . . . how it should be specified.

MS BARRETT: Great. A motion to approve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Those in favour of the motion by Edmonton-Highlands? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

The document will go out this afternoon plus a note to the effect that the House will open on March 8.

Robert, if you would do the rundown of those groups to be approached on the tender.

MR. R. DAY: Commercial broadcasters, Mr. Chairman, are ITV, CFRN, the CTV affiliate, and CBC television. Cable will be Shaw Cable, Videotron, and Rogers, and ACCESS Alberta as the other broadcaster.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

If we might now return to the budget process: section 8, Legislative Committees.

MS BARRETT: Is this the last one we have to deal with?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's my understanding.

MS BARRETT: Good. I'll move to approve.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, is this the general support to standing committees?

MS BARRETT: All committees, standing and special.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay, so what pages are we approving now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Section 8 . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. The entire section.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And we have quite a number of . . .

DR. McNEIL: The front page represents the total number that you would be approving for '90-91. Including all standing and special committees it would be \$454,140.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions with regard to the first page? It looks like maybe we're going to have to go through this a page at a time.

MS BARRETT: My motion was to approve the section, but I do have one question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. So your section - are you on page 1 of the next?

MS BARRETT: Well, on page 1. But you could – I mean, under special committees you'll show Electoral Boundaries being down by 76.1 percent for next year, and that's fine. Is it our responsibility to anticipate an Electoral Boundaries Commission and budget for that or no?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can't until it occurs.

MS BARRETT: We can't. Okay. That's all I wanted to know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any other?

MRS. BLACK: On Travel Expenses, is that because of the Canadian Parliamentary Association, the large increase in that?

DR. McNEIL: No. It's primarily the special committees.

MR. S. DAY: Would that be like Electoral Boundaries, that kind of thing?

DR. McNEIL: It also relates to a slight increase in the travel in Heritage and some of the other committees.

AN HON. MEMBER: So that's largely extra committees.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The matter of the parliamentary committee travel is handled back under where, David?

DR. McNEIL: Under House Services. All CPA travel has already been approved under House Services. These budgets are specific to the standing and special committees of the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Does the overall . . .

DR. McNEIL: It's travel for those committees, payments to members on those committees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the page before the pink sheet, so this is the overall totals before we get down to more specifics by committee.

MS BARRETT: So then the total expenditure for the standing committees would go up by 3.6 percent, but the total expenditure for the special committees would go down by 47.5 percent. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any other questions with regard to this whole section?

MR. S. DAY: Hosting is down 31.2 percent. That one's 712MOO.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MS BARRETT: That's "moo," dear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess "goo" and "koo" – and we'd better be careful with the next one. But I think the last one sums it all up.

MS BARRETT: I'm going to start voting that way in the House, Mr. Chairman. Those opposed? Those in favour?

MR. HYLAND: We watched a movie of you last night on a tape.

MS BARRETT: Pardon me?

MR. HYLAND: About your party at your house.

MS BARRETT: Oh jeez, I keep hearing about this: "The party's at my place; the party's at my place." I haven't seen it yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll show you that tape too.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Grande Prairie. What page?

DR. ELLIOTT: I'm on the very first page, Mr. Chairman. The total budget for the section, I understand, is on that page. I wish to refer, under Supplies and Services, to the second item down, Advertising, with a percentage change of a minus 54.6 percent. Has there been a comment on that that I've missed, or may I ask for comment on it? That's quite a reduction. What's involved?

DR. McNEIL: That relates specifically to the actual costs of advertising for the Private Bills Committee. In the past we've budgeted for \$14,500; we haven't spent that, so we've reduced that requirement, given the actual expenditures in the past year.

DR. ELLIOTT: Is it \$14,500, or you meant \$15,400?

DR. McNEIL: Sorry?

DR. ELLIOTT: You said you'd previously budgeted \$14,500. The figure I see is \$15,400.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, I think there's a bit of advertising for other . . . No, I'm sorry. It's \$15,400. I reversed it.

DR. ELLIOTT: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With regard to that whole section 8, we have a motion to adopt. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Does that mean the budget is done?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just about. We have one other question to raise, and it's this. We have a continuing item from the minutes, about whether facsimile machines were an item, that we had being brought forward. I would assume that because we've approved this budget, that item now can come off our agenda.

The exact wording we have here in section 4(g).

MS BARRETT: Okay. So is it up to Ken?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the motion that we had there, I guess, was that the discussion be deferred. This is about our last step with regard to the budgetary process, so it's now back on the table for anyone to raise, because the motion was just to defer the discussion till now. So we just wanted to be . . .

MS BARRETT: Ken, you moved to defer it until . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: That is correct. I moved to defer it at the time, because I think at the time there was some discussion of what the costing factor would be and whether or not it should be something that should be taken out of each constituency office allocation or should be something that should be provided by the Legislative Assembly per se. Since that time, of course, some decisions were made with constituency offices, so it may very well be that this matter is redundant. What I don't have is what the costing factor or figure would be for fax machines. There were adjustments made for the constituency office allocation, and it may very well be that the members will argue, "Well, that can now be covered because of the change that was made."

MS BARRETT: Not with the way rents are going up here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Clerk, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

DR. McNEIL: Our estimate in terms of the research we've done is, depending on the model, from \$1,500 to \$2,500.

MR. KOWALSKI: Per unit.

DR. McNEIL: Per unit.

MS BARRETT: If you were to order 83 of them, would you get quite a price break, do you figure?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, I would think we'd probably get a price break of \$500 or so on them, maybe a little more.

MS BARRETT: How much?

DR. McNEIL: Of \$500 a unit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in that regard, I think Bill Gano has done some research. Maybe we could try to get that information back for this afternoon.

MS BARRETT: That would be great.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And, as Cypress-Redcliff points out, remember we do not have 83 constituency offices.

MR. HYLAND: Though, on the other hand, you may want the option there for a member, like I'm doing. Only I'm doing mine out of my constituency office allowance to put it in my home, because there's 40 miles between the two, which was what we approved in Bob's motion last time.

MR. McINNIS: The other thing: when you acquire a fax machine, there are some operating expenses as well. You generally need a business phone line, which is 40 bucks a month, in Edmonton anyway. Then that fax paper costs a fortune as well.

MS BARRETT: Does it?

