

1:31 p.m.

Tuesday, February 19, 1991

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we have a quorum, and we'll come to order please.

In the first part of the meeting we will try to be as expeditious as possible, because we have invited the chairmen and deputy chairmen of various committees so that we might review their budgets with them. Hopefully, then they'll be able to go on to other items that they have to deal with.

First off, is there a motion to approve the agenda as found in your Members' Services Committee book?

MRS. MIROSH: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved the approval of the agenda. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: No; I have a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. On behalf of Edmonton-Jasper Place, I've been asked to ask for one more item to be put on, which is another MLA report, I guess down under Other Business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does that concern a letter which I eventually received?

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it's New Business, item 1, correspondence. Thank you.
Additional?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, could I add, under New Business as well, an item dealing with Members' Services Order 9/90? I must depart momentarily, but I would like to leave with the secretary of the committee some evidence with respect to that item. It can be circulated, and I'll bring it back later.

MS BARRETT: What is 9/90?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stick around and you'll find out.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, could we have an idea what the item referred to in the exchange of correspondence is?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got the material for you, and it will be circulated. It deals with a press release. It's the matter of Mr. Dinning's constituency poll.

MR. HYLAND: Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a motion to approve the agenda? Edmonton-Highlands. Those in favour, please signify. Carried.

Members coming in, just pull up a pew if there is one vacant.

All right; what is the wish of the committee with respect to item 3(a), the minutes of January 14?

MS BARRETT: Adopt as circulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

What is your pleasure with regard to the minutes of January 15?

MR. HYLAND: I'll move the 15th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried by a vote of about 2 to zip.

MRS. MIROSH: Want to do it again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I expect you'll all be awake when we do it the next time.

All right; item 4(a), dealing with committee budget estimates. Yes, Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I move that we go in camera for the presentations by the various committee chairmen and then come back into full committee before any decisions are made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Those in favour of moving in camera?

MR. WICKMAN: Could I ask what the need is to go in camera?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion to go into it or not to go into it.

MR. BOGLE: I made the motion that we go in camera for the discussion. This is an expansion of something we've done in the past in inviting some chairmen to come forward. We've never before asked all of the committee chairmen to come. We have government and opposition members who have come forward. I'd like the fullest possible discussion. Anything that you or any other member of the committee feel should be repeated afterwards, you certainly have the right to do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

[The committee met in camera from 1:36 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we are still on item 4(a), Committees Budget Estimates. Perhaps we'll just start working through them in the way that they appear in the budget book, or don't appear.

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act: with regard to that particular budget, Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Motion to approve as submitted, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Discussion? Call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of adopting the budget as proposed by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee? Opposed? Carried.

As in the House, it's mandatory upon members to vote one way or the other on a motion, so may I take the vote again, seeing how it's dealing with the budget? All those in favour of this, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

All righty. The next one on my list is Law and Regulations, but since it doesn't have a budget, I guess there's no need to have a motion to approve. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next one is Legislative Offices. I understand there might be one or two motions with regard to this.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we accept the estimates from the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Discussion?

MR. S. DAY: I'm sorry, could you repeat the motion?

MR. HYLAND: Accept as presented.

MR. S. DAY: Mr. Chairman, there is a potential for reduction in the area of travel here in this particular one that I'd like the committee to consider. The things that are discovered and discussed at these various conferences are valid, and there is much to be gained from them. However, I think that in our present fiscal position and situation, as we are doing all we can to retire our deficit, bring it to zero, we need to look at — a lot of these would appear to be small amounts, but I believe they all do add up, and they affect our thinking overall. I would therefore not be in favour of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices' budget being accepted as such but would like to actually see the conference travel portion reduced by \$10,000. That \$10,000 is not necessarily a magic figure, but as valuable as they are, I think this is one area where we can actually carve into some total expenditures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The motion is to reduce the travel portion by \$10,000. Discussion? Call for the question.

MR. HYLAND: Can we have two motions at the same time?

MR. BOGLE: It's an amendment, I think, isn't it?

MR. HYLAND: It's an amendment.

MR. BOGLE: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a call for the question. Those in favour of the motion which would delete \$10,000 from the travel portion, please signify. Opposed? It is defeated.

Additional comments? There's a call for the question with respect to the proposed budget of the Legislative Offices Committee.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the Member for Cypress-Redcliff's motion? Opposed? Carried.

The Members' Services Committee: is there a motion to approve the budget as proposed? Thank you, Calgary-Glenmore. Question?

MS BARRETT: Which? Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members' Services.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

The Private Bills Committee next.

MS BARRETT: I move to support as submitted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Edmonton-Highlands for approval as proposed. Questions or discussion? If not, call for the question.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Privileges and Elections. This is another one without a budget. We can take that as information, the same as Law and Regulations.

MS BARRETT: Can I make a quick question here, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

MS BARRETT: I know that this came up in our discussion before; that is, that because the various committees so rarely meet, they don't submit a budget. But let's say, for instance, that there was a need for one of these committees to meet while the House is sitting. Does that mean that we would change the estimates? Or would we go to the House for permission to provide the money? Is that the way we'd do it? I assume that when we're not sitting, we'd go to a special warrant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Clerk Assistant.

MS SOUTH: I believe that when they did meet in 1987, we did have a special warrant for those meetings.

MS BARRETT: No, that was done by motion. That was done in the motion.

MS SOUTH: Also, those meetings were while the House was sitting.

MS BARRETT: Yup. Okay, that clarifies it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: See, in most cases it will be when the House is sitting. Therefore, all the support service stuff is already there in terms of our own budget for administration. Okay?

MR. HYLAND: In that case, there were some outside consultants, et cetera.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, but the funding was supported by the motion.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Public Accounts. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: I move that the estimates be approved as presented.

