

9:42 a.m.

Friday, November 23, 1990

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, let's begin. As pointed out yesterday, we were going to come back and carry on with going through the budget process for the Legislative Assembly. Because of the heavy snowfall and not knowing how far down the province it extends and two of our members having about a six-and-a-half- to seven-hour drive to get home, I think perhaps we may even truncate the meeting a bit. In that regard I've ordered the luncheon - or Louise, the secretary, has ordered the luncheon; let's not get carried away thinking the chairman is efficient here - soup and sandwiches for 11 o'clock, so that gives us a target line. We can work through that and then disperse. It's always one of the concerns I have, and I'm sure all of us have, that there's a lot of driving time for a lot of members that just don't happen to live next door to the Legislature.

Okay. On the Leg. Assembly estimates we were at *Hansard*, section 10. Clerk, if you'd like to start.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. Before I get into the specifics of the *Hansard* budget, the Editor of *Hansard* did an analysis of his budget over the last 12 years. In the context of looking at the issue of doing more with less, I thought it would be useful to see what has happened with the *Hansard* budget in the last 12 years or so.

If you look at the last column on this sheet, what you have is the *Hansard* budgets since 1978-79 to this '90-91 budget translated into 1978 dollars so that they'd be the same dollars. You can see there a significant reduction in the 1978 dollars spent in that period. Over that time there's been significant technological change in the *Hansard* operation: the time lines for *Hansard* were shortened up significantly. I thought it would be useful to point that out to the committee just to indicate the efforts that Dr. Garrison has made to try to ensure a more efficient operation of *Alberta Hansard*. I believe that chart captures that. There's the thing about *Hansard* operations: it hasn't changed much in terms of its various functions. In fact, a few functions have been added - the public education component - but nonetheless it's still a more efficient operation. With that overview, then, of the budget over the last 12 years, I'd like to get into the details of it.

This budget is where the bargaining unit related increases in salaries and wages has really impacted. You'll see in terms of the overall Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits a 17.8 percent increase, and in Supplies and Services an anticipated 7.8 percent increase, primarily due to anticipated increases in printing costs. We will be opening the bids for the new printing contracts in a couple of weeks, and we'll have a better, more exact sense of those costs then than we do now, but the estimates built in are about 5 percent in printing costs right now until we have the actual bids in in two weeks.

So would you like to go through on a page-by-page basis?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, before we do, David, could you tell us what's the rationale behind transferring the \$15,000 for the House seating plan from House Services to *Hansard*?

DR. McNEIL: The House seating plan is part of the overall public education material that we've produced, the various fact sheets and so on. It's one of those fact sheets. Previously we spent \$15,000 just producing the seating plan. As a result of

going to this new type of seating plan, we're able to produce the seating plan as well as all the fact sheets for the same amount of money, and that responsibility has been assigned to *Hansard*. So that's the reason for that transfer.

MR. BOGLE: All right.

DR. McNEIL: It's had a very positive impact, I think, on the kind of information on the Assembly that's available to the public and to members to disseminate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If any of you have a situation where you can hand out bushels of seating plans at the moment, we'd be appreciative. We have quite an oversupply, and with the fact of the unfortunate death of Gordon Wright and the by-election there'll be a completely new seating plan for the spring sitting, of course. But we just happen to have a backlog, an oversupply, if you've got some place you'd like to send them to.

Okay. Page 1 is a summary. Would you like to go to page 2.

DR. McNEIL: Page 2. Both Management and Nonmanagement Salaries will reflect the bargaining unit and management adjustments as well as one classification adjustment.

MR. McINNIS: One question there. The phrase "Cost of living, merit increases" pops up time and again, but the figure for it differs. I see it goes from 9 percent, in some cases 11 percent, 13 percent. How are these things determined, just out of curiosity?

DR. McNEIL: Well, they're all determined based on the appraised performance of individuals. With respect to the managers there's a five-point ranking system, and they are granted adjustments based on their relative rating based on the degree to which they've achieved their objectives in the past year. So this year the market component of the management adjustment was 5 percent.

MR. McINNIS: That's the COLA, basically.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. And the merit base was up to 3 percent as a total sum that could be distributed among the managers. In terms of the bottom line impact of that 3 percent on next year's budget, it will be about 1.6 percent of that 3 percent. Well, 1.6 percent instead of 3 percent. But with respect to the management adjustments, the system works by saying you can spend up to 3 percent of your total management salaries on merit pay. But in this instance it's up to the Clerk and the manager supervising other managers to determine how that should be allocated.

MR. McINNIS: Is that the Hay technology, the rating system?

DR. McNEIL: No, the Hay technology is a job classification rating. This is really a performance appraisal rating. I have to make an assessment with respect to the managers as to the degree to which they've achieved their objectives in the past year, and they are paid accordingly. So we pay for performance, in effect.

MR. McINNIS: So that should normally, then, work out to 8 percent, shouldn't it? Five percent on the cost of living and 3 percent on the merit.

DR. McNEIL: On average, yes, but individually it will not because some individuals will receive more than others. Some individuals will receive more than 8; some will receive less. The total pool to allocate is 3 percent. If everybody were rated at the same level of performance . . .

MR. McINNIS: They'd all get 3.

DR. McNEIL: . . . they'd all get 3. But that's not the case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have some catch-up factors on some of these.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. There's some. That money is also used to eliminate inequities and so on. So what it does is provide the manager with a flexibility to adjust salaries how he or she sees fit, within the amount of resources.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, that's page 2.
Page 3.

MR. BOGLE: I want to spend a moment on this.

2:52

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, one question I have on the transfer of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, I had Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Oh, I just wanted a further explanation on page 3, the page we're on, the Information Officer 2.

MRS. MIROSH: Is this a new position?

DR. McNEIL: No, both are existing positions.

MR. BOGLE: There are two positions: one full-time and one three-quarter time. They're transferred from where?

DR. McNEIL: One is transferred from Wages.

MR. BOGLE: Yes. And the other?

DR. McNEIL: I'm sorry; they're both transferred from Wages. This is based on a policy we've discussed in the past: once an individual has been in the employ of the Legislative Assembly Office for a year, then they're shifted from Wages to Nonpermanent.

MRS. MIROSH: Is that contract?

DR. McNEIL: No, it's not a contract, but it's a nonpermanent position. In other words, there's no permanent position affected in this process. What it does is eliminate the situation where you have a number of people on wages doing the same job as you have a number of people in a nonpermanent position, doing the same job but receiving differential pay and benefits. We made a policy decision a number of years ago that after a year in a wage situation, we would convert people from wages to nonpermanent. But any decision to go from nonpermanent or wages to permanent positions is something that's effected by the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm on page 4.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Okay. Any more on page 3?
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: What does an information officer do?

DR. McNEIL: An information officer is just the classification equivalent in the classification system that we've determined is the best fit for the people who do the copyediting.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: We don't have information officers disseminating information in public. It's just the best fit in the classification system for those people that are doing those particular jobs.

MR. HYLAND: They are the ones who read our words of wisdom over and over and over again and put in the periods and colons. Some guys make it awful hard for them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe you could just put in brackets what an information officer is.
Calgary-Glenmore, on page 3?

MRS. MIROSH: No, that's okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 4 then, Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, one of the concerns that I had expressed to me over the last year by the AUPE is the number of positions that are moved to nonperm. What's the rationale? We have here two that I can see on this page. What's the rationale for moving from perm nonperm? If I were an employee, I wouldn't want to be moved.

DR. McNEIL: We haven't moved anybody from perm to nonperm.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, you have here: one moved to nonperm.

DR. McNEIL: From wages.

MR. WICKMAN: Why is that done?

MS BARRETT: It's more secure.

MR. WICKMAN: Nonperm is more secure?

MS BARRETT: Than wages, yeah.

DR. McNEIL: Well, I'm not sure. Both wages and nonpermanent are - I'm not sure there's any difference in security. A nonpermanent position provides certain benefits that the wage position does not. Our feeling is - and we've adopted that policy - that once an individual has been in a wage position for a year, if it's necessary to continue that position we put them on a nonpermanent basis.

MR. WICKMAN: And a nonperm would not have the same security provisions that a perm would?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's stage 2 for some people.

DR. McNEIL: This committee has to make a decision, then, on whether or not to create permanent positions from nonpermanent positions. So what we're doing in terms of moving people from wages to nonpermanent is giving them the same benefit scheme as the people who are permanent who are working alongside them, which we feel is a fair way to go.

MR. WICKMAN: My second question relates to the cost of living increase that shows a minus 8.1 percent. Is that due to a number of reduced hours that some of those four copy editors would be working? How do you get a cost of living increase that is minus 8.1 percent?

DR. McNEIL: Because one of those copy editors was moved to nonpermanent.

MR. WICKMAN: Does that mean less money?

DR. McNEIL: No. It means that that money is now on a different page. So the money on this page is reduced, but the money on the previous page is increased.

MR. WICKMAN: So instead of four copy editors, you only have three now?

DR. McNEIL: No. We have four, but one's in a nonpermanent position. We're not cutting anybody's wage there. It's just the mathematics of the numbers when you move one of the persons to a nonpermanent category.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions with regard to page 4?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, my only concern, Mr. Chairman, is that when it shows a decrease of 7.7 percent, in reality it's not that type of decrease, because you've transferred one position to another program.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. That's why it's important to look at the summary sheet at the front of the budget to get the overall effect on that particular budget.

MR. WICKMAN: So I have to assume that that transfer is in 711E00, the next page, where you show an increase of 26.1 percent.

DR. McNEIL: No.