MR. McINNIS: Yeah. There are rolls of special paper that most of them use.

MS BARRETT: Thermal sort of stuff.

MR. McINNIS: Thermal paper.

One option might be to consider covering the costs of a phone line rather than purchasing equipment.

DR. ELLIOTT: Is there a consideration to be made here, Mr. Chairman, for those constituency offices which have already acquired a facsimile machine?

MS BARRETT: Can I comment on that, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Bob, I would suggest not, for the same reason that we didn't when it came to the computerization issue. You know, I was voting against my own best interests. I had already bought one at home for my personal use out of my own pocket; then out of the constituency budget I'd bought one. I was voting against my own interests. I don't know how you can fix history if it became unfair, so I would really suspect not. I'd say that, you know, once we made that decision on computers, we should be consistent with that approach.

DR. ELLIOTT: As long as we've dealt with it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My concern as chairman is that I think we have moved ourselves sufficient amounts of money in a number of areas. I don't know if we really want to raise any more spectres on the state of our existence.

MS BARRETT: Well, can we get the report for this afternoon?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll do the check over the lunch hour and come back to this item this afternoon.

A motion to table to this afternoon from Barrhead?

MR. KOWALSKI: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

All right. It's 20 to 12. I don't know if we've got an item we can do in five minutes.

MR. BOGLE: Just a question. Is the reason we're coming back this afternoon because of the two tabled motions from this morning?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have the two tabled motions from this morning - three now. The two tabled: the travel motion, the facsimile machine motion - and I have one brief answer - and

automobile allowance.

MR. BOGLE: Well, it may be that we might wish to consider holding those brief matters over until, say, early on the morning of March 8, the day we're going in, and try to wrap up, if that's . . .

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Turn it around . . .

MS BARRETT: Do you guys have things to do this afternoon? Because that's basically it, isn't it, Mr. Chairman? Just that couple of things?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's one smaller matter.

MS BARRETT: It'll give me some lobbying time too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll make another comment in a moment. Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, to handle those three items. At the same time, under New Business, I wanted to point out, particularly to the rural members, that my understanding of the changes in the Income Tax Act is such that from a mileage point of view, instead of 21 cents I think we are now able to claim 27 cents that is considered nontaxable, because of increased costs in car maintenance and so on and so forth. For the rural members who put on 45,000 kilometres a year, that should be taken into consideration.

I would propose that because we have a subcommittee in place, we simply refer these outstanding items, including that item, to that subcommittee to report back here later on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which subcommittee?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, we set up a subcommittee to look at the CRTC decision, for example.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But have them look after this as well?

MR. WICKMAN: And bring back recommendations prior to the House opening.

MS BARRETT: I'd like to speak against that, Mr. Chairman. I have found that when we have subcommittees, if we don't have specific tasks, if we take on too many from all sorts of angles, it doesn't work. What Percy could do is - as I say, it gives me some time to do some more work on the two motions I've been tabling, and I don't mind taking a little more time as long as we get it right. The fax machine stuff: if we get the notice from Bill Gano, if we can have that in writing beforehand, I think we can pretty well make up our minds before then. If Percy wants to circulate a motion about the auto travel allowance going from 21 to 27 cents per kilometre, he could circulate that, and we could meet in the morning.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I was hoping this committee would ask for some further background on it, because I'm not a hundred percent right that I'm factual, but that was the information that was given to me by a rural member of the House.

MS BARRETT: Well, go ahead and ask.

MR. WICKMAN: Could I ask for a report on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. members. We've got to come back here at 1:30.

MS BARRETT: We do?

AN HON. MEMBER: Why?

MS BARRETT: Pourquoi?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because we've got too many other items sitting here. The tabled items have budget implications that if we wanted to deal with them, they're going to skew this whole budget process. I hope we can do it fairly expeditiously. So 1:30, back here.

[The committee recessed from 11:44 a.m. until 1:37 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we adjourned, the question was going to be given over to Bill Gano in our office about costs and estimates on facsimile machines. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. Basic thermal paper copiers are \$2,316. If we bought them in bulk, we could get them for \$2,000 each. So if you had, let's say, 80 offices . . .

MS BARRETT: Say again? They're 23 . . .

DR. McNEIL: It's \$2,316.

MR. HYLAND: That's pretty fancy.

DR. McNEIL: That's got the auto redial and a telephone handset.

MRS. BLACK: With a speaker phone? Answering machine?

DR. McNEIL: No, no. But there's a telephone handset on it, and it can be used for voice or fax transmissions.

MS BARRETT: Okay. What was the discount we could get?

DR. McNEIL: On that one about \$300, so \$2,000 a unit. Now, this is from one manufacturer. If we went to the market, I'm sure we could get a little bit better than that.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I bought a fax machine that is a portable that fits into a single-line telephone where you have a push-button phone, so you can move it anywhere you go, take it with you. It serves as a photocopier. It has a handset, so it could be a phone. You can travel with it. I paid \$1,700 for the thing. I bought it just myself. So I'm sure that's awfully high; you could get a much better deal. Mine doesn't have the answering machine on it.

DR. McNEIL: Well, as I said this morning, you can probably get one as low as \$1,500.

MR. BOGLE: What make is it, Pat?

MRS. BLACK: I think it's Northern Telecom.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I must leave, but I just want to say this: if the committee chooses to make this decision – the committee can choose to make whatever decision it wants, but there is a process that I would make available to the Legislative Assembly. There is a normal public tendering process. We do have a facility within the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services to ascertain a system to identify a machine and put out a public tender. Then it's fair, equal for everyone in the business, if there is to be a decision made to supply these to everybody in the Legislative Assembly. If the decision is that each individual can have one out of their own allowance, then it's up to each individual to do that, and the process still could remain that if 83 individuals said they'd like to use that process, we could set up such a process through the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services to make sure all is done in a fair, open, competitive bid system. I don't know – the 87 stories about: I've got this one, and I've got a gizmo on mine and a bell on mine; I can ring up the stockyard, and the other one can order tickets from BASS . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I take it from the sounds of this one that we're going to request additional information.

MS BARRETT: I would certainly like to see that. I think chances are pretty close to inevitable that we have to go with the current technology in terms of having fax machines. It's a decision that if it's not made this year is going to have to be made one year or another. But at that sort of price range – I go to Future Shop, and I know you can get them a lot cheaper than that, so I would sure want a better description of what the market offers.