MR. S. DAY: I'd like to propose a similar amendment on this one, Mr. Chairman. There's also some opportunity to save dollars without having to affect people. I'd like to amend that by also recommending that we delete the conference travel portion of the Public Accounts by \$10,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, the amendment is to delete the travel portion by \$10,000. Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I do have a concern about this motion, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that the Public Accounts Committee is the one agency outside of government that has an opportunity to review the expenditures. There is the Treasury Board system and there's the audit system, but the Legislative Assembly appoints a Public Accounts Committee chaired by an opposition member for a reason: to look at the expenditure of government from an entirely different point of view.

Now, I admit that it's done after the fact, and there are some concerns about how this committee could be made more effective, but I think when we look at the job of scrutinizing a \$10 billion expenditure account on the part of government, to chop away at the \$60,000 available to our Public Accounts Committee may be a good intent that's misplaced. I hope that when it comes to looking at where money is wasted in government - and I'm certainly prepared to accept the proposition that there is a lot of money at least spent inappropriately if not entirely wasted - the member will take his concern to the big-ticket items. I don't feel justified in taking travel away from the Public Accounts Committee. I'm more concerned about the fact, for example, that we pay for processing pollution permits from the taxpayers' pocket and not from the person who applies for the permit, these kind of things, which are in the millions and not in the tens of thousands, so I'm opposing this motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional comment? Call for the question on the amendment?

MS BARRETT: Question on the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North, in summation.

MR. S. DAY: Just in summation, the member is referring to the big-ticket items, which are usually social services, education, and health care. I haven't heard a whole lot of recommendations from him or others in terms of slashing in those areas. I'm just simply saying that as valuable as these conferences are and the things that can be gained, this is a way in which - yes it may be small, but again if it was carried through our thinking and through the entire government thinking, considerable dollars could be saved. It's relatively painless. I agree that Public Accounts brings the government to account; the chairman of that committee does a painfully good job of that. Nevertheless,

this is an area where saving can be done without a whole lot of pain, and that's why I suggest it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favour of the amendment to reduce by \$10,000 the proposed Public Accounts budget, please signify. Opposed? The amendment is defeated.
The main question: further discussion?

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion with regard to the budget of Public Accounts, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

With regard to Public Affairs, another one of those B committees that has no budget at the moment, a motion to . . .

3:00

MR. HYLAND: Would it be appropriate if we had a motion on those committee items, Mr. Chairman, that when the Legislative Assembly instructed them to work, those instructions included permission for payment if they incur expenses so that it wouldn't be subject to special warrant? Once a committee sat, it would sit with instructions. Or is that against the Assembly rules?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's tidier to do it that if it's struck, then have the motion carry to the House.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I would think a lot would depend on the circumstances. If it's a committee called to sit for one or two meetings, the dollars can in all likelihood be found by the Speaker elsewhere in the budget. If it's a lengthy, time-consuming process outside of session, then they'd have to come back with a special warrant or some other mechanism.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah. All I was asking is: should some indication be made when instructions are given to the committee that those instructions include that sort of stuff?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. When we come to it.

MR. HYLAND: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The Chair interprets that since we've given individual approval to each of these items, we don't need an omnibus motion to just ratify what we've done.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you all very much. That's been useful. Keep your budget books nearby.

Under New Business we have an item of correspondence and also Members' Services Order 9/90. The first item is by Edmonton-Jasper Place; the second one is by the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, whenever we get further down the agenda.

We are now on item 4(b), which is Proposed Increases in 1991-92 Caucus Budgets, and there is also a motion from one of our previous meetings in January. It's minute 91.19. Moved by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud

that the budget estimates for the Government Members, New Democrat and Liberal caucuses receive an increase of 5% for the fiscal year 1991-92.

That motion is now on the table. Wishing to speak to it, the mover.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The motion's on the table, so obviously it's not necessary for me to move it again, but I do want to just make some general comments.

Additional material has been provided to all of us which indicates that the inflation rate here in Alberta is, I believe, in the neighbourhood of 6.2 percent. When we talk in terms of a 5 percent increase and when we look at the various caucuses and at the amount of manpower in those caucuses – or person power; whatever expression is appropriate these days – a good portion of that is uncontrollable in the sense that staff in those caucus offices are entitled to the same type of increases that AUPE received. That is in the neighbourhood of roughly 4 and a half percent, 5 percent, in some cases 5 and a half percent.

Mr. Chairman, the three chiefs of staff have met. They've agreed with the 5 percent. The three parties that are represented on the subcommittee agreed with the 5 percent. In addition to that, we've also agreed that there would be no increase in the allowances of the constituency offices; there would be a freeze there. So in view of the fiscal restraint that has been talked about so much, particularly by the Member for Red Deer-North, I think this is a very, very appropriate motion and reflects the reality of today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional comments of other caucuses? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, Mr. Chairman, actually I'd like to separate the issue of caucus budgets and constituency budgets, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is strictly with regard to caucuses.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The comments indeed did flow. Thank you. Carry on, please.

MS BARRETT: That's good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of your more succinct, better speeches. Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: I feel it's important for us to recognize – and the motion itself doesn't point to it as directly as possibly it should – that over 90 percent of this increase, as I understand it, is going to the secretaries, the staff of our caucuses, helping them to maintain the cost of living. In fact, this isn't going to operations per se – a minute part of it, possibly – but largely it's reflecting the fact that we have excellent people in all of our caucuses and we need to look at them getting what others have received in terms of at least a cost of living allowance. At the same time, as we look towards next year and the budget, I think we should look to ourselves maybe sending a message that we are part of the inflationary spiral and that somewhere along the way there has to be a break in the chain that would then ricochet down the line, as it were, even if it's only for a year or two and remembering, you know, that 5 percent is cost of living.

Just to grasp a figure that's easier, if you looked at a 10 percent increase each year either for someone's salary or a department, in seven years you've doubled the cost of that

person's salary or of the operation of the department. I hope we approve this with some degree of sobriety and recognize the graveness of the fact that even 5 percent per year, whomever it's for, right across the board just continues to go up and up and up. We need to address this whole process and see: is there somewhere that we can put a stop to it?

