

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

8:02 a.m.

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. You've had distributed to you proposed agendas. Perhaps we could move to item 2, Approval of Agenda.

The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, I think it would make a lot more sense if we put item 5(c) at the top of New Business. That's dealing with the general subject of a review before we get to the specific matter, the capital city allowance. I think it's more logical to deal from the general to the specific. Also, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands and I for some time have been unable to vote on matters related to that because of our feeling that there should be an independent review. If we can dispose of that first, then we'll be in a position where we can perhaps deal with the other items on an interim basis.

I would move that 5(c) become 5(a) and then the others continue in line.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Speaking to the motion with regard to the agenda then, all those in favour of it? Opposed? Carried unanimously.

All right; under section 5, New Business, 5(a) will now be Legislative Assembly Salaries, Allowances, and Expenses; 5(b) will be Capital Residence Allowance; 5(c) will be Confederation Room Usage.

A motion to approve the agenda then? Edmonton-Highlands. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

First, under item 3(a), Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes of Thursday, March 9, 1992.

MS BARRETT: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Adoption moved by Edmonton-Highlands. Discussion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the adoption of the committee meeting minutes of Thursday, March 9, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Next, item 3(b), the minutes of Friday, March 10. The Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the approval of the minutes of that date, please signify. Opposed? Carried. Thank you very much.

Business Arising from the Minutes. At this time it's the Chair's understanding that business that is there on an ongoing basis we will deal with at a future meeting of the committee. Thank you.

We move then to item 5(a), Legislative Assembly Salaries, Allowances, and Expenses.

Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move that

we establish a subcommittee consisting of five members. Three of the members will be government members, one of whom will be chair; one member from the Official Opposition; and one member from the Liberal opposition. The committee shall consider the scope and mandate of the proposed external review and report back to the Members' Services Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have we got some copies of that motion at all? Could we have some copied and distributed?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Traditionally when items had been submitted ahead of time for the agenda for consideration, they've been included as part of the package. I did submit a notice of motion well back and it's not included as part of the package, which surprises me because I anticipated that I would have the opportunity to move that. You've recognized a member that has not served notice for a written motion, and I would like the opportunity to present my motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. There are two parts to that. First off, the matter of the distribution of the various letters that were received: we have a packet here to be distributed to everyone immediately. On the second part, we have not functioned in Members' Services Committee sending in motions ahead of the meeting. We do indeed send in letters which deal with items to be raised at that time, but this is not the same as having to submit items that appear on the Order Paper as motions other than government motions or motions for returns, written questions, or Bills, especially the Bills or motions other than government motions. So it's a matter of the items being addressed that come as notice to the Chair.

Mr. Day, would you distribute those right now, please.

MR. R. DAY: The whole package?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The whole package. Thank you.

MR. HYLAND: I think, too, those letters were circulated previously by yourself on two different occasions to the members, were they not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I believe most of them were, but I'm not certain that all of them were. I know the Chair acknowledged receipt of the various items, and I think one of them was tabled in the House yesterday.

MS BARRETT: So, similarly then, the chairman recognizes that I as well had submitted a substantive motion on this matter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the packet that's being distributed at the moment they were supposed to have been put together in the chronological order in which they were received.

We'll stand adjourned for a moment or two while we get this passed out.

[The committee adjourned from 8:10 a.m. to 8:15 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. members. I assume you now have copies of the correspondence and also that you have a copy of

the motion, so you've had a chance to review the words of all of those things.

For clarification, of course we're in committee and therefore you can indeed bring coffee or juice into the Chamber if you wish. It's when we're in the formal state of affairs like question period and formal debate that those other rules apply. Thank you.

Speaking to the motion -- we got interrupted by a point of order -- Taber Warner, and then Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to indicate that the question of an independent review has been dealt with by this committee in the past. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands has raised that on previous occasions; in fact, on one occasion made a motion that an independent review take place. More recently we have the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud coming forward requesting a review as well.

The reviews proposed by the two members previously mentioned both focus solely on the MLAs and MLA benefits and would be the traditional review similar to ones which have taken place in the past where you'd have a judge as the chairman and then various leaders from around the province who would make up the remaining portion of the committee.

We received correspondence from the Premier a week ago Monday. In the correspondence to yourself as the chairman of the committee and as filed in the Assembly yesterday, the Premier is suggesting a much broader review. I would like to ask the indulgence of the committee to read into the record the body of the correspondence from the Premier.

I believe all Members would find it helpful if our Members' Services Committee could consider how to assess Members' benefits as a total package, if and when the freeze is lifted in 1994.

I believe it would be helpful if your Committee, before making any recommendations on future changes, could obtain advice and an assessment of our benefits from an independent, external company or group of Albertans, or both.

Also, it might be helpful to all Albertans if Members' allowances and benefits were assessed in as broad a spectrum as possible. Perhaps a comparison to senior civil servants, elected representatives across Canada, hospital and academic institutions' executives, judges, and private sector executives, with similar responsibilities, etc., would be helpful. Your Committee will probably have others in mind as well.

I'm sure the Committee will be able to work out those details to determine how to get the most effective, up-to-date assessment and recommendations, considering the 1994 date.