MRS. BLACK: Could I just comment on that, Mr. Chairman? I really feel that when it's something that's going into my constituency office, I don't want to be tied into a contract from the Legislature, and if I want to upgrade mine, I want to be able to do it. I've got enough equipment that's already been prepackaged and that's what I get. I would like to have the flexibility to run my own show in my office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Buy it out of your own constituency allowance then?

MRS. BLACK: That's right, and I like to do that, thank you.

DR. McNEIL: When this issue was discussed at a previous meeting, I did mention the possibility of computer technology, a computer fax board which I said at that time was probably a year or two off. Now, that was six months ago. We still think it's probably a year away. Once that technology is perfected, it would enable us to use the microcomputer in the office as a fax machine with the addition of a fax board in each machine. My expectation is that that would be significantly cheaper at that time, but again we're talking probably a year or more away.

MRS. BLACK: But that's like an emulation board, isn't it? It's about \$1,100.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. Although they're going down.

MS BARRETT: It's like a what board?

MRS. BLACK: Emulation board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to table?

MS BARRETT: Sure; so moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you. It still allows for the option that if somebody wants to have one in their office, they can take it out of their present funds.

Any other items that will reflect upon giving final approval to the budget, such as the motions to come off the table about travel allowance or anything like that?

MS BARRETT: Oh, yeah. Percy, did you get any clarification on it?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Were you going to sponsor a motion?

MR. WICKMAN: No, not at this time. I have to go back to the member that discussed it with me and get additional information because I think his information was incorrect, according to what Mr. Clegg has told me. So I'll just leave it for now.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So what you're saying is that now you think the maximum of what would be taxable would be the 27 cents per kilometre?

MR. WICKMAN: It's presently being utilized, because they use a combination of actual mileage plus gas. So when you equate the two, we're at a reasonable level that would be acceptable to the income tax department.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to share with the committee what I told the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I spoke briefly, and without identifying myself, to Revenue Canada at lunchtime. The official I spoke to said that they had not set a particular rate which they regard as reasonable, but they wanted to be reasonable. They say they recognize different rates for different annual mileages, different types of vehicle. The general range is between 20 cents and 30 cents per kilometre for an employee who pays all his own expenses. Recognizing that some of the expenses are paid separately for MLAs, that's something we have to take into consideration if we ever review this particular rate. He wasn't prepared just to specify any figure at all. He confirmed that there was no one figure that had been approved.

MS BARRETT: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman, did Percy have a motion? Was he sponsoring an actual motion to increase it to 27 cents per kilometre, or was it just a statement?

MR. WICKMAN: No, I had not made any motions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No motion. All right. Then we will perhaps hear about this at some future date.

The Chair begs the indulgence of the committee. Earlier in the morning, before we had one break, when we were dealing with the proposal for tender on television, it had been moved by

the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place that the revised proposal number one for question period up to Orders of the Day would be the one that went out. After the break the Chair inadvertently then allowed the Member for Edmonton-Highlands to go ahead and move the same motion, which was carried. For purposes of the minutes at this time, is it agreed that it was indeed moved by the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and carried by the meeting?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

All right. Motions to come off the table, then, from this morning.

MS BARRETT: My motions. Okay. Just bear with me a moment while I get my papers together here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Transportation and Administrative Services Orders. Air Trips.

MS BARRETT: Well, this poor old item has been tabled so many times and every time at my own request. Can you believe it? In any event, I would like to now move again that the Transportation and Administrative Services Orders be amended to provide a member to take up to 12 return air trips in a fiscal year to any point in Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Discussion on the motion?

MR. BOGLE: This is a motion to table?

MS BARRETT: No, it's off.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, this is a motion to . . .

MR. BOGLE: You're taking this one off?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. No, I mean we're going to deal with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's now off the table. The motion is for 12 trips per year.

MRS. BLACK: And we presently have . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Five.

MR. McINNIS: Which is down from unlimited previously?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, it used to be unlimited until '87.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Further discussion on the motion to increase it to 12 trips per year, which will have some budget ramifications.

MR. S. DAY: Just for clarification purposes, Mr. Chairman: Calgary MLAs obviously have more than five trips per year, right?

MRS. MIROSH: We're just talking about outside . . .

MR. S. DAY: What are we talking here?

MRS. BLACK: Anywhere in the province.

MRS. MIROSH: This is not including your travel to the House.

MS BARRETT: It doesn't deal with travel between the capital and the constituency.

MR. S. DAY: This is to any point in Alberta, though?

MR. M. CLEGG: This one section just deals with to Edmonton. Another section is this general travel, and that's what we're talking about.

MR. S. DAY: Right. Right now that's five trips.

MRS. MIROSH: This is outside your regular trips to and from the Leg.

MR. S. DAY: In case I missed it at an earlier meeting I might not have been at, was there a reason given for increasing from five to 12?

MS BARRETT: Yes. I'll just wait my turn.

MR. S. DAY: Yeah. I'd be interested in hearing that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. On that narrow point, then, Edmonton-Highlands – do you wish to respond? – followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MS BARRETT: Yes. There is a reason, and that is that the system used to be unlimited when it came to flying within the province. That changed in 1987, against my strenuous objections, of course, and it was limited to five. The reason I would like to see it increased to 12, which comes to about one per month per MLA, if exercised, is so those people who are invited to distant places for speaking engagements can do so without having to spend hours on the road. Now, it's no secret that I, for instance, don't fly and that I do spend hours on the road, but some people don't. For instance, I have an invitation to speak to a women's business group in McMurray. Well, you know, I might choose to spend all that time driving up and back, but a lot of people in our busy lives would really prefer not to have to do that. It's a lot faster for them to fly.

The issue is not will we travel less; it is the mode by which the travel occurs. Now, I haven't this written into the motion, but I'd certainly be prepared to support an amendment that said that under the current rules in lieu of flying five times a year, you can charge a round trip in your car – right? – extra. I'd be certainly . . .

DR. ELLIOTT: We have that.

MS BARRETT: Yes, but it was mentioned to me that if you get the additional flights, then you can't both take the car trips plus the flights, and I agree with that. If it needed an amendment to that effect, I would support that.