Many secretaries that I know in Red Deer have been informed by their employers – and they're every bit as good and as valuable as the secretaries we enjoy here – that there will be no increase this year. In fact, layoffs happen in the private sector when the dollars aren't coming in. They don't have the opportunity to hit that deficit spiral. So we need to keep some of these factors in mind. I'm in agreement with approving this one, but as we look to the year ahead, we've got to address this whole aspect of the inflationary spiral and what can be done to put the skids on it.

I want to point out that this is largely for cost of living for our secretaries and support staff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Cypress-Redcliff, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the one thing that doesn't exist in this budget with the 5 percent motion is that in other settlements the agreement was 5 percent, but built into that, with contracts, et cetera, are merit increases. Unless our chief of staff has got some money in her hat, I don't know where we're going to get that from in all the caucuses. Even with the 5 percent increase we're probably 3 percent less than other government employees that are under any sort of contract. We're still going to be 3 percent less. Not everybody gets merit, but I would suggest that probably 60 percent or more of the people receive merit increases in their contracts. I remember just last week we did Leg. officers. We went through the budgets, and there were merit increases in them. This motion allows us to match the cost of living increase in the contract, but unless the other caucuses are different, I don't think it allows us to match the merit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: The point's been made, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional comments?

MR. BOGLE: Question.

3:10

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a call for the question with respect to the motion dealing with the 5 percent increase to caucus budgets. Those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

The next item of business, 4(c). Discussion with regard to '91-'92 constituency office allowances? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. There is a motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'll move that the constituency budgets be frozen at the same level as the current fiscal year.

Speaking to that, Mr. Chairman, I do it with some misgivings in that a lot of the constituency office staff are not persons that are well paid. A lot of times the constituency budgets are not overly lucrative in the sense of allowing to pay salaries that may reflect what happens in the private sector. I also understand

some of the difficulties that rural members will have in trying to maintain more than one constituency office. I can refer, for example, to our Member for Westlock-Sturgeon, who, I believe, has three constituency offices.

As the Member for Red Deer-North and others have pointed out, when it comes to tightening, I guess this is one of the areas that we can tighten. We're going to have to tighten, and we're going to have to make do in the constituency offices with less. The only concern I have about the particular motion is that I would hope it does not erode or reflect on the storefront type of service that some of us are accustomed to giving our constituents. They're the ones that pay the overall budgets one way or the other. I would hate to see that they're going to get shortchanged in the whole process. I know Edmonton-Whitemud is going to be in some difficulty, but we'll live within that budget, and I'm sure other members will live with their existing level of budget as well.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to speak against that motion. I think we should consider a 5 percent increase for constituency budgets as well. It's not just staff. I've tried to look up in my book to see what the overall operating allowance is for a constituency, and I couldn't find it, but it's around \$36,000.

DR. McNEIL: It's \$38,036.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, \$38,000, out of which you pay staff, utilities, rent, and, you know, general office expenses, right? I know that I'm looking at another rental increase this year. I don't know who else is, but I remember Dianne and I talked extensively last year about the kind of payments we make just on our rent because of the type of constituency we're in, where we have to locate, and also staff. I think those people are entitled to a basic cost of living increase just like everybody else. Remember, we're not just talking about settlements in the public sector; we're also talking about settlements in the private sector, which are very competitive. So I don't think it's unreasonable to offer that to our constituency staff. Again, what it means in my case, because my rent is very high – and I know it's not the highest – is that I have to spend more on my rent, meaning I have fewer hours open, because that's what I can pay for, and it means, I think, reduced service to the public. So I think it would be well in order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I take this as an amendment, then, to increase by 5 percent?

MS BARRETT: Okay, thank you. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only reflecting what I'm hearing.

MS BARRETT: Yes, you're right. I was speaking against; you're right. I offer that as an general amendment.

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

MR. McINNIS: In that case, I'm going to take the pro side of the argument. By the way, I find the recommendation of the committee to be a bizarre one. It seems to me that if we're prepared to recognize at a human level that we don't feel it's right to take care of budget concerns at the expense of our employees, then we should apply that principle fairly across the

board. It seems to me that we have built modest increases for Legislature staff in all of the departments, including now the caucus offices. To say to constituency offices, "Well, too bad; you guys are the ones who are shouldering the weight" – I find it pretty difficult to come back to the person who works for me and indicate that that's the way we do that service. Because that's the front line, members of the committee. Those are the people who see the victims firsthand, the ones who are not able to get their problems resolved through the normal government channels, and I've come to appreciate through the statistics over the past year that those numbers are going up in terms of people who come who need help of various kinds and the function that's performed there by our staff.

To add further to matters, the government recently canceled the priority employment program. Most of the constituency offices availed themselves under the terms of the program to have additional staff in place for a limited period of time. It was a training program, but it was a method of relief from some of the burden of casework for the employees in those offices. We don't have an announcement yet on STEP, but I see a whole lot more pressure on the staff in those constituency and community offices in the next year, certainly not less, to which one adds the problem of rental increases. I find that the \$38,000 does not cover what is a modest salary, \$2,000 a month out of my office. From the information I've gathered, that's relatively similar, at least among urban members, in terms of what we pay, not a high-paid profession by any stretch of the imagination.

So to me it doesn't add up to zero, and I just can't see a rationale or a basis for saying that we're going to take this area, take those people who are now on their own on the front line and say, "Well, you are the ones we're going to make an example of." I just can't support that, so I support the amendment for a 5 percent increase.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, Red Deer-North, Calgary-Foothills.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I must speak in support of the motion as presented. Members will recall that a year ago we struck a subcommittee to look at rents in our constituency offices. At that time we increased the constituency office allocation, and then we added 5 percent onto that, so I think it gave us about an 8 percent increase overall. I think that late in the upcoming fiscal year, the 1991-92 year, we should again go back and review not only the rents being paid in various areas to determine if, for instance, there should be a differential rate for urban members who are in high-rent districts vis-à-vis those of us who are in areas where we can rent at a much more reasonable cost but then look at other factors. I don't think we can make the same argument on our constituency offices in light of how we treated them last year. I think, therefore, that the motion as originally presented by Percy should be supported.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Dealing with the amendment, Red Deer-North, Calgary-Foothills.