MR. WICKMAN: It's not there?

DR. McNEIL: It's in 711B, the previous page. But if you look on page 1, you'll note that in terms of the Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits, you've got an overall 17.8 percent increase there.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Indeed, a number of things are confusing. But you have to keep to the same format of previous years, and that's why you have this kind of shifting about. Again, as the

Clerk has pointed out, keep referring back to that summary page; some of it will help it come together.

Page 5. Clerk, that pretty well follows on.

DR. McNEIL: Page 5. This is just the benefit roll up of the various salaries we use in contract payments. Again, because of the increases in health care costs and Blue Cross and workers' compensation, you get an increase here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready to go to 6, *Alberta Hansard* Staff Training?

MR. McINNIS: What type of training is this?

DR. McNEIL: In the past year and likely in the future this would primarily be word processing training and some editing related training and things like that.

MR. McINNIS: So it's equipment related?

DR. McNEIL: For the most part, yes.

MR. HYLAND: That workers' compensation increase: are we hooked into the whole group or have we got a thing by ourselves?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, we're locked in with the whole government group.

MR. HYLAND: Secretarial type, administrative type.

DR. McNEIL: That rate went from .7 to .9 percent.

10-02

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 6.

Page 7 then: Cab Fares, increased use. I'm sure you're all aware the later we stay here at night, for another two hours we have a lot of dedicated staff still working, and most of that staff are female employees. So then that gets us back to the matter of supervision, security in getting them home. So that's where all of that cab . . .

MR. McINNIS: It's the high price of legislation by exhaustion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Interesting that you should be the one with that comment, hon. member.

And that Other is the Hansard Association. That's been transferred to another page because this is the year that *Hansard* is hosting the conference.

DR. McNEIL: The Advertising on page 8 is just advertising for sessional people. We've had fairly good luck in the last year or two in terms of keeping people from one session to the next, but there's usually some turnover there in that group of sessional employees.

Page 9 is pretty straightforward in terms of mailing costs, primarily of *Hansard* issues.

Page 10, long distance: no change there.

Photocopier costs is a fixed contract.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 12.

DR. McNEIL: Page 12. You have the anticipated increases in the printing costs, and as I say, when we come to this budget in January, we'll have better estimates than we do now of the costs.

The other is this \$15,000 transfer, which impacts this budget, for the seating plan and fact sheets.

Page 13.

Page 14. No increase anticipated in Materials & Supplies.

On page 15, called the B budget because it's a one-time-only item, there's the Hansard Association of Canada Conference. It's Alberta's turn to host that conference this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The one thing to point out – it's there on page 12, but it has ramifications all the way through, of course for the *Hansard* budget in particular – is that the department is working on the theory of 80 days: 40 days, 40 nights. Of course, that's a variable. We're at the ebb and flow and we respond to the wishes of the members as to how long they want to stay. So that's a floating factor.

Okay? Any other questions as they relate to *Hansard* at all? Thank you. The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it has to do with the B budget item, the conference. The statement was made by the Clerk that this is Alberta's turn, that the last time such a conference was held in Alberta was 10 years ago. Is this what I'm to lead from that? Eleven, 12, or 13 years, depending if you get all . . .

DR. McNEIL: I believe that is the case, yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: And this is how these things are done?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. In September I hosted a ministerial conference in the province of Alberta for ministers associated with emergency preparedness in Canada, and it was \$12,000. These were ministers from across the country. The conference was held in Barrhead. I mean, \$20,000 for a two-day meeting is a lot of money, and surely there has to be a breakdown in terms of what's being expended here. There are many venues in Alberta other than Edmonton where such conferences can be held, if they're required to be held, at a greatly reduced cost. The thought was that if we can pull off a ministerial conference in Barrhead at \$12,000 with ministers from across the country, then Vegreville, Westlock, Taber . . . If they can be done at a greatly reduced rate, fair game.

I think the costing factors of these things are very important, and efficiencies have to be brought into this. I would ask that that be looked at and that I could see the specific budget in here as to how you get \$20,000 for a two-day meeting. What would it entail?

MR. McINNIS: The site selection committee was impressed with the Barrhead proposal.

MR. KOWALSKI: That was the finest conference they've ever attended. They're real people who live in Barrhead.

DR. McNEIL: We'll be pleased to provide that analysis for our next meeting.

MR. KOWALSKI: In fact, with our experience there, we could very easily do the same thing, I'm sure, for 12 grand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll have a sub sheet with regard to the number of people who plan to be in attendance and the

breakdown. It's interesting; I asked the same question of my staff yesterday on this. Thank you.

Can we move on to section 11, Legislature Library? We have our Librarian, Assistant Deputy Minister Blake McDougall. Blake, would you like to deal with the overview page? This is more of a cursory overview process that we're doing, because we're coming back.

MR. McDOUGALL: Mr. Chairman, if I might have a few moments to comment briefly on the two matters that are usually of great interest to persons who are examining the library's estimates. One has to do with the relative position and efficiency of our library among the other Canadian parliamentary libraries, and second, how the library recovers an amount actually in excess of its own budget through resource sharing with the other Alberta government libraries and the University of Alberta. I was wondering if I could have a few minutes to speak to that before we go with the budget proper.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. McDOUGALL: To help me illustrate or enlarge on these two particular items, I have two documents here that summarize the facts very briefly and I hope will help to make my point.

I believe that everyone now has the two documents. The first one I'd like to refer to briefly is a table that's entitled Survey of Canadian Parliamentary Libraries, 1989-90. The top row of this table shows the ranking of Alberta's parliamentary library compared to 10 other Canadian parliamentary libraries. Briefly, the facts there are that its budget ranks fifth; in number of permanent staff, it ranks sixth; in terms of cost per parliamentary librarian, it ranks sixth; and in cost per capita, it ranks ninth. That's based on the 10 parliamentary libraries. So that gives you some kind of indication on a relative basis where our library fits in in the Canadian scene.

10-12

Now, I'm pleased to report that in terms of the relative efficiency of our library, relative to our budget we rank second in Canada in the amount of information that we supply per budget dollar. We rank second in Canada in terms of the number of responses we make to requests for information. As a point of interest, Manitoba presently is first.

Well, that gives an indication of the efficiency of the unit. So the table itself shows a straight ranking of figures, and then I've indicated that we're second in terms of the amount of information supplied relative to budget.

Now, the next document I think is quite interesting. Those of you that are in the Legislature Annex a great deal probably notice that on the directory there is a unit identified as a Cooperative Government Library Services Section. The staff of that unit are with me on the ninth floor of the Legislature Annex. What they do is facilitate resource sharing among the government department libraries and the University of Alberta. This document indicates first of all, again in summary, what the library's total budget is for the 1991 fiscal year. Then we take off the cost of that particular unit and then the savings realized by the unit through resource sharing. The total is \$777,090.32, and we show a net saving of \$54,461. There's a detailed document in the back that explains how the section operates and its functions, and the back page indicates how that figure was arrived at in summary.

So in effect then – and this concludes my introductory remarks – through resource sharing the library in fact realizes savings in

excess of the total cost of the library operation. I think that is quite commendable. Now having said that, I'm prepared, first of all, to answer any questions on these documents and then to speak briefly to the budget itself. Does anyone have any concerns or questions regarding the summary documents?

MR. BOGLE: Just an observation, Mr. Chairman. The Survey of Canadian Parliamentary Libraries, 1989-90, is an excellent document. I think it's very helpful to the committee in terms of seeing the ranking and the comparisons between the various libraries and how our library fits into that process.

MR. McDOUGALL: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: On the comparison sheet the budget for '89-90 was over \$900,000. So you actually took a cut last year?

MR. McDOUGALL: No, what happened there is that our data processing funds were transferred from the library to the information services division because all the data processing services in the Assembly now have been centralized with that unit. Right? So it's a transfer of funds out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll take a look, then, at the overview page.
Blake, please.

MR. McDOUGALL: Well, the overview of the Legislature Library's 1991-92 budget submission is fairly straightforward. I indicate that it's a maintenance budget, and there are no B budget items. The increases are based on existing salary and wage scales, benefits, and the costs primarily that we encountered during our last year of operation. Having said that, I'm prepared to answer questions regarding specific accounts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, to Blake, does the length of session affect you, and if it does, how much?

MR. McDOUGALL: No. The volume of the activity in the library of course increases, but we don't experience the great drop-off in activity that, say, *Alberta Hansard* does. Now, *Alberta Hansard* of course has to continue to record the minutes of committees when the House is in session and indeed at other times, and they have other public education responsibilities. But our operation provides service to the Alberta government and the public throughout the entire year, so we don't have the severe sort of fluctuations in activity in the library that they have in other areas. As well, we're acquiring new material for the library throughout the entire year, processing it and maintaining the library collection, so our operation isn't as cyclical as some other areas of the Assembly.

MR. HYLAND: But are you not open when the Legislature's in session? Are there extended hours you have to cover?

MR. McDOUGALL: Yes, we have extended hours when the House is in session, and we employ, as you can see from the wage account, one additional librarian to help with the flow of information. She was previously employed in the library and is

quite helpful in that regard. So we do take on additional staff during that period, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 1, then, pretty well . . . Keep your finger there, and we'll move on to page 2. As Blake has pointed out, it's pretty well maintenance. Page 3 picks up some of the points that Cypress-Redcliff was making about sessional reference library, for example.

MR. HYLAND: I'm not sure what page it's on, but are we still going slowly ahead with that microfilming of weekly newspapers?