MR. McINNIS: The answer to the question is that this covers any travel that's not otherwise provided for, including caucus meetings. Caucuses don't always meet in the capital city on every occasion. But it also includes invitations. An example I was thinking of: I was invited by the Minister of the Environ-

ment to attend an announcement on the Daishowa project in Peace River. I attempted to make arrangements to travel with the minister on the government aircraft, but there wasn't space because the Chair of the government environment caucus, Mr. Evans, was invited instead. So the offer was made, "Well, go ahead and fly on the commercial airline," which would be fine except I didn't have a flight to allocate for that purpose. I think that's the kind of thing.

Or you're invited by an association to attend their convention, which happens all the time. More and more organizations like to hear from more than one side of the House. Now, the minister has the option of using departmental funds to travel to a function like that, which I think the member would agree is legitimate public business, but that option is not presently available to a member of the opposition to take advantage of the same invitation. Now, obviously we don't always invite ourselves to these functions. It's a question of whether you have to either ask our association to pay the travel cost or pay it from some other source, whereas - and I think you can look at the rationale that was given when the idea of allowing MLAs to travel in the province was first brought about.

Another instance I like to use is that increasingly government agencies are moved out of the capital city. You have the Opportunity Company in Ponoka, the Ag Development Corporation in Camrose, and if you have to attend on behalf of a constituent to a proceeding before one of those bodies, where does that come from? It would be from this, in the case of members who live in the capital city anyway. Others may have the option of stopping off in Ponoka, say, on the way from Red Deer. You don't have that between Jasper Place and the Legislature.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my understanding from the *Members' Guide* is such that when it comes to leaving Edmonton, going to places like, let's say, Camrose, Ponoka, those places to which one would normally travel by automobile, there isn't any limitation on the number of times one can do that at the present time. Is there? The only limitation at the present time is on air travel. Is there not?

MR. McINNIS: As long as you pay out of pocket, there's no limitation.

MR. WICKMAN: No. But it's what? Forty-five thousand kilometres for rural members; 25,000?

MR. M. CLEGG: That is the limitation.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, there is that limitation. When we go to the air travel - the information that was given to us at the last meeting indicated how many times caucus members were flying. Nobody up to that period of time, the fiscal period, had even touched five trips. I would see as a more workable solution to what Pam has proposed: rather than up it to 12, let's go for the pooling concept. If the New Democrat caucus, which each would be entitled to five air flights a year, pooled that amongst their 15 members - excluding the leader, of course - which would entitle them to 75 trips, then the caucus could allocate accordingly. Because I think what happens, Mr. Chairman, is that you get critics in certain areas - like John's, for example, with Environment - which takes them outside Edmonton a great deal more than maybe some other individual in some other portfolio. So I think that would accomplish it.

Now, the question of mileage, whether the current limitation on mileage is sufficient, is another question. But we're dealing with air travel. So I would prefer the pooling concept rather than increasing it from five to 12.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the Clerk with comments on administration.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, my comments were related to the information the Clerk had circulated before with regard to the number of trips members have been taking. It doesn't indicate or warrant that that should be increased. Perhaps to refresh members' memories, if we could have that recirculated, I think it spells out that . . .

DR. McNEIL: It's in the book.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, it's in the book.

DR. McNEIL: Under 4(a) in the binder.

MRS. MIROSH: Fair enough, but look under 4(a) and you'll find how many trips are used by members, and you'll find that it's not . . .

DR. McNEIL: There's data there for the '88-89 fiscal year and the '89-90 fiscal year to date. For '88-89, for Edmonton MLAs, four used all five trips.

MS BARRETT: Plus one non-Edmonton. So that's five in total.

DR. McNEIL: For the non-Edmonton MLAs, one used all five trips.

MR. S. DAY: On that point, Mr. Chairman, when you're dealing with five, speaking from my own experience, and I'm sure others of all parties could relate to this, all of us - this may surprise opposition members - get a lot of requests to go to various functions out of our constituencies. As a matter of fact, government members get many requests to go to opposition members' ridings, because the people there want to hear from a government member. I know when I've got this figure in mind, five trips, I'm very careful about that and very conservative. If it goes to 12, just as now you're seeing members take three and four, you're going to see members take 10 and 11. If it goes to 40 trips, you'd see members taking 38 and 39.

When we're elected, I think we've got to look at all our expenses in terms of: is this helping my constituents? So when we're looking at a constituency office budget where rents are going up and we need dollars to cover increased printing costs to communicate with our constituents, then I reluctantly, kicking and screaming, would support some raise there. But I have to say to myself, "Are my constituents asking me to travel around the province even more than I'm doing now?" That, I think, has to affect our thinking when we're looking at an item like this one here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question, then, on the motion?

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The motion before us is to extend the members' travel to 12 trips per year from the current five. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? The motion is defeated.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if you would accept the alternate motion of pooling, is that appropriate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you're making a motion. Edmonton-Whitemud has made a motion to pool.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that each of the three caucuses be allowed to pool the number of air travel trips they're currently entitled to and to allocate according to their own caucus needs.

Speaking to it, Mr. Chairman, I'm doing it, I guess, appreciating that some people don't like to fly. I don't like to fly. I do on occasion, but I don't like to fly, and there are people like Pam who simply will not fly. In a sense there are five trips that she is entitled to that can't be utilized. If there's a need for someone from her caucus – or if the same situation held in the Liberal caucus – to go up to Fort McMurray, for example, driving can take a great deal of time and such, and this would allow someone from that particular caucus to go in that member's place and utilize those travel trips that that person is entitled to and that otherwise would not be used.

MR. S. DAY: Speaking on this motion again, Mr. Chairman, just reflecting on remarks I made on the earlier one, individual members even within a caucus have different views on fiscal restraint. A member wanting to exercise fiscal restraint in this area – and they have five trips allotted to them – might say, "I'm going to really be tight on myself here for the taxpayer; I'm only taking one trip this year." If we went to pooling, that individual attempt at some albeit small measure of fiscal restraint could be frustrated by members who like to fly a lot, because you would then lose those four trips. Somebody else would take them, and your efforts to maintain fiscal restraint and responsibility to your constituents would be frustrated. That's why I would be concerned about this pooling motion. This doesn't reflect on the opposition at all; it reflects on our own caucuses.