MR. S. DAY: Again, Mr. Chairman, all the arguments are there on paper for how we could use more money in our constituency office operations, and I think all members would use it wisely, even the opposition. There's no question about that, but it gets back to what we're looking at in terms of a different economic environment as far as government services go. I don't think it means we have to cut our staff. For me it means I will just have to shift some of the priorities in my own

office and make sure that the person who runs that office is adequately and properly taken care of, and I'll have to cut back in some other area. I think this is a positive motion – not the amendment but the motion – because it shows that as MLAs we are willing to say that we can do something to stop the spiral. It might mean biting the bullet somewhat, but we can do it. As a matter of fact, we've got to do it, because we all recognize that cuts have to happen, and here's another area where it doesn't mean laying somebody off. It means trimming down.

Some of the members in Edmonton may have to pay a slightly higher rent. I don't know. I looked at the other 82 members; I'm average or slightly above average. At least you have an option of a legislative office here, which may not be, true, right in your constituency, but people still can come and find you in an office even if yours happens to be closed. My office is not open every day, eight hours a day, and in five years I have had not one complaint about it not being available, accessible, or anything like that. I just believe it is one of the areas where we need to not only set the example but bite the bullet somewhat and just hold the line, so I would be opposed to the amendment.

3:20

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to speak against the amendment. As the Member for Taber-Warner alluded to earlier, we did have approximately an 8 percent increase in our constituency allowances last year. I didn't support the increase last year, and I certainly don't support it this year. I think it's imperative that MLAs revisit the priorities within their offices and ensure that their staffs are taken care of and set an example for restraint. I would be very much opposed to an increase. I think the public is expecting us to hold the line, and I certainly feel that we must do that.

I am surprised, though, that I am supporting Edmonton-Whitemud's motion. I don't usually support his motions, but in this case I'm afraid I will have to support his motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Further discussion with regard to the amendment? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I'd just like to sum up. I appreciate the comments from the people who have spoken against my amendment. I'd just like to clarify one thing for the record though. Last year when we dealt with this matter, we all, I think, approved an increase for the operating budget of constituencies to acknowledge the benefits package that, I believe, we all supported for the staff, and that was a factor that we contemplated before we went to the 5 percent increase. It is true that in the discussions we did also talk about rent. I think we should just understand last year's discussion, which was very good. It wasn't just an arbitrary 8 percent increase. There was an increase that was built in for staff benefits and then on top of that an increase that could be used either for those of us who have to pay more for rent or for those who could afford to then hire people for either more hours or give them an inflationary pay increase or a merit pay increase.

Thanks. I guess you can figure out how I'm voting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of the amendment as proposed by Edmonton-Highlands, which would be to increase it by 5 percent, please signify. Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

The main motion. Summation, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman, and I do want to point out that I had indicated at a previous meeting that I would have been prepared to look at 5 percent maximum, possibly 3 and a half percent, but after talking to some of my colleagues, as I indicated earlier, it is going to be tough in some of the constituencies, but it's one of those areas where we're going to have to make do. So I feel that it's appropriate, again, that we simply pass this motion and have a freeze on the constituency budgets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed? Carried.

MR. McINNIS: May we have a recorded vote on that, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: A recorded vote: everyone in favour except for Edmonton-Highlands and Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, may I bring item 4(f) forward at this time? I simply want to table documents that can be read overnight, and we could come back to the matter tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a request from Edmonton-Whitemud to vary the agenda. Are the rest of you in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

If you'd like to have those distributed.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if the Clerk would distribute those, allow members to read it overnight, and when we come back to the subject matter tomorrow, it deals with guidelines for advertising and communication as it applies to the constituency allowances. It demonstrates what the other provinces are doing, and it demonstrates the appeal mechanism that the other provinces have. I think it would be appropriate to have a motion to table this matter until tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion to table until tomorrow, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you. Item 4(f) is being distributed.

For clarification with regard to the next item on the agenda, 4(d), the proposed limited printing of House documents, I wonder: has Edmonton-Highlands had a chance to converse with Edmonton-Whitemud on this issue at all?

MS BARRETT: No, I didn't actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, perhaps we could adjourn for about five minutes.

MS BARRETT: That would be useful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we do the adjournment, I think there's one point of clarification that needs to be raised about those committee budgets.

MR. BOGLE: Well, on the Legislature committee budgets we didn't require a motion to approve the umbrella motions because of the way we dealt with the element this year, but it needs to be reinforced that our budget last year was \$451,640. Our budget this year is down 16.2 percent from that. There's a drop of 16.2 percent to \$378,518.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is Red Deer-North aware of that?

MR. BOGLE: I'll send him a note.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Draw it to his attention. All right. Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: I just wanted to ask a question. In terms of dealing with the question of mailings tomorrow, will you be dealing with the issue of the communication allowance within the Members' Services allowance? Every year there's a formula for the communications allowance that takes into account a factor for two first-class mailings to each constituent, and each year we've adjusted that as a function of the increase in the postal rate.

MR. BOGLE: That's an administrative adjustment not a policy adjustment.

DR. McNEIL: But it will require an order, which we'll have ready for tomorrow. I just wanted to make that comment since you'd dealt with . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, that was the intent of my motion, that that would automatically be incorporated in there and that the Clerk would come back with the appropriate order to reflect that. I believe it's a 1 cent increase in postage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Members' Services order: that's duly noted for when the item comes off the table tomorrow.

Thank you. The committee stands adjourned until 20 to 4 so that this other item on printing costs can be dealt with between the two caucuses.

[The committee adjourned from 3:28 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen. The next item on the agenda is 4(d), Report on Proposed Limited Printing of House Documents. You may recall that the Clerk mentioned that an analysis was done in the department. If the complete Order Paper were printed on two days of the week only, being Tuesday and Thursday, and an edited version of it on the other three days of the week, we would be able to effect a cost saving of \$22,000. A letter to that effect went to the three House leaders. I had a reply from one.