MR. McDOUGALL: Yes, we are. That program stopped completely for two fiscal years, I believe it was, but since that time we were able to recover some of the funding and we're continuing with that program. The names of the communities that we've dealt with during that year – that is, the names of their newspapers – are listed in our annual report: the communities we've dealt with during that year and the titles of the newspapers that we've completed microfilming.

It's a very popular program with Albertans because it's one way of preserving their written heritage, and I get very good co-operation from community officials, local editors and publishers, and the presidents of historical societies and so on when we go into one of these projects with a particular community. The officials of Forestburg and Chauvin are the two right now I'm working with. I'm working with the community of Claresholm on a co-operative basis with Glenbow-Alberta. We're working together to do their newspapers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Page 4 is one that flows on from the previous pages.

I assume that we're on page 5, with regard to any bursary and conference stuff, but that's a reasonably small amount.

Perhaps page 6. Do you have any questions on that one?

10:22

Into page 7: one delegate to the association in Montreal. Page 8: figures reflect rate increases in postage and GST. Page 9: the matter of photocopy and fax equipment. You can see throughout here we have maintenance: page 11, regarding equipment, and page 12, Binding. On page 12, Mr. McDougall, the binding of which volumes?

MR. McDOUGALL: Well, nearly all of our binding here has to do with gathering government documents, particularly House papers, into order so they're easier to handle and easier for the users to access. Then the other specific binding costs are to do with the library's large number of periodical publications. We try to bind the ones that are used more to try to cut down on wear. We'd like to do a little more binding this year. There's a \$500 increase there. The library's collection is aging, of course, as the province goes on. We have some government documents in our vault storage area that have deteriorated fairly badly, and we'd like to start rebinding those. So if it's possible, we'd like to do more binding this year, as indicated by the increase.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 13, Hosting. The \$500 stays the same. How does that reflect with your actual cost?

MR. McDOUGALL: We spend very little on hosting. I don't have the actual figure to date this year, but there have been many years when we haven't spent any money on hosting at all.

The reason we have this account is because we occasionally have officials come from the National Library in Ottawa or another parliamentary library in Canada or from abroad and we like to be in a position, if we can, to do some hosting in that regard. But there have been years when we haven't used any of the funds.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we move on to page 14? All right to go on from there then?
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: I'm on 15.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On page 15. Okay.

MR. HYLAND: My question is: where in heck in the library are you going to put another 252 feet of shelving, or is it replacement for the old?

MR. McDOUGALL: No. Mr. Chairman, we've asked for an additional 1,000 feet of storage space for the library, and it's to be realized in July of next year. This shelving is to furnish that particular area. We're sharing that area with the Alberta government department libraries so that we get the maximum use out of it, particularly initially, because we don't require all of the 1,000 square feet in the first few years. So we're working on a co-operative arrangement where we will share that space with the government departments.

In summary, that shelving is to furnish a new storage area of 1,000 square feet.

MS BARRETT: Is that the vaults?

MR. McDOUGALL: Yeah. It's an off-site vault. Right.

MS BARRETT: When you say off-site, where?

MR. McDOUGALL: We've asked for the Government Centre area, because we often have to retrieve the items on short notice for library users. Presently we have one off-site vault storage area, and it's over in the Annex, if you wish to call that off-site, but the others are all in the lower level of this building. This space can't be accommodated, it's my understanding. Of course, it can't be accommodated in this building, and I've been given some preliminary indication that it's a tight situation in the Annex as well. It would probably have to go further abroad. But we can overcome that problem by putting less used material in there, a little planning.

MS BARRETT: Doesn't the Annex have some spare floors that aren't being used?

MR. McDOUGALL: My conversations in connection with how much space is available at the Annex have been exclusively with the building superintendent here, Mr. Kreibom. In my recollection of the way he described the situation to me, it wasn't very promising for us, because he has higher priorities for the members and cabinet ministers. So that's the reason.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any additional comment from the person with the *Mona Lisa* smile?
Okay. Page 16. Blake.

MR. McDOUGALL: You don't see this with the other units: we break out the two main components of the library here so that they're costed. The first column, 10JA00, indicates the cost of operating the central facility in this building, and the second column, 10JB00, is the cost of maintaining the operation that facilitates resource sharing among the government libraries and the university. This document that I handed out indicates what that unit does specifically and the cost savings they realize for us each year. When I was referring to our work in resource sharing, the second column is the cost of that particular unit. Then, of course, together they constitute the whole library budget.

MR. HYLAND: And that return goes into GRF.

MR. McDOUGALL: That's right. The cash returns we get from the services we provide all go back into our fund with the Provincial Treasurer of Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Additional questions with regard to the whole section 11 here, the Legislature Library? Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, just the comment that I use the library services fairly regularly, and I want to commend the gentleman for the good service he does provide in there.

MR. McDOUGALL: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Before we go on to the next section, I also want to just give public thanks to the whole staff I'm fortunate enough to have working with me. That means all the staff and in particular the managers. With our fairly regular meetings with managers, we've been able to work a pretty good dynamic in terms of the Legislative Assembly operation. That, of course, is a great comfort, because when I'm sitting in the Chair, I have enough things to worry about other than having to worry about how the department's running that day. So I'm very appreciative of the work of all the staff, and I'd like to compliment Blake on not only running the library but in the helpful role he performs as the assistant deputy for the department. Then in addition to that, I've had him involved this year in doing preparation of a book on the Lieutenant Governors of the North-West Territories and province, which hopefully will see the light of day sometime in the next few months. He's been the one principally responsible for bringing that book together as well. I know from my other conferences across the country that the library and Blake in particular are held in high esteem. So thank you.

MR. McDOUGALL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if we might have about a five-minute break, and then we'll come back and deal with section 12, Information Systems. That's Bill Gano who's come into the room, for those of you who haven't met him before.

[The committee adjourned from 10:33 a.m. to 10:41 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If we might come back to order. If you'd turn in your estimate binder to section 12, Information Systems, Bill Gano is here with us to take us through it. The

whole operation of the Legislative Assembly from the electronic point of view has vastly increased. I don't know what the exponential rate is, but there's been an incredible change in four years and a very significant change within the last 18 months. In servicing the caucuses as well as servicing the individual members a lot of the efficiency is due to the gentleman who is with us now. So, Bill, if you'd like to make a few comments about the overview, let's go from there.

MR. GANO: Just a bit of an idea of what's gone on in the past few months. We have managed, as Mr. Chairman indicated, to increase data processing significantly over the last few months. In spite of that, as indicated in the summary page, we have managed to decrease since last year by about 20 percent. The main area of decrease, of course, is in fixed assets, which is mainly due to completion of the project that saw the automation of constituency offices. That also is responsible for the decrease in supplies and services as well, because we no longer have the same supplies that were required for the constituency offices. Those are the basic things that have been happening in Information Systems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any general questions with regard to the whole envelope or comments before we start to go into it?

MS BARRETT: Well, I'd just like to make a comment. I talked to Ross Harvey about this lately, who's come to traveling on a plane with his little laptop computer, and it turns out that even the House of Commons is going to a system very similar to ours. So it looks like it was a very good choice to have made. I mean, not only is it common in industry but even the House of Commons is following our example now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. MIROSH: Who's Ross Harvey?

MS BARRETT: Ah, just a friend of mine.

MRS. MIROSH: Does that make it good?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. On the second page is the statement of purpose, where you can see everything that's included within this envelope. As pointed out by Bill, we've finally come to the year where we don't have to be buying massive amounts of new equipment to get all the constituency offices and caucuses up to speed. We've now got ourselves through our three-year plan. Wasn't it three years?

All righty. Page 1 is that summary, so if you want to keep that, you can flip back and forth. Page 2: market and merit adjustments here. It's nice to see a section that's down but certainly up in its efficiency. It's not like we have a large staff in that area.

MR. HYLAND: So this is one new position, is it?

MR. GANO: Sorry?

MR. HYLAND: Is that a new position, Systems Analyst 1?

MR. GANO: Yeah, it's a position that was transferred from wages. We did have her here for over a year, and we've transferred her into project position.

MR. HYLAND: I know very little about computers. I ask my 10-year old; he tells me. He knows more than I do.

MR. GANO: Ain't it the truth though.

MRS. MIROSH: Is this Information Systems increase, this operational cost, a result of all our new computers?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What page are you on?

MRS. MIROSH: Just in general. Did we have to hire all new staff recently for operating these computers?

MR. GANO: We have hired one additional person, as well as myself when this whole project first started, so the operation of it has increased by that amount.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would be willing to compare our staff, the number of employees we have and the efficiency rate, to any department. I'll pick one out of the air: Alberta Treasury. I'd be willing to put a lot of money on the fact as to how much more efficient this group is and the smaller numbers required.

DR. McNEIL: Just to add to that, the Ontario systems group for the Legislative Assembly has 25 employees.

MRS. MIROSH: Twenty-five employees?

MR. GANO: I guess one aspect is that over the last 18 months you have a network that has grown from approximately 30-some work stations to almost a hundred work stations now as well as 70 constituency offices that are currently being supported by four people. This gives you a perspective on the amount of work that goes on in a month.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, if you want to talk efficiency, it takes Leg. Assembly from seven to 10 days, I think is their time, to turn around an expense cheque. It'd take other departments two to three weeks before you'd get your expense cheque.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I had one this week that was submitted on Monday and was back on Thursday, and I nearly fell off my chair.

MR. HYLAND: They know where it came from though. They saw whose signature was on the bottom.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Me?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; it was Edmonton-Whitemud. You both are such look-alikes.

MS BARRETT: Thanks a lot.