MR. McINNIS: I'm trying to be sensitive to the points raised by the Member for Red Deer-North because I know he's sincere in the comments he brings to the table here, and his love for fiscal restraint is renowned. But I do want to say that this is not something we do because we like to do it. To be away from our families and go out and attend meetings in far-flung corners of the province is something we do because it's part of the job we've undertaken here and part of the oath we've sworn and the political commitment we've made.

Now, what we're talking about is not whether or not people are going to travel. People are going to travel regardless. People traveled before there was any provision whatever for MLAs to travel on an expense account. The history of this thing is that slowly but surely the Crown came to realize that members other than Executive Council have need to interact, to speak, and to have meetings face to face with people throughout the province. This is basically a question of equity between the ordinary members and the Executive Council members – and their appointees, because people who chair committees of the Legislature, people who chair other commissions, boards, and agencies have access to other means of travel. They have government cars; they have expense accounts; they have other

ways to get around the province, albeit to do the public business, but that's what we're talking about. And they can fly too, right? So what we're talking about is a question of equity as between different classes of members in this operation.

It's not a question of some people desiring to have fun or get their kicks by being in an aircraft at the taxpayers' expense. There was just a touch of that in there, Stock. I think you should reconsider the idea that somehow people love to fly and this is an opportunity to go out and enjoy themselves doing it. It's not. It's work. It's a question of whether their families have to pay the cost of it or whether it's borne by public funds in the same way that the travel of a chairman of a Legislature committee, the Chair of a government agency such as the Alberta Research Council or AADAC or any one of the others – government members who are not members of Executive Council – the same way that they do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Parliamentary Counsel, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I was going to make a suggestion to the committee, if they wish to deal with this by an amendment to the orders, which, if adopted, would meet the Member for Red Deer-North's concern. This order establishes members' rights on an individual basis; it's not really addressed to caucus rights. What I was going to suggest, had the consideration approached a positive resolution, was that the order should read something like this, "that a member may transfer to any other member in the same caucus the right of reimbursement for an air or vehicle trip under the relevant clauses," rather than authorizing a pooling system on the principle that these are members' rights that we're dealing with. If the committee wanted to look at it in that sense, then each individual member would decide whether to pool his trips or whether to offer them on an individual basis for another member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We will take it, then, that that is the general framework of the motion under discussion.

MR. McINNIS: A restraint minded member wouldn't be forced to have their flights used by a less restraint minded member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreed by the committee, to take that as the general intent of the motion under discussion?

MR. WICKMAN: That's acceptable, Mr. Chairman.

MR. S. DAY: Just on that point, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the sensitivity just expressed here, but it still pressures the member. I think being realistic, if the member is not taking trips out of a concern for fiscal restraint and this order is in place reading in such a way that they can give that over, the pressure is going to be fairly considerable from one's own colleagues to abandon that and give them over, whereas if it's in place, if we don't allow it in any way, then that pressure is totally removed and everybody is free to have five trips and leave it at that.

MS BARRETT: Oh, jeez, massive abuse. I can see it now. Bankrupting the system, by God. Bring it to its knees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question, then, on this motion?

MS BARRETT: Might as well. Yeah, call for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the transferring of one's five trips per year to another member in one's caucus if the motion carries. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? The motion fails five to three. Thank you.

In this same area, was the matter of spousal trips raised or not? This was to stay the same? It wasn't raised. Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't think so, was it?

MS BARRETT: I have no idea, but if anybody so moves, I'll speak against it, by God. Single people are restraint minded. We're the fiscally responsible upstarts. We don't have spouses hanging on the wings of aircraft with us, by God.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Meanwhile, flying on to the next issue, 4(b), Members' Automobile Allowance.

MR. S. DAY: Mr. Chairman, excuse me. Clarification. There's no change in spousal . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I don't see any motion coming here. Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Highlands. Members' Automobile Allowance.

MS BARRETT: Hey, she's on a roll. What the heck. I'm going to move this one, too, Mr. Chairman, so I'll read it out. I move that

transportation and administrative services orders be amended to unify the automobile allowance ceiling between urban and rural members to the current maximum of 45,000 kilometres per year, subject to receipt and proof as currently applies.

Now, I think I got this right, assuming that this does not affect the round trips between capital and residence for any MLA. This does not affect that. Those trips are separately written out and reimbursed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Discussion? Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Well, I know there are some government members who justify this in their own minds in the notion that this will keep opposition members out of their ridings if they keep the amount of mileage down. I think that's false reasoning. I know I may not be very persuasive with government members, but I want to indicate that in no way, shape, or form will turning this down keep us out of their ridings. In fact, it may have the opposite effect.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Surprise, surprise.

Additional discussion? Okay. Clerk, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

DR. McNEIL: Just in terms of the financial implications for the budget of that motion, it would be about \$172,000 a year or, on top of the percentage change in the budget now, would add another .8 percent. So instead of 3.4 percent we'd be going up to 4.2 percent.

MS BARRETT: That's if you get maximum uptake, though. Right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, even so we would have to have the

budget portion carried.

MR. BOGLE: A short coffee break, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. See you back in five minutes.

[The committee recessed from 2:07 p.m. until 2:12 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Just to conclude my remarks on this item, I think there's an underlying principle that a member is a member is a member. The activities of the member are by and large defined by the member in consultation with his constituents. We don't need a committee of the House like this to define the activities of the member. Now, when I sat on the committee which was assigned the task of dealing with the difficult problem faced by urban members, increasing rents in commercial office space in a tightening market, the committee came to the conclusion that the only fair way to deal with it was across the board. To create a class of benefit to deal with the problem faced by urban members was unfair to the other members, who have different problems and, therefore, different solutions, and really the best people to define the role of a given member of the Legislative Assembly are that member and his constituents. That's really the way our system works. So this is a motion to restore a notion of equality in terms of benefit and resources that are available for members to do their jobs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands, and then I think I have here also the Member for Taber-Warner, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud . . .

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . and the Member for Red Deer-North.

MS BARRETT: Might as well go around the table, eh?