Perhaps, Edmonton-Highlands, in your other capacity, please.

MS BARRETT: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I believe we should assume that that recommendation is going to be accepted and proceed with the estimates on that basis. The matter will be discussed by the House leaders at our very next meeting, but I at this point have no reason to assume that the recommendation would be defeated or amended in any way that would affect the estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I had some prior notice of that. That has been taken into effect in building the budget sheets for discussion today. Thank you, and we'll have future correspondence on that to the Chair.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; now we go to 4(e), Legislative Assembly Office budget. Clerk, you have the documents there.

It's our understanding that the committee has indeed already given final approval to *Hansard* and also to information systems.

We would like under the guidance of the Clerk to go back, and we'll work our way through in the order in which they appear in the book. Clerk, it's yours to deal with.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. I want to start with number 1, General Administration, then.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, can I ask a question? Have things changed? Didn't we already do this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are some minor . . .

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay. Thanks.

DR. McNEIL: We've gone through this budget once on a review basis, but it was my understanding that it was the committee's intention to go through it again on a more detailed basis and make motions with respect to each section.

MS BARRETT: Each section?

DR. McNEIL: At least in terms of those sections that motions haven't been approved on before.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: Two were approved at the last meeting: *Hansard* and information systems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But we, too, are hopeful that some considerable progress might be made. All right, David.

DR. McNEIL: Okay, general administration budget. Kathy and Cheryl will be here if there are any detailed questions. I think I can answer most of them.

This provides, for maintenance of existing operations, an overall increase of 5 percent, plus we have a B budget proposal here for the amount of \$32,607 in relation to wage funds to support on-line data entry which is being transferred to each department and to the Legislative Assembly Office from the Alberta Treasury. This will place much greater onus on the Legislative Assembly Office as far as inputting all the salary and wage information for the Legislative Assembly Office. All this has been done in the past by the staff in the Treasury Department.

That's the overview. We've got a 5 percent increase in the administration budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Cypress-Redcliff, on the overview.

MR. HYLAND: You said 5 percent on staff?

DR. McNEIL: No. I said an overall 5 percent increase.

MR. HYLAND: Overall. Okay. No question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: That's excluding that B budget item for the wages for the on-line payroll position.

If we want to go through these page by page starting on page 2, the permanent salaries reflect market and merit adjustments.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, because we've gone through these page by page, unless there are questions directed to a particular page, might I suggest we have a global motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fine by me. So moved by Edmonton-Whitemud. Do you approve?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

All right; any questions with regard to this first section, General Administration?

As the Clerk has pointed out, the real major issue there, that B budget of \$32,000, has been explained, but if there are additional questions, I'm sure that . . .

MS BARRETT: What page is that B budget on?

DR. McNEIL: On the very last page of the set there's a more detailed explanation.

MS BARRETT: No. I've got page 14.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have the Office Safe and the Replacement of Obsolete Equipment.

DR. McNEIL: Okay, the B budget:

Manpower funds are required to support additional payroll functions transferred from Alberta Treasury as a result of their policy decision to decentralize and downsize.

No additional resources have been supplied by Alberta Treasury to perform the new functions. Manpower funds will be used to support an on-line data entry payroll clerk in the payroll processing and maintenance functions, as well as the corresponding implementation of on-line conversion.

What's happening is there is downsizing in Treasury, and these functions will now have to be performed within our own office.

I think Cheryl can provide more information on that in terms of the process and where it's at now.

MS BARRETT: But I take it when it's being presented as a B budget, it ain't really a B budget. This is an essential item.

MISS KVIST: From my perspective, yes, it's very essential in terms of being able to provide the service that we need to get the payroll done. It's an increase over last year. We appreciate that budgetary restraints are there, but what's happening is that previously Treasury was providing the service for us and we were sending documents to them. They were inputting, checking, and doing the control. They are trying to cut back significantly. They're no longer providing any of those kinds of services, and we will be doing it directly.

MS BARRETT: In other words, Treasury shaves 32,000 bucks a year, and the Assembly assumes \$32,000 a year in costs. Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The document is being xeroxed. It's basically a two-liner. One item is \$30,000; the other one is roughly \$2,500. It will be here in a moment.

MR. BOGLE: And Treasury will show the \$32,000 reduction in their budget, will they?

3:55

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in God we trust, and we also trust in all members of the Assembly, especially the Members' Services Committee, to highlight this, take it into the Assembly, and make certain that Treasury does.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You know, this is not the first time this kind of a thing has occurred.

MS BARRETT: No. I can recall similar things happening before.

DR. McNEIL: I guess not having this individual could and likely would slow down the processing of all our payroll transactions. There's a lot of activity even though we have a relatively small department. Because of the number of contracts we have and the wage people we have, there's a lot of activity in this area, much more so in comparison to a department of an equivalent size in the public service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And with a faster turnaround on the cheques by far. Okay?

MR. HYLAND: It is considerably faster than another department where I have a chance to put expense cheques forward once in a while.

MRS. MIROSH: Have you already done this?

MISS KVIST: No; this is scheduled for April 1.

MR. HYLAND: This is what they talked about last year and didn't do right away, isn't it, or something?

MISS KVIST: It's been in the works, in planning, for over a year now.

MS BARRETT: Well, if we're just in a discussion mode, I'd like to say that I've been working in this building since the '82 election, and in my experience the administration is just extremely efficient and well organized. I wouldn't mind if the staff knew that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I certainly agree with you.

MR. HYLAND: I've had to put expense items through as chairman of the Water Resources Commission, and I can't remember my cheques coming back sooner than two to three weeks in that system. Leg. Offices often turns it around in seven days, 10 days.

MRS. MIROSH: That's without this person.

MR. HYLAND: Well, Treasury was doing it before.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, right. We'll inherit somebody from Treasury and really straighten them out, eh?