MR. WICKMAN: Thanks for the compliment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there you are; spoken like a true gentleman, Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: This page 3 is in conjunction with page 4, because the transfer of the position, transfer in wages, of course, is on page 4, 711C00. Transfer to nonpermanent: that's referring to that position, systems analyst I.

MR. GANO: That's right.

MR. WICKMAN: Previous to its being nonpermanent, it was classified as what, casual, temporary?

MR. GANO: Yeah. It was a wage position which was, you know, casual.

MR. WICKMAN: How long is it nonpermanent before it becomes permanent?

MR. GANO: Basically, there is no rule. The definition of a project position is when the project ends. Whether this project ends or not is up for debate right now.

MR. WICKMAN: But aren't some of these ongoing positions that you recognize are going to be ongoing? Why not simply make them permanent at this particular time?

DR. McNEIL: That's the decision that this committee has to make. When we revisit this budget in January, there may be a proposal with respect to this area.

MR. WICKMAN: My concern, Mr. Chairman, is as it relates to the provincial employee, the number of such positions. We see it happening a lot out there in the public sector, and it's not always fair to the employees. They're not given that status that assures them of some security. I'll raise it again in January, though, when we get into the details.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk, is it not fair to say, though, that we've been moving towards granting more of this stability, if you will, to the members of staff?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again, it's in the period of time since you've been with us.

MR. GANO: Moving a person from wage to the unit project position does give them additional security, if you will, but also provides them with regular benefits.

MR. WICKMAN: I realize you're going from step 1 to step 2. Then you get on to step 3.

10:51

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Thank you.

Page 5, then, is really matters of consequential flow, with the health care premiums and so forth.

Page 6 deals with staff training.

Conferences, page 7. A very minor increase there, one conference.

MR. HYLAND: That training is for the hundred work stations plus the constituencies, isn't it?

MR. GANO: That's right; caucus offices plus Leg. Assembly administration staff.

MR. McINNIS: That's contracted, isn't it?

MR. GANO: For the most part, yes. The WordPerfect-type training goes to a private firm. We do some in-house training ourselves, but this isn't really included in there.

MR. HYLAND: When it goes to private firms, is the contract put out on a bid basis?

MR. GANO: It was originally when we first started this. The ones we've been using for the last year or so have not had another bid come in since then.

MR. HYLAND: Has the price gone up?

MR. GANO: Their price has not. No, it has not gone up. I do occasionally do a bit of a market survey as well, you know, of different training firms, and their price is still lower than what the other firms have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's page 6.

Page 7.

Page 8.

Page 9, dealing with Computer Terminals, Leg. Assembly Office Fax, Datasets. Yes, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: On the fax, is that the toll charges? That's not equipment, right? That's charges for use.

MR. GANO: That's a rental charge.

MS BARRETT: A rental on fax machines?

MR. GANO: I believe that's from the library. Yeah, we're renting that one.

MR. McINNIS: That would be more than one fax though. Five thousand bucks . . .

MR. GANO: It's all of Legislative Assembly Office, all of their faxes.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

Would it be cheaper to buy them?

MR. GANO: Yeah, potentially.

DR. McNEIL: The difficulty is with the speed at which the technology is changing. We don't want to get caught in the box of having a fax that's out of date, so I would think in the next year or so we can make a decision as to whether or not to purchase if the changes in technology slow down.

MS BARRETT: When you're renting, do you have the right then to trade up without a penalty? So that's the temporary benefit.

MR. McINNIS: Well, as soon as we possibly can, we should try to get plain paper fax machines rather than the coated paper machines for environmental and, I think, cost reasons as well.

MS BARRETT: I didn't know such things existed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, this is really a heavy question then, Mr. Chairman. This question is addressed to you. If one division in your empire rents, and then if you go back to page 9, in the previous one they're buying, what's the policy of your empire?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Individual initiative in each section.

MR. KOWALSKI: There's certainly some degree here for some degree of consistency.

AN HON. MEMBER: On one hand and on the other.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yes. I want to make a comment. We may be getting carried away with some of this stuff too. These fax machines are everywhere. I think the legitimate question is: how many do we need, period. Everybody's got to have this new toy. There's got to be a question as to how many we need in a system, period. If you could answer the question in terms of the policy, I'd appreciate knowing what it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I already gave you the one answer, which I thought was pretty sparkling actually. I think the other thing would be: is it permissible for consistency to be applied not only to this department, which I agree with, but also to government, to opposition caucuses as well? That would be fair?

MR. KOWALSKI: That certainly should be the approach, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. We'll analyze it and come back to it.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As Maggie Thatcher said yesterday: you know, I'm starting to enjoy this.

MR. KOWALSKI: It was a heavy question too.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: I have a question relating to fax machines. Maybe it's here or maybe it should have been somewhere else. When you purchase your paper, if you have a fax machine in your constituency office or your home, you have to purchase the paper out of your constituency office allowance or your communications allowance, one of them, yet if it's here, it's supplied for you. Well, you've got it in the budget, yeah; not your communications budget. I think that's a little bit like the postal system used to be. If you posted out of your constituency office, you paid out of your communications budget. We changed that to keep that from happening. I think maybe we should look at this. I don't have a problem with the monthly charts. That goes against your communications budget. For every other occasion paper is supplied out of general administration. I think this should be looked at. Maybe it's been corrected since, but that's what I experienced when I had to buy some.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, there might be some confusion here. When we checked into a fax machine for the constituency offices, there were disadvantages to it. We chose not to go for one. It's not just the cost of the fax, but there's an ongoing line charge or service charge. I'm not sure if that also covers the cost of the paper. I would venture to say that there aren't that many constituency offices that would have fax machines.

DR. McNEIL: I don't know the total number, but there are quite a number that do have fax machines.

MR. HYLAND: It's different when you're an Edmonton person. You can get stuff over town through a . . .

MS BARRETT: What about your electronic mail though?

MRS. MIROSH: People from my constituency fax everything to my office.

MS BARRETT: Is that right?

MRS. MIROSH: It's for my constituents' business.

MR. HYLAND: I have one at home, and I have one in Redcliff.

MS BARRETT: You've got to have a separate line for that though. Can you use one line? Like, you might have two telephone lines coming into your office; they both have the same number. Can you dedicate one of those?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. McINNIS: You can switch back and forth. You answer the phone; if there's a fax coming in, you switch back.

MS BARRETT: Oh, wow. Okay. Interesting.

MRS. MIROSH: I don't know what I'd do without it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Now we come back to the formal part.

MR. McINNIS: There are a couple of issues here. One is whether a fax machine should be part of the standard, army-issue package of equipment in the constituency or community office, as the case may be. I don't know if that issue is on the table right now, but it might be.

MRS. MIROSH: No, it's not.

MR. McINNIS: The other one about paper, I think the solution to that problem again is plain paper fax machines. Then you don't have to buy these \$8 rolls of paper and worry about being junk faxed and having your paper all used up.

MR. HYLAND: Well, if you want to go to paper machines, you're looking at probably five or six times the value that we're paying for the machines that use the other paper. I know my last one was either just over or just under a thousand dollars. The paper ones are how much?

MR. GANO: Well, you can get plain paper copiers these days for between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

MR. HYLAND: Fax machines?

MR. GANO: Fax machines, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's also an interesting part of the environmental game to charge you more for the processes.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I wanted to comment on the question of who pays for the fax machine, the Leg. Assembly or the constituency office allocation. That question's been dealt with and reaffirmed by the committee. If a member wishes a fax machine, it comes out of the constituency office allocation. Now, if a member wishes to bring it back to the table in a formal way, they have the right to do that. There's no confusion about who provides the fax machine in a constituency office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I take it that we have some information coming back on page 9, page 10, and on page 11 with respect to the Legislative Assembly Office fax machine.

I recognize the Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: On page 12, can I get a clarification of what that Book Catalogue is? There's a dramatic increase there, and again the word "storage." This is the second time in the last half hour that the word storage has popped into this conversation. Can you tell me what that means?

MR. GANO: The storage that we're talking about here is storage of on-line records, records that are stored in the computer. They are continually increasing the size of the book catalogue. This actually runs off the U of A book catalogue. So what happens is the library, through its terminal, signs onto the U of A and enters titles and authors and those kinds of things into their book catalogue. Now, they're continually doing that, so the amount of space required in the computer is increasing. That's what we're referring to in the increased storage cost there.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I'd like some assurance that this figure won't continue to grow at that rate in each successive year. Because if it does, we'd better reassess our participation.

MR. GANO: No, it's not going to continue to increase. Basically, this is an initial entry that they've been carrying on for about the past three years, and there are two more years left before they get all their catalogue entries into the computer. At that point those costs will not increase any further.

11:01

MR. BOGLE: I think we'd better assess it in more detail when we come back in January, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we can get the Department of Advanced Education to give us a sum of money.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it's a very valid question, because a number of departments of government have their own libraries as well, and if all departments are basically moving in the same direction, what you've got is really quite an incredible duplication of something. You only need one for the government. If it's the Legislature Library, that's fine, but if 25 or 30

other departments are doing exactly the same thing, that's totally redundant.

MS BARRETT: I don't think that's what at issue here. It's buying into the university system, isn't it? That's what this is about?

MR. GANO: That's right.

MS BARRETT: I mean, that collection is going to be infinitely larger than all of the government departments combined, n'est-ce pas?

MR. GANO: No. I'm sorry, I misunderstood. It's only for the catalogue entries in the Legislature Library. Okay?

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see.

MR. GANO: But we are using the U of A's computer to do it.

MS BARRETT: Which is cheaper than if we were . . .