I would just like to add to what John was saying. Given the defeat of the previous motion that I'd sponsored with respect to restoration of the right to fly beyond five round-trips per year in Alberta, it seems to me this is a fair way to make sure the traveling rights are equalized between all MLAs. I'm not sure the motion would have been necessary had my first one passed. In fact, I probably would have dropped this request. But in light of the defeat of the previous motion, I urge members to support this one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think that without any question there is a distinction, and a very noticeable distinction, between rural members and urban members. The rural members geographically have a much, much greater distance to travel. I can go throughout my urban constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud from one point to the other in a matter of a small number of miles. I don't think the motion reflects that in fact there is that distinction. I'm not comfortable that we should be advocating that urban members are entitled to the same maximum mileage limitation as the rural.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I've been thinking long and hard on this matter. I was one of those who argued initially that there should be a distinction between urban and rural members for automobile travel, for the reasons pointed out by Percy and others. I guess I would have been happier today if we had had some common ground; i.e., an increase in the kilometres an urban member could charge. I don't think a case could be made to increase the kilometre charge for rural members. I think our current upper limit is sufficient. Even though a number of members bump up against it, it is in my view still sufficient. I don't sense any feeling around the table that there's support for a position partway between the two; i.e., increasing the urban rate by 10,000 kilometres. If there were, I'd certainly be prepared to make a friendly amendment proposing that, but I don't sense it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Go ahead.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I'll try it. I'll move an amendment to the motion increasing the urban mileage rate from the current 25,000 kilometres to 35,000 kilometres per year.

MR. HYLAND: Which would be half the rate that Pam's motion says.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Half the increase.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From the present 25,000 to 35,000 K for an urban. All right. Thank you.

MR. BOGLE: I make that keeping in mind that we still make a distinction which favours urban members in certain elements in our constituency allocations where we use the voter - or if it isn't voter population, it's a total population figure. I leave it at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Speaking to the amendment, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I think that's a very fine gesture. I think somewhere along the line in what's going on here, we should realize what we actually face. Just the other day I had to increase my insurance coverage because of the mileage that's on the vehicle, and that's another \$180 a year to take the mileage up to where I'm doing it, plus there's additional insurance that goes with the fact that there's business use. When you add it up, you know, there's a few hundred bucks a year involved in additional insurance because of the kilometres driven on the job. I never drove anything like this before I had this particular job, so if there's some willingness to recognize there is a burden there that needs to be addressed, it's appreciated anyway, Bob. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Further discussion on the amendment. Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: I think again, Mr. Chairman, although I appreciate the gesture, it stills comes back to - I'm going to get razed again here - fiscal restraint. The constituency I serve is unique in that Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are the only two municipal constituencies in the province that also encompass rural areas. I definitely could use the extra kilo-

metres. Driving out to those farms and down the back roads and everything else and being 90 miles from Edmonton also puts quite a demand in terms of traveling back and forth by vehicle, more than if I were living near the southern border of the province where I wouldn't be taking a vehicle as much. So it's not that I couldn't use the extra miles, but I think it still comes back to the question: am I adequately able to serve my constituents and still keep their concern about fiscal restraint in mind?

I appreciate the comments brought out by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands in saying that if everybody goes to 45,000, it's only an extra \$172,000.

MS BARRETT: I didn't say "only."

MR. S. DAY: Or \$172,000.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. S. DAY: The concern I have, if I can go back to my grandfather who talks about taking care of the nickels and dimes and the dollars fall into place, is that of every budgetary item that's considered in this building in the wide array of departments, so many are looked at that way. The argument's brought forward and then they say, "Well, it's \$200,000 or \$1.1 million, and in an \$8 billion budget that's really small." I think we have to look at all these little nickel and dime issues, because otherwise we nickel and dime ourselves to death, and we can't say, "Look at how small it is relative to the size of the whole budget." We've got to communicate a message to other people looking at budgets that every nickel and dime counts. I appreciate the gesture, but that's why I can't support this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Call for the question on the amendment.

MR. McINNIS: Just before that passes, you've got to admit, Stock, that if you travel to the capital, that's covered separately. Right?

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MR. S. DAY: One trip a week.

MR. McINNIS: One trip a week. That's in addition, and that's a benefit you have that urban members don't have.

MR. S. DAY: Yeah, because you don't live in Red Deer, so you don't need that.

MR. McINNIS: Yes. Well, you made reference to that as something you had to cover out of your 25,000 kilometres. You don't. That's in addition.

MR. S. DAY: No, I'm talking about extra traveling miles within my urban/rural constituency.

MRS. MIROSH: That he puts on his vehicle. You were talking about an insurance increase because of the mileage.

MR. McINNIS: Yes, but he's reimbursed for that mileage.

MR. S. DAY: Well, the insurance part is a good point, a very

good point. I think the public in general doesn't realize the multitude of extra costs we face as MLAs, and that's a good point. But I still feel we can adequately serve our constituents with the restraints we've got now.

MR. HYLAND: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Call for the question on the amendment, which would read that the urban MLAs would have their kilometre rating increased from 25,000 to 35,000. Those in favour of that amendment, please signify. Thank you. Opposed? It fails on a motion of 5 to 4.

MR. McINNIS: Can we have a recorded vote on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. Once again, those in favour, please signify.

[For the motion: Ms Barrett, Mr. Bogle, Mr. McInnis, Mr. Wickman]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Opposed?

[Against the motion: Mrs. Black, Mr. S. Day, Dr. Elliott, Mr. Hyland, Mrs. Mirosh]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Five to 4 defeated.
We're back on the main motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question on the main motion was to unify it to \$45,000, right? Call for the question. Those in favour of that motion, please signify. Three. Opposed? The motion fails.

In the view of the Chair, that then takes care of anything else likely to affect the budget calculations. In light of this, we are now able to proceed to have one omnibus motion to adopt the budget as presented over these last few meetings.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Edmonton-Highlands. Call for the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried unanimously. Having said "carried unanimously," perhaps some of the more long-time members of the committee are prepared to make a comment as to how our budget goes through the House so we don't have any mixed signals when this hits the floor of the House.

MS BARRETT: I can certainly say the past practice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please.

MS BARRETT: Past practice, to my knowledge, is that because of the closure under which the opposition suffers under consideration of estimates, the number of days we have to consider the number of departments, and the amount of money we're reviewing that we never get around to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a moment now. Because of Standing Orders, it's not closure.

MS BARRETT: It is so closure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Adherence to the rules is not closure.

MS BARRETT: Because of adherence to a closure provision within the Standing Orders, which the minority in the House has yet to get changed, usually consideration of these estimates is assumed to have been dealt with thoroughly by this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: By all parties of the committee.

MS BARRETT: By all parties.