MR. HYLAND: Now it will be faster, because one of these two ladies will be standing there to take the piece of paper away from them. It will be in their office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional questions on this section? Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Am I correct that the Treasury decentralization takes effect in the next fiscal year, or are we short-staffed now and this is sort of a catch-up?

MISS KVIST: Implementation is in the next fiscal year.

MR. McINNIS: It will presumably affect other departments in addition to the Legislative Assembly.

MISS KVIST: It affects all departments, and as well Treasury is getting out of the business of printing and providing forms. All of the related forms processes are being put into the individual departments and the Legislative Assembly in terms of how you do business. However, the responsibility for still being able to show a paper flow and the controls now have to be with us. So basically it seems as though we're still going to have to do the paperwork and then turn around and do the inputting and the flow that Treasury used to do. They're kind of getting out of that business altogether as much as they can.

MR. McINNIS: Just one other question. This is to Kathy. Can we absorb the paper within the rest of the budget, or do we need to B budget that, the forms and so forth?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes, we can. And actually Treasury have been doing this over the past five years, our particular area. We do remote data entry now. They used to do all data entry for us. So they're passing more and more onto the departments and the Leg. Assembly as well.

MS BARRETT: Similarly, we have the input equipment?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Well, a motion to approve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a call for the question with regard to approval for the proposed general administration budget. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously.

MR. HYLAND: Did you lump the B budget in there?

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: Why don't we just approve everything and go home?

MS BARRETT: I agree with Dianne's motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which was?

MS BARRETT: Let's approve everything and go home. Or at least get back to the other part of the work.

MRS. MIROSH: I was being facetious.

MR. BOGLE: I'd ask that under MLA Administration we revert to going through it page by page, please. Keep everyone together, if there are questions, deal with them, and when we get to the end, one motion to approve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All righty. The overview page. Thank you, Cheryl.

MISS KVIST: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: MLA Administration, the Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: The overall increase in the budget is 3 percent. That reflects increases. It shows on the sheet primarily in the Salaries, Wages and Employee Benefits area. This is a function of the fact that a much greater number of constituency office staff are now on employment contracts, so they're now paid out of the Manpower area as opposed to the Supplies and Services area of the budget. That is primarily a transfer of funds from the constituency office allowance, from one budget category to another.

MR. HYLAND: If that wasn't included, would that mean we'd have a general reduction instead of the 3 percent increase? There's actually a reduction in . . .

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: No. It's just from one place to another.

DR. McNEIL: It's just a transfer.

MR. HYLAND: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: It's easier to see the increases in here if we go through page by page.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

DR. McNEIL: Starting on page 2. Again, these funds are all funds within the Members' Services allowance that are just being transferred from contracts, and it's the same as on page 3.

Now, page 4 really reflects one of the costs which was discussed last year. The costs of pooling people to contract is the increase in benefit costs to the individual member's constituency office allowance. You see that being reflected on page 3. Again, we're not talking about budgeting any more funds in total, just in a different category than it has been in the past.

MRS. MIROSH: Are we on page 4?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions on page 4? Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: No; page 5.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just wait a minute.

MRS. MIROSH: On page 4, we increased this amount just because of the constituency secretaries moving onto this?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: And the benefits they take on their contracts, depending on what they want.

MRS. MIROSH: It's quite a significant increase.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yeah, it is. There's some increase in premiums too.

MR. HYLAND: That's not new money, though, is it?

DR. McNEIL: No. That's all within the existing constituency office allowance.

MR. HYLAND: New within this item but not within the budget.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes.

DR. McNEIL: That's right. It reflects a transfer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Committee members, may we turn to page 5? Agreed? We're on page 5. There's a question.

DR. McNEIL: There are increases here that are noted as a result of an increase in airfares, under MLA airline credit card use; gasoline, based on actual usage and an estimate of a 20 percent increase in gas prices.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: That has fluctuated, but when we prepared it, that was what we were doing.

DR. McNEIL: The MLA mileage program increase there is based on the increase in the kilometre rate from 21 cents to 25 cents per kilometre, based on the same assumptions that it was calculated on in the past. All the other ones are the same under that item of Travel Expenses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, in all cases are the figures used the very maximum? If the worst case scenario was realized - for example, MLA spousal/guest travel, six trips per annum: there are many, many MLAs who don't utilize that particular aspect of travel. Is this the maximum based . . .

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: No. It's an estimate based on previous years with a little bit extra, given that there was a change.

MR. WICKMAN: And does the other increase on the gasoline credit card directly reflect earlier decisions that were made at this committee and the projected increase in the price of gas?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes. It's based on actual and a 20 percent increase in the price of gas.

MRS. MIROSH: It's going down again.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: We hope.

MS BARRETT: Can I ask the Clerk: on the increase in the airfare, I have no idea how much airfares have gone up, but also we note here that you've got "purchase of discount bulk tickets." Presumably that realizes a cost savings to us, n'est-ce pas?

4:05

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes, about 25 percent. What happens is that the airlines did have a bulk ticket purchase, and then they terminated it for a while because they weren't sure what was happening with gasoline, and now it's back again. But the airline tickets, I think, have gone up probably about 25 to 30 percent, and they are continuing to go up.

MRS. MIROSH: That's a lot; it's high.

MS BARRETT: Just out of curiosity, I'd like to know . . .

MR. BOGLE: Round-trip, Lethbridge to Edmonton, \$420.

MR. HYLAND: It isn't that; it's \$480-something.

MS BARRETT: I just heard \$267 round-trip, Calgary-Edmonton.

MRS. BLACK: So you buy in bulk, and that brings that down to about \$159 round-trip. If we buy in bulk, it saves almost \$100.

MS BARRETT: We do get them GST-free, though, right?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, but the bulk tickets are not available all the time. As Kathy said, they stopped it for a period of time because of the variation in gas prices, and then they came back in.

MRS. BLACK: You have to always watch for those bulk sales.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly.

MS BARRETT: Is there just one carrier now between Edmonton and Calgary?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: No. There's Air BC and Canadian Airlines and Time Air.