MR. GANO: Which was cheaper at the point in time when they started than using PWSS.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll still come back to you with more information.

DR. McNEIL: Just to add one other item here, over the next year we will be looking at the whole issue of automation in the Legislature Library in terms of what the effect is of what we're doing now and what's possible to do, given the technology we now have. Coming out of that particular project, I suspect, will be recommendations as to what we need to do over the next five years to make sure that our library capabilities are up to date as far as what we can do with our present electronic capabilities. That's something that we'll probably take a year to get our heads around and define, but we will at that stage come to the committee with some proposals in terms of where we think the library should go in the future to be in the 21st century as far as technology is concerned. This is likely to be one of the many aspects that have to be dealt with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we take that as a commitment for this time next year. Thank you.

Page 13. A significant decrease: down 62 percent.

Page 14, the equipment. Thank you. Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MS BARRETT: What does LAIS stand for, please?

MR. GANO: Legislative Assembly . . .

MS BARRETT: Information systems? Okay. Well, then, when it says LAIS project, what's the project there?

MR. GANO: The project itself is to look, basically, at the overall information requirements of the Assembly as a whole. Right now we have a number of different pieces out there. We have electronic mail, we've got word processing, we've got people signing onto mainframe computers to do corporate registry lookups, *Hansard* lookups: those kinds of things. Really what it is is an umbrella type of thing in terms of how to bring everything together.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. How to connect it all. Okay.

Could I keep going? I've got a number of questions on this page. The Purchase of EDP Equipment to Replace Unmaintainable and Obsolete Hardware. Is that replacing the old NBI stuff? Is that the ongoing project there?

MR. GANO: Basically what it is is a maintenance function to replace any obsolete equipment. We have had now machines of the newer type for two years, so they will be coming up to three years old. The obsolescence will begin to build on those, so that's part of that as well, even to increasing some of the equipment that is currently in the caucus offices and the administration offices.

MS BARRETT: That's the AST stuff already?

MR. GANO: Potentially, yeah. I'm not saying that will go out, but the figure is for maintenance types of things: you know, if we get a machine that dies altogether, replacing that machine. It's sometimes cheaper to buy a machine than to repair it these days.

MS BARRETT: That was what I was leading into, and I see David wants in. We used to have a figure in here that was a couple of hundred thousand bucks a year. What was that deal we had with NBI?

DR. McNEIL: That was maintenance.

MS BARRETT: This one looks a lot lower now.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. We were paying \$250,000 a year to NBI for maintenance. But when the committee adopted the strategic plan, one of the key elements of the strategic plan was a yearly allocation for maintenance of equipment. That's what this refers to. This was proposed so that instead of going for five years and not spending anything and then having to replace everything, as we've done a couple of times with NBI and now with the AST, we would avoid big increases in the budget for EDP services by taking this particular approach.

MS BARRETT: My question is: it is still a lot cheaper than the annual cost we used to have to pay to NBI, n'est-ce pas?

DR. McNEIL: Half or less than half.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was a great exercise in fiscal responsibility when we as a committee went into this. Any other comment? Clerk, and then Edmonton-Jasper Place.

DR. McNEIL: Just to add that if there's an item in this budget that's critical in terms of the long-term health of the EDP system, it's this particular one. We hope to avoid the situation where one year we have to budget \$500,000 to replace everything we have. That's what this is designed to do.

MR. McINNIS: I certainly support the expenditure on replacement and repair. I just wonder when the day comes when MLAs have access to this equipment. When I was a staff person I had a unit at my desk, but now I can't find one no matter what

I do. The ones we have are always busy. When do MLAs get onto the system?

MR. WICKMAN: You could always go back to staff, John.

MR. McINNIS: I appreciate that helpful suggestion.

MR. GANO: Supply of equipment for MLA use is a planned project for next year, and that's that \$45,000 you see under Caucus Office Automation.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Other comments?

Well, thank you, Bill. I want to just also mention to the committee that thanks in large measure to yourselves and your predecessors, certainly from the establishment of the committee at the 1986 election and certainly again with the 1989 election, with your foresight – our collective foresight – and then together with the direction from Leg. Assembly Office, and in particular the hiring of Bill Gano, we have indeed the most sophisticated and most efficient servicing system in all of North America and Europe. Because of the comparative conversations I've had with other jurisdictions, this is indeed leading the way, and a lot of that efficiency is thanks to you as a committee for hanging in with it but also to Bill and his staff for doing it.

Along that line, we have also made the offer to other jurisdictions, as we do with the efficiency of *Hansard*, for example, that if other jurisdictions want to come here or phone and be apprised of how these systems operate, we've made the offer so that they themselves will hopefully be able to save some money along the way and not go making a lot of mistakes, which is easy enough to do. In our case here, we go back to the system we had in place before, which we inherited and which is now no longer with us, thank goodness.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I never asked this earlier. Does that mean we have you permanently; you're not on secondment anymore? Remember, we borrowed Bill from Municipal Affairs or somewhere.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have to speak to the Clerk. What's your response?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, we have Bill nonpermanently. The position he's presently in is a nonpermanent position. It would be my recommendation, the next time we go through this budget, to move Bill's position into the permanent category. I believe that given the level of technology we have now, we need a permanent position to manage that function. I think it's very important, and I think it will become more important as years go on. From my perspective the essence of being an MLA is using information and needing information, and I think that's key.

11:11

MR. BOGLE: I certainly support what's being said, Mr. Chairman. I know Bill was of great assistance to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries.

MS BARRETT: And everybody else.

MR. BOGLE: Well, everyone. I rifle in on that because of our work on the committee.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I know. You're just saying from that committee. I agree. Let Municipal Affairs go and find their own replacement, eh?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we're talking about the service component to the committee. Those of you who have had the opportunity to go over and look at the mapping system for the Electoral Boundaries Commission, it is really something else. The amount of information that's in there is mind boggling. Of course, all that system is under the direction of the Assembly for whatever the future direction is in this whole area.

All right. That takes us through this budget estimate book with the exception of not only the caucus budgets but also section 2, MLA Administration. Yesterday there was some preliminary notice of a possibility that there might be some adjustment made. Are we now prepared to go back to this section 2 and go through that?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, in view of the time, is it still our intention to wrap up by 12 o'clock?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm concerned that we're not going to cover all aspects.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If need be, we'll call a meeting prior to Christmas, after the House rises, if indeed the House does rise by Christmas Eve. Then I think we should have a look at some early dates in January, the first week or two of January – is it possible? – and the last couple of weeks in February, which is when we'll do the final number crunching. So we'll come back to that after we go through this section.

MS BARRETT: Is all that's remaining on the agenda for today, then, is do this section and then set meeting dates?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As far as I know, unless there are any other issues. Hopefully, we should be able to make our pitch by the time we get to noon, and lunch. Okay. The lunch is being looked for. When the lunch arrives, if you'll just get up and go for your sandwiches and soup and come on back, we'll just keep working through.

All right. We're now on section 2, MLA Administration. The Clerk, please. You have an overview sheet.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. The overview sheet indicates an MLA administration budget projected increase in expenditures overall of 1.7 percent. The difficulty in going through this budget will be that a large part of this budget relates to the constituency office allowance and communications allowance and promotional allowance. So a large part of this is fixed, based on the formulas for calculating the constituency office allowance. That's \$38,036 per member per year: the promotional allowance based on the number of electors, and the communications allowance based on the number of constituents. We have proposed an increase in the communications allowance as a function of the increase in the postal rate. Instead of using the .85 formula, which was the case in the past, we recommend it go up to 88 cents per constituent. So that formula has changed, and that's reflected in here as well. That's a function of the projected increase in postal rates; as well, some portion of that postage cost will be the member being required to pay GST on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, on all of these are we doing actual costs, or are we doing constituency offices, travel . . . Example: are we doing actual costs of the amount of constituency offices that are out there, or are we doing what could be the maximum? And the same with travel.

DR. McNEIL: No. In terms of the constituency office allowance and the travel relating to constituency offices, that would all be within the formula to calculate those. In terms of the others, though, the MLA airline credit card, MLA gasoline usage, and so on, it's based on projection of actuals. As I indicated, when we go through here page by page, you'll see this.

Page 2, Constituency Staff. That \$900,000 is just an allocation from the total budget for constituency offices to the staff portion of it.

MR. WICKMAN: Just on that page, Mr. Chairman, if I could. For the next meeting or when we deal with this, I guess in January, could you bring back two pieces of information for me? One is what we talked about in terms of the inflation indexing, the latest one, which I believe is something like 6.1 percent in the Edmonton area or, say, Alberta. I'm looking at inflation factors built in here. Constituency staff by and large are not well-paid people.

Secondly, if I could get an indication of the average increase that has been given through the unionized settlements. I believe it's 5 and 5.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. WICKMAN: So that I could equate that to what's happening within our constituency offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you just have confirmation of the figures, right?

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, confirmation of those figures. I suspect it's around 6 percent for indexing of inflation and 5 percent for the settled contracts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments at this moment?
That was page 2, \$900,000, Constituency Staff.
Page 3 . . .

DR. McNEIL: . . . being the benefits flowing from that.

Page 4, Staff Training and Constituency Staff. Again, that's an allocation.

MR. BOGLE: This is a new figure, or is it a transfer?

DR. McNEIL: Just a transfer.

MS BARRETT: From where?

DR. McNEIL: Well, out of the constituency office budget. There's more training going on in the offices.

MS BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

DR. McNEIL: But I want to check on that one. I think that's the case, but I'm not dead certain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But a lot of this relates back to the electronic office, which is why we're having to do so much more training. Then if there's a changeover at the constituency office level with your staff, we're back into training your new people again. Okay, do some more checking on that with regard to page 4. If you want to turn down the corner of that one, to come back.