MRS. BLACK: And is there a motion to that effect that's made in the House?

MS BARRETT: No. It just comes up.

MR. HYLAND: I don't ever remember, even when the votes were called, any debate on it, and you guys were there as EAs too. I don't ever remember any debate on Leg. Assembly estimates.

MS BARRETT: No, I don't either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because when you put it together, the length of time we've had on this budget in the last three meetings plus preliminary discussion before that is more than what's given to some departments, I suppose, in total.

MS BARRETT: I can think of certain other departments I'd rather spend some time on given the closure factor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Given the guidelines of Standing Orders.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: We should note that - what? - two or three years ago . . . The budget of the Leg. Assembly is tabled in a separate document. Because of the uniqueness of the Assembly, it doesn't tie in with the government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

Under New Business, is there any other item which the committee members have?

MS BARRETT: We didn't have one more item that was tabled, or was that Percy's 27 deal?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We picked up all the other tabled motions. One was on a television document. That was done: going to tender. The two items you had, Edmonton-Highlands, on the automobile and the air trips.

MS BARRETT: Oh, yeah. Fax machines. That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is one other . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Did we do the extended benefits for former members? Did we do that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. It's just an ongoing . . .

One item I would like to bring to the committee's attention relates to the jurisdiction of the Chamber and the precincts. The precincts of this Chamber include the room in which we are presently seated, this particular Confederation Room, this particular lounge area, and also the area on the opposite side of this, which has the Clerk's office when the House is in session plus three secretarial positions there. The document I'm circulating to you at the moment takes us back in the history of this province to 1911, and it's a proposal I would like to put in place for this current sitting. We'll re-examine it after we've come through the other end of the sitting. It would be that this room would become the government members' lounge. The room on the opposite side, where the three secretarial positions currently are, would become an opposition members' lounge. The Clerk's office would continue to be there. The lounge area at the back would still be everybody's members' lounge, and the coffee and the fridge would still be there. That hopefully will ease some of the congestion in the building. It will also allow for individual caucuses to have perhaps some more private time to consult. It also has the provision whereby we can then all overlap still, and that's to be greatly encouraged in terms of the bridging operation that often takes place in the House.

The other ramifications of this move, then, would be that the present offices occupied by the secretary, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chairman of Committees would become the working offices for the Clerk Assistant and the records clerk, that staff position there, and the Parliamentary Counsel. Let's see. Then the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees will go up one floor to the fourth where presently we have the office space for Parliamentary Counsel and the Sergeant-at-Arms. They in turn will go up one more floor to the fifth. That also allows us to take over another storage area behind the Carillon Room so we can finally have some adequate space as a robing room/change room for the pages and the security staff. It exemplifies some of the interesting pressures on the building in terms of space requirements at different times.

Doing all this and, as I suggested, doing it for this current sitting and then re-evaluating that, it then really brings us in line with some of the other Legislatures in the country, Ontario in particular. It also picks up from the Saskatchewan model and Manitoba, to name some, where the various parties can go off and have time to themselves, if that's what they desire.

So I put that before you for information, and I'm certainly willing to accept comments.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, where would that leave the press?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the availability is still at the end of this corridor, at the top of the stairs, at the bottom of the stairs, around the fountain, also along those hallway corridors and the media room downstairs. There's been much more use of that media room downstairs, led by the New Democrats and the Liberals in particular. My understanding is that the Premier's office and cabinet ministers are making better use of that as well. But I'm quite certain that most of the interview process is going to happen out here at the head of the stairs and perhaps down the staircase.

MS BARRETT: I have a concern about that, too, mainly because the acoustics in the hallway are so terrible, and everybody knows what the scrum is like, particularly after question

period. These people are operating on a tight deadline, especially electronic. Radio is under the most pressure, then television. Those people have to have decent sounding interviews in order to get their feeds to be audible. Is there no other way we can do this? I mean, I would favour leaving things as is rather than pushing them out into the hallway, because of the acoustics. The marble is terrible. The sound of the fountain – and not only that, but footsteps and clatter on the floors – you can hear upstairs because it's not carpeted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The matter of the fountain, which indeed is one of the things that does cause a lot of background noise, is such that we're going to make the allowance to have it shut off after the question period.

Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I was going to speak on that item, which I will as well, but just two questions first.

Other than the change you've indicated, is the rest just a carryover of procedure that's been carried in the past? Like, for example, the reference made that each member of the House have three tickets placed at his disposal daily for admission to the members' gallery. That's not currently in practice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. This is just a piece of history to show what was in operation when they first moved into the building to use its space.

MR. WICKMAN: And where's the current proposal then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just what I had given you verbally in terms of this room, the opposite side, and its becoming the two lounge areas for the opposition and for government.

MR. WICKMAN: My comments, Mr. Chairman. I think it would be good to have something that is laid out specifically when it relates to those types of legislative matters. For example, if that practice is still in place about members of the House having tickets available, I wasn't . . . No? It's not in place? Well, maybe the system there now should be written down and put in a policy such as this 1911 one was.

My second concern, Mr. Chairman, goes beyond just the sound and such when we take away this particular room which the media have become accustomed to using. There are other factors. Let's face it. The media are a very, very integral part of a parliamentary process. At times we don't agree with them; they don't agree with us. That's the nature of it. Those are the facts of life. Nevertheless, there has to be a respect that all of us together make up the parliamentary procedure, and I think we have to be accommodating. I visualize what would happen is that we're going to have scrambles in the front of the building, because when there's an issue that the media deem to be hot, let's face it, they're going to get it. And they have to be someplace, and I thought this was a convenient area for them. Otherwise, we're going to have them assembling in the front where the public tend to mill around a bit more. I thought it was workable the way it was going.

MR. S. DAY: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your sensitivity to members, and certainly historically your concern is a reflection of the change of the makeup of this Chamber. Right now we are in a period of temporary aberration where there are a lot of opposition members, so there's a requirement for rooms to be

meeting in. Are you asking us today: is this a decision of Members' Services? Is this a decision that comes from your office, or is this by information only? Is it something you'd like us to deliberate on and get back to you?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's an interesting position to have to be in in terms of the Speaker, because what it says here under the jurisdiction, it only really relates to the matter of the Sergeant-at-Arms, as being delegated responsibility from the Speaker, to "preserve order in the galleries and lobbies of the Assembly." This is one of the lobbies of the Assembly. It is not technically a committee meeting room, although we allow it to be a committee meeting room. It's an area that belongs to all members of the House, whether it's this side or that opposite side as well as the back. So I'm not here in terms that you have to do it as a divine edict; that's for sure. But in terms of the working problems of the building and the congestion that occurs, it becomes a very major problem. When we did the research on it and came back with the fact that it was brought to a committee - which I assume was somewhat comparable to this committee - it was a committee decision, for one session at any rate, to allocate these two particular areas in this way. That's the reason I brought it back here.