MS BARRETT: I wouldn't want to suggest collusion in pricing or anything, but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Taber-Warner, and then the Clerk.

MR. BOGLE: I merely wanted to make the observation on travel, looking both at airlines and the gas mileage, the significant increases, and just to reflect and let it show on the record that it's not only this portion of the budget that that has an impact on; it's the legislative committees that we dealt with earlier today. We're going to be dealing with other travel arrangements either today or tomorrow, so the cost of travel has gone up substantially, and that's reflected in the bottom line.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
Clerk, please.

DR. McNEIL: You'd asked us at one of the last meetings about information on bulk airline tickets. Kathy prepared a summary of what we've done in the past year as far as our percentages of savings over the total cost, and on average since

April 1990 we've saved about 14 percent. That's varied from 25 percent down to 7 percent, depending on when the tickets were purchased. Just pass those around.

Do you want to move to page 6?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Members, on the document just going around, in the last paragraph there's a typo. It should be January 1, '91.

All right; may we move to page 6, members.

DR. McNEIL: That increase there is a transfer of funds from one category to another. It's all within the Members' Services Allowance.

Page 7. The estimate for postage, again, is based on actual experience in this year, and the number for the MLA communication allowance is based on the revised formula, taking into account the increase in postal rate. We've applied a percentage to what was there last year.

MR. HYLAND: Is that minus 3.4 percent this explanation: "increase in advertising"?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Well, it's because we've transferred money out of the communication allowance to other areas, and there's been more money transferred out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we go to page 8? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're on 8.

DR. McNEIL: Again, that increase there is just a transfer of funds to reflect it. Generally speaking, higher rents are being paid.

MRS. MIROSH: I've got my rent fixed for three years.

MS BARRETT: You do, eh?

MR. BOGLE: If I could lock in at that rate, I'd fix it too.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I expect it would be appropriate at this particular point to refer to an item that had been deferred from the last meeting, and that is the security mechanisms for constituency offices. In view of the fact . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, hon. member. It's due on the agenda after we get through this.

MS BARRETT: That's true. It's item (g).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very briefly to it, a report came in this morning which talks about a cost of about \$200 per constituency office for the parts, and there's a system that can come in place. The recommendation of the Sergeant-at-Arms is to have that meeting with the subcommittee that was struck and report to the next regular meeting but that there is something on the road, the system, that we could pick up. We're working on the theory that we could pick up the actual cost of the equipment out of our budget this year, and we're trying to negotiate the installation with Public Works, that maybe they can put it in at their cost.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Mr. Chairman, then will you report back at the appropriate time to this committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: So there's nothing more that my subcommittee has to do on that at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not at this moment but before the next meeting.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But we'll share with you an item of correspondence when we come back to that on the agenda tomorrow, okay?

May we go to page 9? Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Again, these increases are based on actual experience in this past year. On page 10, there's no change.

Page 11. Based on the discussion at the last meeting, under MLA Formal Writing Sheets and Envelopes, we did the overprinting costs. Because of the fact that we now have the capability to do overprinting on envelopes and writing paper, we have reduced that. It was \$100,000 initially; now it's \$50,000. That's not to say that, you know, there won't be some required, but we feel that will be less required than has been the case to this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. There was also a memo that went out from Bill Gano to all members about the laser printing and so forth.

All right. Edmonton-Highlands, on page 11.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. David, when we go to the plain letterhead again, remember I asked that just the coat of arms be on it and not even "Legislative Assembly" because the print types will be different? Are we going to be going that way?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Good. Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: If it hasn't arrived, I think it's been ordered.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Also, talking to Public Affairs, what's happened is that instead of having seven or eight colours in the coat of arms, it's now four. That's going to make it cheaper over the letterhead, so that will reduce our prices.

MS BARRETT: No kidding? Great.

MRS. MIROSH: Nobody even notices.

MS BARRETT: You got that right. For the most part we're doing photocopies. You can't tell anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, page 11.

May we go to 12? Thank you. On page 12, any questions?

MS BARRETT: What are the Constituency Offices Working Sessions? I assume that because it's got some numbers beside it, 712E00, it comes out of constituency budgets, but what is it?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Okay. What it tends to be is that MLAs will have meetings in their offices that will go all day, so it's under Hosting. They'll order lunch or drinks for the people who are attending those meetings.

MS BARRETT: Oh. Okay. I see.

MRS. MIROSH: No kidding?

MS BARRETT: Yeah; I've never done it.

MR. BOGLE: You don't have any leeway in your budget.

MS BARRETT: That's right. That's for those who have cheap rent.

MRS. BLACK: You mean, people will order lunch in? We always tell them to bring a sandwich.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right; may we go to page 13?

DR. McNEIL: Page 13 is a transfer based on actual experience.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Some leases don't include light and power.

MS BARRETT: You got that right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff, page 13.

MR. HYLAND: I think this is related to the cost of constituency offices, but at one time I remember a memo coming out about business taxes, or was it taxes on constituency offices?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Municipal taxes.

MR. HYLAND: Municipal taxes. Where did we go on that? Did we give up on that or write that off or lose that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Parliamentary Counsel.

4:15

MR. RITTER: The Legislative Assembly, Mr. Chairman, has never given up on that battle. We're still banging our heads against the wall. We are running into difficulty because it affects virtually all government buildings as well as Legislative Assembly buildings. Of course, the Crown has a considerable amount of real estate, and it seems appropriate that the Legislative Assembly should not be the ones paying for a major legal battle on something that is obviously more dear to the government than to this particular branch of it.

I have given my opinion in writing to the Department of the Attorney General, PWSS, Municipal Affairs, all these departments which are affected by the interpretation that the province does not pay municipal taxes, and all the lawyers have pretty well come to the conclusion that it is appropriately a matter that ultimately has to be settled by a court. I mean, my opinion that we shouldn't have to pay municipal taxes is worth nothing; a judge's opinion is worth a considerable amount.