Page 5, Travel Expenses.

DR. McNEIL: This is where we're projecting increased costs of airlines, looking at our actual expenditures this year and then projecting the increase in air fares as well, as well as the gasoline credit card program, basing a 20 percent gas price increase into that particular budget and then again based on the actual experience that we've had with that.

MLA Mileage Program: this number is projected based on the actual expenditure. If the assumption is that the allowances will change there, then that would cause an increase in that budget.

MR. WICKMAN: If Three Hills becomes part of Edmonton-Whitemud after redistribution, do I get an extension on my mileage allowance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, because you won't be there in Three Hills constituency, I suspect. Which political party do you think you'll run for? The Reform, perhaps?

MR. BOGLE: Yeah. John refers to the greening of the hill, when I refer to the greening of Edmonton.

11:21

DR. McNEIL: Our estimates for next year should be a little more accurate when we deal with this budget again in January or February. When we have a couple more months of experience, our projections will be a lot better, but this is our best guess at this stage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Taber-Warner, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

MR. BOGLE: Actually, I'll hold until we get down to the former MLAs' travel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.
Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: I want to bring up the question again about bulk buying of airline tickets. I understand that some of the government departments can buy a lot cheaper than we can in the Leg. Assembly. I know you've checked on it, but I've been told by government departments that they get a substantial decrease through bulk buying.

DR. McNEIL: When we checked last time, we didn't find any difference.

MRS. MIROSH: There was. If I bought through my own individual card, there was a substantial decrease. There isn't now because of the changes in the gasoline prices, but other departments in government have in fact received a discount to buy tickets for a whole year.

DR. McNEIL: Well, we'll pursue that again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Which departments?

MRS. MIROSH: That was Economic Development and Trade. The person you can speak to there is Erv Lack.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Because I know we did go through this, and again the answer came back that it was exactly the same rate. But thank you; we will try.

MRS. MIROSH: He said they have so many people that go back and forth all the time, and they buy them. It saved a lot of money.

DR. McNEIL: We spend a lot of money on airline tickets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I've heard the same thing too. I think the issue here is that, if I'm not mistaken, most of the air travel is between Edmonton and Calgary, n'est-ce pas? That is exactly what I've heard as well, that you can do bulk buying for just the Edmonton-Calgary routes.

MR. WICKMAN: On the airbus.

MS BARRETT: No; like real big bulk buying, like hundreds of tickets at a time.

MR. WICKMAN: Where you get a 20 percent discount.

MR. KOWALSKI: You can travel for free on Greyhound. That's one alternative.

MS BARRETT: Do you, Ken? Do you use the Greyhound?

MR. KOWALSKI: I don't go to Calgary.

MS BARRETT: Oh, but I know the Greyhound goes to Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Actually it does, every Friday night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Well, we'll double-check that one. Thank you.

All right. Do you want to carry on down the sheet there, please, Clerk, on page 5, Former Members' Travel. I guess that's where we're at at the moment. Thank you.
Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: I wanted to ask a question about it. We've had more than a year's experience with it now. When we come back to it, I'd like to see the actual as well.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I would too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My impression is that it has indeed increased this year. We get lots of thank you notes about it.

DR. McNEIL: And the reduction in Spousal/Guest Travel is because of the actual usage.

MS BARRETT: Can you remind me what's allowed under that? I can't remember. Four trips? Now, that is if your spouse or

guest lives outside of Edmonton and comes to visit you in the capital? Okay.

MR. BOGLE: Including family.

MS BARRETT: So children are now guests.

MR. BOGLE: They're part of the family.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, children can be 22.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My understanding was that years ago – and Cypress-Redcliff, you were on one of the previous incarnations of this committee. Was it not drafted originally that it was going to be five trips for spouses per year? That's one thing we need to go back and check.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah, I think it was. Where's Ken? He and I were talking about that just a few days ago, that it seems to be four and five came up either in that or in the other travel related to MLAs going elsewhere on business.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, I think five was for the MLAs going elsewhere.

MR. HYLAND: We weren't sure. We wondered about that, if that should be checked to see if indeed it should be five.

MR. BOGLE: It is five for MLAs going. It is five.

MR. HYLAND: We were just wondering if we missed, from the original way back, on the spousal travel too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. That reminds me that Louise had done a check back to Members' Services orders, and we can bring that forward to the next meeting. Thanks, Louise. But I think there was a historical glitch that did occur.

DR. McNEIL: But that is not an extensively used program, to the extent that, you know, it could be.

MR. HYLAND: Which one?

DR. McNEIL: The spousal travel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For those who use it, it would be useful. Okay, so we'll come back with that information.

DR. McNEIL: Page 6, Advertising. The \$120,000 there is just the allocation from the communication allowance to advertising, and the Telephone Directory Advertising is the . . .

MR. HYLAND: I think I'm still back on the last page.

DR. McNEIL: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're still on page 5. That's fine.

MR. HYLAND: Sylvia and I are just arguing here, and I'm not sure who's right now.

MR. KOWALSKI: Probably Sylvia.

MR. HYLAND: Probably Sylvia. When your constituency office staff comes to Edmonton, it's charged through Constituency Office, isn't it?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. HYLAND: And the same if your secretary here goes to your constituency office; that comes out of the same budget. You have enough room in your budget to do that, right?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. HYLAND: So why is it coming out of Administration and not Constituency Offices?

AN HON. MEMBER: It's just separated.

DR. McNEIL: That 712K00 there is where it comes from in terms of the overall \$38,036.

MRS. MIROSH: Is that where it comes out of, the \$38,000?

DR. McNEIL: Well, yes.

MS BARRETT: Then the same is true for MLA Telephone Directory Advertising? We take that out of the constituency budget, don't we?

DR. McNEIL: No.

MS BARRETT: We don't? Oh.

DR. McNEIL: No, that comes out of the administration budget.

MR. HYLAND: We changed that a few years ago so it would be all the same.

DR. McNEIL: There are really two components to this MLA Administration budget: the Members' Services allowance component, which is the constituency office allowance, the promotional allowance, and the communications allowance; and then those things that the administration office pays for for members.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Now, I'm going to take it that we have moved from page 5. Cypress-Redcliff, after the meeting if you would visit with Louise, she found the appropriate section, which dates back to 1980, and it was six trips.

All righty. Now we're on page 6, although there have been comments with regard to page 6, communication and MLA Telephone Directory Advertising. Is that all right? May we now move on to 7?

Okay. Page 7 takes us to MLA Postage, Freight, and Communication Allowance.

DR. McNEIL: This is where we're seeing significant increases in postage. That's reflected in next year's estimate, and you see the MLA communication office calculation there and then those various transfers to the various budget components related to communications.

MR. WICKMAN: Just one question here on the MLA constituency offices' postage and freight. We've always made the attempt to separate constituency mailings and caucus mailings, and I understood that there was a limitation on the MLA constituency postage. Now, if I divide the thing you have here by 83, it's considerably higher than what I understood the limitation to be. Is there no limitation on constituency postage?

DR. McNEIL: We've never established a dollar figure as far as I'm aware.

MR. WICKMAN: So what happens if some member is sending out \$6,000 worth?

11:31

DR. McNEIL: Well, this in an area where I believe we need to exercise increased control and monitoring over to assess those kinds of things. We've started to attempt to do that in terms of monitoring the individual caucus' postages.

MR. WICKMAN: Don't misunderstand me. I think the communication aspect is extremely important. One of the highest priorities is the ability to communicate with one's constituents. I'm not saying that it's overexpended or it's too luxurious. I just want to know what the rules are.

DR. McNEIL: This number here, \$349,842, is something that comes out of each individual's constituency office allowance. So it's totally up to you as an individual how much you spend on postage as long as it's within your total constituency office budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that when we get the postage machine filled in the constituency office, it doesn't come out of the constituency budget.

DR. McNEIL: It's not my understanding.

MR. WICKMAN: Only for bulk mailings it comes out of the constituency. [interjection] I'm sorry; you're wrong. It doesn't.

MR. KOWALSKI: Better check into that, because I've been paying for it.

MRS. MIROSH: I've been paying for it.

MR. McINNIS: The policy on postage has some confusing elements to it. I'm quite confused too, because somebody told me recently that there's been sort of a daily limit put on the caucuses and they're billed back in excess of that. There's some confusion about what's paid and not paid out of the constituency office budget. I wonder if we could get a statement of what the policy is. That might help.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next meeting. Because we also have had a couple of other members go down and do some other huge bulk mailings from this building. It's not up to us to be paying for your bulk mailings; you take it out of your own allowances.

DR. McNEIL: This is an area of concern that we need to look at more closely.

MR. BOGLE: Bulk mailings through the Assembly?

MR. HYLAND: There'd be nothing wrong with doing the bulk mailing from here. It's just billed differently. You bill it to the communication department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Robert Day said: it is now. Emphasis on the "now."

Okay. Page 8.

DR. McNEIL: Again, that allocation, \$582,000, is just an allocation from the constituency office allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 9.

The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. On page 8, that figure \$582,000: that's the figure to rent 83 constituency offices. This is just a global figure?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: So the average cost would be a simple division of 83 into \$582,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are not 83 offices.

MR. KOWALSKI: No, I mean for simplistic purposes, that's basically the division.

DR. McNEIL: Roughly, yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: What's the range? Do you know what the range is offhand, in terms of what each individual MLA would be paying?