MR. S. DAY: My concern, then, would be that I guess I'm ambivalent as far as that happening, but I appreciate your being concerned about us as members. The media question is one that I think needs to be looked at. Just on a personal note, as Whip it's going to be a little tougher to drag members out of this room and get them back into the House than it was when they were a little closer, out on the balcony. I'm assuming there's no renovation cost, and if it does go ahead, if the term "lounge" - I have a picture of a wet bar and different things happening. If it could just be called a meeting room, which indeed is what it would be, I think that would not be alarming to anybody.

MR. McINNIS: We could call it the restraint room.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Cypress-Redcliff, Calgary-Glenmore, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You had a word you used instead of a lounge that you just read out that's in the Standing Orders.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Lobby.

MR. HYLAND: Lobby or something. I think maybe that is a more appropriate word. I've been in several Legislatures, I don't know how many across Canada, but I think in every one I've been in they've had an area for - in some of them even by party. The opposition side: there'd be a wall in it or something so there are two distinct meeting rooms and often a common area, like we have at the back, and others. I can well understand the problems because of our space in this building, but I think it's something we should try for a year or a session - maybe I shouldn't say a year; I should say a session - and see how it works. If it creates a whole bunch of different problems, well then, maybe we have to look at those different problems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I believe that when we come

out of that door and you have the media there and the camera, that congestion is very unnerving. I know many times I've just about been hit by a camera, and there are all kinds of wires. I think we need that space. We have the telephones that we use over there as well, and you have media around you and sometimes there's no privacy to discuss issues.

However, I do feel, of course, that the media are an integral part of the Assembly, and I'm wondering if there would be any problem with inviting them into the room, if the minister or one of the opposition members want to invite them into their side for an interview, if that flexibility could be there for them, because then at least you know that they're there. But when they're there all the time, you trip over each other. Would there be any objection to having them invited in for specific interviews? I believe that's where there's a problem, out in the corridor. You know, when there is an issue at hand and it's arranged between the member and the media, they just take a little space in the corner for that interview.

MS BARRETT: Sort of defeats the purpose, though, of having a private meeting room. I know what you're getting at, but . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Well, at least it gives some space outside the corridor, if the invitation were accepted. I don't know. I'm just throwing it out as an option.

MR. McINNIS: I remember a time when the back corridor there was a place where staff and members could be, and then it was restricted to members because the members needed a place where they could be by themselves. This proposal is essentially to expand that but to make a sort of partisan corridor space or lounge space or hall space, however you want to describe it. Right now we do have a practice, which is that this room is essentially where the media interviews are done after session, and that's the import of the changes, to basically move that out of here.

Now, the bit of history contains an allocation of space around the Chamber, but also a process whereby that allocation is made, both elements to it. So if this is a type of precedent, on substance it's a precedent as to process as well. So if we're looking at something like this, I suggest the logic of this is that we need some type of committee to have a look at it, and I for one don't feel comfortable doing it in this committee right now, because I'm not sure I've mentally followed everything you've said. I'd like to see it down on a piece of paper anyway. That's my observation. I think there's a process precedent as well as substantive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, can anybody remember how long ago the media started using this room? As I remember, when I first got elected, a lot of it used to happen out there and gradually came in here, but I don't remember if it was official or if it just moved. I don't think it's been here all the time. I think more seemed to come in after the room was renovated two or three years ago. It was bigger and made lighter.

MS BARRETT: Oh, no. Good heavens, no. Certainly when I was a researcher, it was used commonly. John was here before I was.

MR. HYLAND: What I remember, it was more like the

newspaper and radio guys would be in here. The others weren't in because the room was so dark; you know, with that dark wallboard and things, but maybe that's not right. Now that it's brighter, everybody's here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have to remember, too, that the wall used to be here. I gave up the Speaker's robing room so that for the comfort of more members we would have a larger meeting room, and this is another thing that started to happen. Then, with the room being bigger, more and more people started to come in here, and it starts to make it into much more of a - it's a scrum all right, but it also creates some other pressures.

MS BARRETT: It was sure useful when Grant was here. I remember coming and watching interviews.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, I was just about to recollect from my early days here in 1975 that shorter as it then was from where you are seated, they used to rearrange the room when it was not for committee use with this long table. It was divided up into three portions where they used to hold individual press interviews. The press would come in here and have prearranged interviews with either cabinet ministers or opposition leaders when they came out after question period. Because of the dividers it was more structured and quieter and there wasn't the large scrum of reporters which we now experience. By my best recollection, that was happening as early as 1975 when I came.

MR. S. DAY: My question was along those lines, so that's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I assume, then, that you're going to give some thought to it, and we will deal with it on the morning of March 8. It's going to be very interesting.

MR. McINNIS: Just one other thing to think of. If you're

getting a message in to a member in the House, at the present time you take it to somebody at the corners, here. That's the process. You would need somebody, I guess, up there running messages if these were closed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may recall from the estimates that we were adding one more security staff person at this end because we were understaffed at this end from the security point of view. That will give us an extra body, and we could also position an extra page there to get those messages in.

MR. HYLAND: In your comment to answer somebody's question - I guess it was Stock's - about renovations, on that side is still the hallway to go down that divides it off too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: From the point of view of renovations, on this room and on the opposite side there are no costs, because the thing would be that in terms of, if we went forward with it, we'd just be furnishing with furniture stock that's already available in storage here. All right. Well, I think that's an item we'll deal with when we come to the morning of March 8 at 8 o'clock.

MR. S. DAY: And that will be a very brief meeting, I'm hoping, Mr. Chairman. We've got a lot to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We trust so.

MS BARRETT: So do we adjourn? Are we done?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I'm going to entertain a motion to adjourn.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

[The committee adjourned at 2:46 p.m.]