We are aware that Calgary and Edmonton and the various municipalities around those two major centres are vigorously opposed to my interpretation of it, and although the general feeling is that if it goes to court, we will probably win, the government has been very careful, I think for possible political

reasons, not to go to court yet to clarify the interpretation of the Municipal Taxation Act.

I'm sitting back and waiting for the Crown to do it, basically, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Still on page 13.

MR. HYLAND: We always maintain that the Leg. Assembly is different from the government or different from the Crown, and this is a constituency office versus a government office, so there's that difference. But maybe that isn't a difference in law; I don't know.

MR. RITTER: Mr. Chairman, that's a very relevant question in this circumstance, because the Municipal Taxation Act uses the term "Crown," which includes the Legislative Assembly: the Crown being exempt from municipal taxation assessment. In this particular legal case both the Crown and the Legislative Assembly are in the same boat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Page 14.

DR. McNEIL: Again, the increase there is due to transfer.

MR. S. DAY: That's referring to the third item there?

DR. McNEIL: It's just a question of how members are allocating their promotional allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we go to 15? Minus 3; Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. I remember, Mr. Chairman, a couple of years ago we switched our insurer for dental or some other cost-shared premiums. I see the workers' comp rate has really increased a lot. Can we just flag this for the dental coverage and see if there's a more competitive rate again? I don't want to change the estimates now, but I think this committee said that we were going to do that every couple of years to make sure we're sort of shopping around on those plans. After a while a supplier, you know, might think that you're not, and you might get a better rate elsewhere.

DR. McNEIL: With respect to the dental plan, we're part of the overall government plan.

MS BARRETT: Oh, okay.

DR. McNEIL: Because of the size of that group, it's not likely we would have any better advantage.

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: The extended health care premiums is the one that we changed.

MS BARRETT: That we shopped for, and that's a zero. Okay, thanks.

DR. McNEIL: No. We were just advised on Friday, as a matter of fact - and I'll hand this out - that based on our experience over the past year, in order to fund the plan from our contributions, they require a 10 percent increase in the rate.

MS BARRETT: You already did comparison shopping, I see.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: This is through Blue Cross again.

MS BARRETT: So it changed by 10 percent then.

DR. McNEIL: There was no increase in this last year. We're proposing a 10 percent increase this year, and that 10 percent increase is the same as what the public service Blue Cross plan has increased over the past two years.

MS BARRETT: So basically add \$182?

DR. McNEIL: No; \$1,820 . . .

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry, \$1,820.

DR. McNEIL: . . . to that number of \$18,256. So it becomes \$20,000.

MR. BOGLE: When will we deal with the new rate?

MS BARRETT: We have to add this in right now.

DR. McNEIL: Well, this is what I'm proposing be done, so I would hope you'd have a motion to that.

MR. BOGLE: A separate motion on the principle of the new rate, yeah.

MRS. MIROSH: Are you talking just about this specific one, this coverage?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, just this specific page that was just handed out now.

MRS. MIROSH: I wanted to talk about another item on this page.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, but I wonder if we might deal with this handout that's just been given to us now. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: I'll move that under Members' Extended Health Care Coverage there be a 10 percent increase in the rates applicable, covering the anticipated costs to members' claims against the plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Others wish to speak to the motion? Call for the question.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, all those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you. Now, Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask if we had

ever revisited the life and disability insurance since the '89 election. Are all members aware specifically of the life and disability insurance? I don't even remember what they are.

DR. McNEIL: As far as I know, we haven't revisited them.

MRS. MIROSH: Should we? Because rates and coverages that are out there for an extended period change too.

DR. McNEIL: Again, these are through the carrier that the government has, so if we take advantage of the size of the group in terms of our rates that's not to say if the committee wanted us to do that, we couldn't do that. But we have not done that.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I just don't think that a lot of the members are really certain about the kind of coverage that we have here within our own . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's certainly there in the green book, but perhaps you want the office to make some initial inquiry. I mean do we upgrade, or do we increase coverage?

MRS. MIROSH: To upgrade, but not necessarily at an increase in price, because I know there are ongoing changes in these life insurance companies, and we may not be getting the best benefits for what we're paying.

MS BARRETT: If I can add to that, I know there are some real changes in the orientation for a lot of companies because they think they've been wasting their money to some extent on full life insurance as opposed to other schemes. Not that I'd want to change it right now, because I think we're a little bit late, but I agree with you. Maybe what we should ask for is an analysis of the current policy versus some of the new policies that are available that are not "full life insurance" but have a different system of investing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Is the committee happy enough if we just take that as noted as issues raised by Calgary-Glenmore and Edmonton-Highlands, and then in the course of the next few months we can try to get some [inaudible].

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Not a panic. I think it takes quite a while for this committee to look at it and decide.

MR. HYLAND: Agreed.

4:25

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed. Thank you.

Having passed that previous motion, the revised page will be here probably tomorrow. The rest of the page is fine. Move on to 16?

MS BARRETT: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's possible for tomorrow, Kathy?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: Yes it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 16. That seems to be pretty well pro forma, if you're down 100 percent. Everybody's happy with that one?

MS BRUCE-KAVANAGH: What it is: before the constituency computerization, members used to buy their own, so now they don't have to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Page 17.

DR. McNEIL: Again, the increase here is primarily due to the transfer of funds from another category and not new dollars.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was there a mover for the overall approval of that section or addition? Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, as amended, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As amended. Thank you.

Any other questions? Okay. All those in favour of the approval of item 2, MLA Administration budget as amended, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you. The revised sheet for tomorrow. Thank you, Kathy, for your help.

Item 3, House Services.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, were we going to rise at 4:30 today? Hint, hint.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hint, hint? Fine fine by me me.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Before we do the rising, are we all in agreement as to the time we're coming back tomorrow?

MS BARRETT: At 3 p.m. That's what my book says.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Three o'clock tomorrow, here?

MS BARRETT: Yup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. With that undertaking the Chair is now prepared to take the motion. Those in favour of adjournment until 3 o'clock tomorrow, please signify. Opposed, if any? Carried. Thank you all.

[The committee adjourned at 4:27 p.m.]