DR. McNEIL: Well, we did a study for the committee last year that was quite . . . I mean, some people are paying \$50 a month; others are paying \$700 or \$800. We can update that information if you would like. But there's a wide range.

MRS. MIROSH: I'm one of the highest, and so is Percy.

MR. KOWALSKI: Diane, what's yours?

MRS. MIROSH: Mine's \$900, and I just have a little, teeny-weeny office.

MR. KOWALSKI: You've got a community centre.

MS BARRETT: When I pay all my bills, mine comes to almost \$900 as well. It's outrageous.

MR. WICKMAN: Is yours going up again, Dianne?

MRS. MIROSH: No.

MR. WICKMAN: Mine goes up another 7 percent with the lease agreement. It's in the lease agreement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're speaking to the expert on leases next to you.

MR. WICKMAN: The problem is I might have to get a second constituency office.

MRS. MIROSH: I might get kicked out if he doesn't finish it. It includes utilities. It better; that's the deal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Page 9, MLA Equipment Rental, Constituency Office and Residential, in a few cases. Equipment Installation, MLA Tolls. Any comments there, Clerk?

DR. McNEIL: Again, the projected increase is based on actual levels.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We go to page 10.

DR. McNEIL: Standard maintenance costs there. Page 11.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, under MLA School Photos I'm surprised the figure hasn't gone up.

MS BARRETT: Why?

MR. BOGLE: Because that's a cost-shared program between Leg. Assembly and the constituency office, and our costs went up during this school year.

MS BARRETT: Did they? I didn't realize.

MR. BOGLE: We received a notice.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is it more schools coming, Bob, or . . .

MR. BOGLE: No. It was the cost per school group.

DR. McNEIL: It was a new contract.

MS BARRETT: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that.

MR. BOGLE: So our costs automatically went up. Could you check on that when we come back to the issue?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: On that point, Mr. Chairman, I'm finding a much greater request for the Leg. tours. If anything, in addition to the point Mr. Bogle raised, I think the increased demand would account for a sizable increase as well. It's a good program; the students love it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And so do all the MLAs. You're so photogenic.

MRS. MIROSH: Uh huh, including the Speaker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Depends on the day.

Okay. Any other questions or comments with regard to page 11, congratulatory scrolls and all those good, interesting things?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. What is "MLA Printing (Communication Allowance, 712E00)"? What is that? Is that actually from our constituency budget and just noted in here?

DR. McNEIL: I'm sorry, what page are you . . .

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry, page 11, three-quarters of the way down. Well, no, not even . . . Where am I now? I've lost it. Yeah, about three-quarters down. "MLA Printing (Communica-

tion Allowance, 712E00)." That's actually from our constituency budgets, isn't it?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Okay. That's what I thought.

MRS. MIROSH: Now, that's pretty well staying the same. On mine it's gone up.

DR. McNEIL: Well, that's the . . .

MS BARRETT: But it's a discretionary item.

DR. McNEIL: That's just something that you pay for within the overall bounds of your constituency office allowance.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah, but still, hasn't everybody's gone up?

MR. CHAIRMAN: But it's dependent upon the amount that is paid to you per constituent. Right?

MS BARRETT: Yes. It's on the formula.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it's how you work within that formula. In order to change the whole formula, you have to go back to change the formula that's applied in the green book.

MS BARRETT: I wouldn't mind that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But I'm sure that you'll find some creative ways to cut costs within your own operation, Dianne.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, there's one item there, MLA Formal Writing Sheets and Envelopes. I'm sorry. Did somebody raise that? That's a dramatic increase.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. That's something we have to look at more carefully but there has been a significant increase. Now, this budget item here is for overprinting of the standard stuff that we buy with the MLA's name and address and so on.

MR. KOWALSKI: And that's just demand driven?

DR. McNEIL: That's demand driven.

MR. KOWALSKI: No cost control on any of us for that.

DR. McNEIL: No. That's correct. That's demand driven as a function of how much correspondence goes out of the office.

MS BARRETT: You're writing a lot more.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, there's no cost control, then, if it's demand driven. It would seem to me one of the things we should look at in a lot of these things is basically try and determine a formula on a per-MLA basis that may be similar to the other formulas we've got in place. Just attach it to this so-called one package for each MLA, and then there's a governance based on 83 governancees rather than something being demand driven. That's a \$52,000 increase in writing sheets and envelopes. That's a lot of money for a lot of paper. That's a lot of trees. Because then it has to be translated to postage as well with it. Just as point of principle, the more governance we have

on each and everyone of us, the more responsible we'll be in budget decision-making.

MS BARRETT: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to add to that. In terms of looking, I'd also like to look comparatively at government departments to see if this increase is comparable to what's happened in other departments over the last few years. I have a feeling that it is, that it's not out of step. That's my guess. But I wouldn't mind some comparative being brought back to us on that.

11:41

MR. WICKMAN: And I think, again, Mr. Chairman, the point has to be made. Let's be very, very careful about overreacting to simply communicating with constituents and Albertans, which I feel is a vital part of being a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I don't see that as being a criticism of that.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I can connect this, Mr. Chairman. The increase in writing sheets and such, the increase in postage is maybe an increased attempt to communicate with constituents and Albertans, which I think is good, whether it's the New Democrat caucus doing it, us doing it, or the Progressive Conservative caucus.

MRS. MIROSH: Was this \$48,000 last year the actual cost of it, or was that underestimated?

DR. McNEIL: That was what we budgeted for.

MRS. MIROSH: You budgeted, but did you budget under?

DR. McNEIL: It may have been. I can't tell you that off the top of my head, but it may be that it was underestimated.

MRS. MIROSH: It may not have been the actual increase in use.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. KOWALSKI: But this is for vanity writing sheets and envelopes. This has nothing to do with paper and communications. This is the one that you basically have the sheet of paper and put your name on it. This is all vanity.

DR. McNEIL: This is the charge for overprinting of these various things.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, you mean this isn't our everyday stationery?

MR. KOWALSKI: This is vanity stuff. You put your name on it and send it out.

MRS. MIROSH: I haven't even got one of those.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's a whopping increase. It just makes no sense.

MS BARRETT: Don't you pay for that out of constituency budgets?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, wait a minute. Clerk, respond, and then Edmonton-Jasper Place.

As promised for next meeting, we're going to have the actual, because then we'll have had at least another month into this fiscal year to get the figures.

MR. BOGLE: Well, and determine whether or not it more properly belongs in the constituency office. If an MLA wants his name on it, the MLA should be paying for it in that way.

MS BARRETT: We're not talking about letterhead. I'm getting really confused now.

DR. McNEIL: What this pays for is MLA and Legislative Assembly staff business cards. It's printing of specific names and addresses on a standard business card. The next one is MLA "Compliments of" Cards. There's a standard "compliments of" card, but then we overprint it. We personalize it for each member, for those members that request it. The MLA budget pays for that. The MLA and Officer Letterhead and Envelopes and Overprinting: again, there's a standard letterhead which is overprinted with the member's caucus office address and so on. MLA Formal Writing Sheets and Envelopes: again a standard piece of paper, but then it's overprinted. What I'll do is bring examples of each of these in next time and go through it in much more detail than we can do today.

MR. WICKMAN: Bring those "compliments of" cards if you could, because we've been told we can't get those.

MR. HYLAND: Haven't you got a printer in Edmonton-Whitemud?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Would you also check into that matter? Who told you, hon. member?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, within our caucus when we made inquiries as to getting the "compliments of" and getting the cards personalized, we were told we were going to have to pay for those, that they're over and above the budget. So we just get the yellow cards that simply say, "compliments of."

MS BARRETT: That's what he's talking about.

MR. WICKMAN: That's not personalized. I don't consider that personalized when it simply says "compliments of."

MS BARRETT: It doesn't say it's personalized. It just says . . .

MR. HYLAND: Percy, I'll give you the name of a printer in Bow Island that will do a couple of thousand up for about 60 bucks.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm just having trouble figuring out how we rack up \$100,000 on the so-called personalized letterhead, the business cards, whatever. That's over \$1,000 a constituency, and that isn't making sense to me.

MR. KOWALSKI: Yeah, I don't use it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, on this specifically could you find out who in your caucus spoke to whom in our operation,

and then would you have a conversation with the Clerk so that we can get that part cleared up?

Edmonton-Jasper Place has been waiting patiently.

MR. McINNIS: Well, I think some analysis would be helpful, but I'm certainly not prepared to hit the panic button on stationery, because the demand that drives it is correspondence that you get in the mail. I think that if people take the trouble to write a Member of the Legislative Assembly, they're deserving of some response from the member. In sending a letter back, I guess the staff doesn't really have to worry greatly whether they've used up too much stationery this month and have to ration replies and whether we can afford to respond or not. It seems to me if there's a desperate need to cut in government, we can find somewhere other than taking away our stationery.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, the issue is not stationery, John.

MS BARRETT: It isn't, eh? Okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: No. We've all got a standard piece of paper with the crest of the Legislative Assembly on it. The issue is that if John McInnis sends somebody a letter and he's going to sign it "John," does he also have to have his name printed on it, which drives the costs for this? That's the vanity point. I use a simple format, blank paper that everybody else uses, but if old Percy wants to make sure his name's on it, then that's where it drives the cost.

MR. BOGLE: Not only his name but Three Hills . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Oh, yeah, Three Hills as well.

DR. McNEIL: I think there's another thing to add here. Because of the change in technology, now that we have laser printers, we have a much greater capability to create and personalize stationery on the laser printer as opposed to what we had to do in the past.

MR. McINNIS: But the issue is stationery.

DR. McNEIL: We can look at this again. Maybe Bill Gano can assist the caucuses in terms of designing something that you can do when you send out that correspondence using the laser printer.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would suspect that's something other than stationery because that amount is up 107 percent and postage is up 33 percent. So it's not correspondence going in and out. It must be something else because that's a 70 percent difference.

MRS. MIROSH: Underestimated the last time.

MS BARRETT: I understood that for the envelopes, if you ordered . . . Let's say we use just standard Leg. Assembly envelopes, right? And if we wanted to have them overprinted, say, with "Official Opposition," that cost our caucus budget money. So we stopped doing that five, six years ago. Is that not the case? Doesn't it cost your caucus budget if you want to have "Official Opposition" put on them?

DR. McNEIL: I'll have to check on that one. I believe it does, but I don't . . .

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I realize this is a really confusing issue. Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyway, to page 12, MLA Beverage Service back of the House, Constituency Offices Working Sessions.

MR. McINNIS: Constituency Offices Working Sessions?

MS BARRETT: I think that comes under your constituency budget again. That's 712E00.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. It's transferred from your . . .

MS BARRETT: It's transferred like every couple of months.

DR. McNEIL: If you had a town hall meeting and you served coffee or whatever.

MR. McINNIS: That's where the child care, transportation, and that is.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When you're feeding coffee to your kids in your day care at your town hall meeting, then it's a transfer out of your account. There are some places here where there needs a lot of . . . Well, and rightly so, we leave it to a lot of reasonable discretion by the member.

Okay. Page 13 is pretty standard, Light and Power for Constituency Office.

MS BARRETT: Is that also a transfer out of constituency budget?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, okay.

MR. KOWALSKI: We're going to hit stationery, again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On page 14, yes, we're back to make your imprimatur on stationery here, 185 thou. Promotional allowance.

MS BARRETT: Ah, there. Okay. That answers the question of the stationery right there.

DR. McNEIL: The next one, page 15, is just Indemnity and Expense Allowance and the various benefits that flow to the members. It's a straightforward calculation.

MR. WICKMAN: So within this program, Mr. Chairman, the portions that are used at the constituency office are charged in this particular category, which is charged back to the constituency budget?

MS BARRETT: No, you're on stationery now.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm on 712P00.

MS BARRETT: No, that's Leg. Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, you're back on page 14. We were on 15. So then, okay, we're on 14 again.

MS BARRETT: Stationery comes out of Leg. Assembly, the Promotional Allowance is part of your constituency budget, and I don't know where Miscellaneous Services . . .

DR. McNEIL: That would be out of the constituency budget as well.

MR. WICKMAN: Stationery Purchased for Use by MLAs you're saying is part of the caucus budget.

MS BARRETT: No, it's part of Leg. Assembly.

DR. McNEIL: It's part of the Leg. Assembly Office budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Leg. Assembly. Okay.

DR. McNEIL: In other words, we provide the standard . . .

MR. WICKMAN: No, I get the difference between the two now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you volunteering to have it go into your caucus budget?

MR. WICKMAN: No. The other portion obviously is - I mean, Barrhead was referring to it earlier - the category where we saw the increase to \$100,000 from \$52,000.

11:51

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Why don't we move on? Page 15 is consequential. Page no name, 16, Data Processing Equipment. This is a transfer.

MR. McINNIS: Well, on 15, Workers' Compensation. Are MLAs covered by workers' compensation?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: In case you get a sore back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In case the Speaker gets lockjaw.

MS BARRETT: I've never seen Canada Pension Plan contributions go down before in my life. That's like talking about taxes going down. How did that happen?

DR. McNEIL: Previously these benefits had been budgeted on a gross formula: CPP, UIC, and WCB. Now they're broken out. Treasury has provided us with more specific information this year as to percentages that are allocated to each one of those.

MS BARRETT: I see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Page 17.

MS BARRETT: Can I have one more question, please, on page 15? What's Extended Benefits Plan Funding? Is that Blue Cross?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Boy, those premiums really went up, eh? Is

that what happened? Or did more people just start subscribing?

MR. KOWALSKI: That's the same figure. Nothing has gone up.

MR. McINNIS: You're looking at Alberta Health Care.

MS BARRETT: No. On the very bottom, Extended Benefits . . .

DR. McNEIL: Sorry. Extended Benefits Plan Funding is the cost of the benefits plan for former members. So members who continue their benefits . . .

MS BARRETT: So that has to do with the subscription rate, not the price, the premiums; in other words, more people are subscribing to that optional program. Is that correct?

MR. BOGLE: That's the plan that's parallel to the early retirement for public servants, where someone can continue to be covered for up to a maximum of five years.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. But the premiums didn't go up 68 percent. The subscription rate . . . Yeah, okay.

MR. BOGLE: No. It's based on actual usage. I guess we estimated \$25,000 last year, and it was an underestimate.

MS BARRETT: It was a first-year deal. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Is it not correct that we had to deal with a special circumstance that had arisen?

MR. BOGLE: Does that come into this category?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. BOGLE: That we have one unique case.

MS BARRETT: What?

MR. CHAIRMAN: When you have certain members that have health difficulties.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Page 16. Since it's down a hundred percent, I'm sure we can pass on to page 17, dictaphones and dictamites. I'm interested to see that some of these are still around.

MRS. MIROSH: Dictamites?

MS BARRETT: I asked that last year. They're minidictaphones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Does that take us through the overview on there? There is no additional information at this stage, I gather, about mileage formulas or anything like that, Member for Taber-Warner? Because that had been raised.

MR. BOGLE: No. Could we hold that over to our next meeting, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, members, for taking the time to go through that, and there are a number of issues to come back, including the actual costs.

Before we go on to setting the dates, I understand that a Members' Services order was drafted with respect to coverage. Mr. Clegg, would you like to circulate that? This is a result of yesterday.

If a Member contracts for a service to facilitate communication, the Member shall, where possible, contract with a person who is licensed and insured to carry out that service.

I think what I'm saying here is that we'll pass these out for information, then we'll bring that to the next meeting.

Hon. members, if you'd like to take these for the next meeting.

MR. BOGLE: As well, we will deal with the constituency signage next meeting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I think in view of the weather and the time, we will. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. M. CLEGG: Mr. Chairman, if you wish, I could distribute that for information so the members have it. Because I wasn't able to lay my hands on it yesterday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, if we distribute the one, we'd better distribute them both.

All right. While that's going on, if you'd like to look at your date books, please. The first matter is this. I think we should have another meeting prior to the end of the year. I think we need to leave it at the call of the Chair but in this sense: that as soon as the House rises, those members that live outside the city of Edmonton, please do not make the rash assumption you can go home right away, that depending on the day the House rises, we would probably call a meeting for the next morning. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MRS. MIROSH: I won't be here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Specifics. You can send your notes as to your absence.

MR. McINNIS: Would that mean that if we rose on a Friday, we'd meet on a Saturday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we need to talk about that for a moment. Because if indeed the House rises on Friday, the 21st, then I think we'd better assume we will meet on Friday afternoon after the House has shut down or keep as a proviso that we will meet on the Saturday morning, which would be highly unusual. But let's keep that so that we don't disappoint the little kids back home. The closer you get to Christmas, the more difficult it is, of course. All right, then.

Let us, then, look beyond that to the first week of January. Now, are people going to be around in the first week of January?

MS BARRETT: Not me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The second week of January?

MR. KOWALSKI: That's better.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. In the second week of January.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's the week of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The week of the 8th, 9th, to the 11th.

MR. KOWALSKI: Oh, bad week. That's the second week?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the second week.

Then, we'd maybe look at Monday and Tuesday, January 14 and 15, which is in the third week.

MS BARRETT: January 14 and 15?

MR. WICKMAN: What days are those?

MS BARRETT: Monday and Tuesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we assume that we would meet at 1 o'clock on the Monday, go right through to 5 o'clock on Tuesday, and that would be enough to work through the budget?

MS BARRETT: Yep.

MR. McINNIS: What were those times again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Monday, the 14th, from 1 to 5; Tuesday, the 15th, 9:30 to 4:30.

MR. WICKMAN: You're saying all day Tuesday but half a day Monday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Now, hopefully, that might do it, but let us go ahead into February.

MR. McINNIS: Which day is Family Day?

MR. KOWALSKI: The third Monday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That'd make it February 18. What about Tuesday and Wednesday, the 19th and 20th?

MR. WICKMAN: I have a problem, Mr. Chairman, with Wednesdays, because our caucus meets every Wednesday.

MR. BOGLE: That's normally a cabinet day till 12.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, perhaps just the Tuesday, the 19th.

MR. McINNIS: What about Thursday and Friday?

MR. BOGLE: I just want to check on the one caucus date.
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MR. CHAIRMAN: It may well be that we only need one day in there if we've had the two in January.

MR. BOGLE: Why not hold two? We can always give one up, but if you haven't reserved, then you're in trouble.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any other expense accounts that you have for today so we can try to speed up the process?

MRS. MIROSH: What did we say, the 19th and 20th, or 20th . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're waiting for your caucus dates.

MRS. MIROSH: I move that we adjourn.

MR. BOGLE: Is there something else?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, as long as you agree that we can . . .

MR. BOGLE: Did you want the dates in *Hansard*?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we can deal with dates so that absent members . . .

MR. BOGLE: Can we take a five-minute break while we're doing that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, absolutely.

[The committee adjourned from 12:03 p.m. to 12:05 p.m.]

MRS. MIROSH: Yes, I move to adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favour of the motion to adjourn, please signify. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 12:05 p.m.]