In short, Mr. Chairman, the recommendations which have been made to us by the Premier call for a very comprehensive, thorough review looking at other sectors in our society. I think to do that properly, we need to establish a subcommittee with representation from the three parties represented in the Assembly, and that that subcommittee come back to the full committee with its recommendations so that we may proceed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The letters that were distributed will be added as documents of the committee.

Edmonton-Highlands, please.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. I wasn't exactly expecting to strike a subcommittee, but I'm going to speak in favour of the motion and move an amendment to it because I think it should be all of this committee that decides the membership of the independent review panel. The amendment I would move would be that at the end of this written proposal simply add the proposal that I submitted in writing:

Be it resolved that all matters related to pay and benefits to members be hereafter referred to an independent commission for determination. This committee recommends to the Assembly that such a commis-

sion be struck as soon as is practicable and that it be comprised of a judge as the Chair, the president of the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, a representative of a local government, and a retired person who lives on a fixed income.

So members have that in writing in front of them, with a minor adjustment of striking the reference to "recommending to the Assembly," because this committee can determine the composition of the external review committee.

Now, the reason I move this as an amendment is that it would then satisfy those concerns which I brought to this table three years ago. You will recall, Mr. Chairman, that both Conservative and Liberal members spoke against this proposition. I'm really very pleased -- and I mean this sincerely -- that all members of the committee are now on board with the direction of striking an independent committee. I'd like to see us, this entire group, decide who is going to be that committee, and then the subgroup, the one that Bob is proposing in his motion, could look at the scope of the deliberations to be sent to the external committee.

So I would move that as a friendly amendment to his motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, for clarification, please: the amendment basically includes your letter to the Chair of May 11. As all hon. members have that in front of them, if you will delete in line 2 the words "recommends to the Assembly" -- is that correct in the deletions? Do you have one addition at the beginning as well?

MS BARRETT: Yeah. You could strike all of it up to "such a commission." I mean, the amendment can start at "such a commission." You can strike all the other words.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Was there also an earlier part to it, that the last line of the motion from Taber-Warner would then read:

The committee shall consider the scope and mandate of the proposed external review and report back to the Members' Services Committee . . .

and then we go on to

. . . that such a commission be struck as soon as is practicable and that it be comprised of . . .

MS BARRETT: Right. I don't mind editorial changes making the wording conform.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, is that the general understanding of all members so that we know we're debating the same amendment? Thank you. I see Cypress-Redcliff first on the amendment and then Taber-Warner.

8:25

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to talk against the amendment because I think it changes the intent. As I heard the Member for Taber-Warner move the motion and make his comments, he noted that the subcommittee would develop the outline, the game plan, so to speak, and then report back to the Members' Services Committee that would truly set the ground rules and accept, reject, or amend the recommendations of the subcommittee. I don't read anywhere in his motion where the subcommittee could go ahead and appoint a group and go through with it that way. I have concerns with a judge.

Mr. Chairman, I think for an audit like this, with the scope as suggested by the Premier, when you're going outside just the salaries, benefits, et cetera, of MLAs and you're looking at a number of other people, we need to sit down and think about who we put on that or what kind of group, whether it's a firm we pick or whether it's individuals or how we do it. I think we need to spend some time deciding that rather than selecting people by the position they hold.

We should look at their qualifications and go through it that way versus naming them before we start.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, if the amendment had read that the subcommittee consider the position previously put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, then in my view that certainly could have been taken as a friendly amendment. I must speak against the amendment on the basis that we're prejudging the work of the subcommittee, and the final decision will not be made by a subcommittee. It will be made by the full Members' Services Committee. That's where the final decision will come.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if you'll bear with me, I'll need some guidance on the procedural aspect here. First of all, I'd like to propose an amendment to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands' amendment. I need to know, first of all, who she specifically suggested should be on the independent commission. A judge?

MS BARRETT: Yeah; if you have a look at the letter that I sent to the Speaker . . .

MR. WICKMAN: I'd prefer to go by your motion that you just made.

MS BARRETT: Yeah; what I've done is clipped the first sentence and part of the second sentence and used the rest of it as an amendment. So you've got that in writing.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, speaking to that -- and I can support the amendment incidentally. The proposed amendment to the amendment that I would have is specifically: instead of "a representative of a local government," I would add on there "two representatives from local government, one being appointed by the AUMA, the other being appointed by the AAMDC." Now, as to whether it's appropriate to make that amendment at this time, you'll have to advise me.

Then when we deal with that amendment, I would have a second amendment, and the second amendment would deal directly with the motion as presented by the Member for Taber-Warner. That amendment would read . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. You're not going to give notice of a further subamendment until the subamendment is dealt with. I mean, that's done just for clarity of all members, to be able to understand what's going on.

As a matter of fact, at this stage of the game the Chair declares a recess so we can now have printed out exactly what's coming before the committee, because this is getting a little bit too convoluted. The issue is so important to all that we want to have a typed version of what's exactly occurring. That's the declaration of the Chair. We stand adjourned until we have that before us.

[The committee adjourned from 8:29 a.m. to 8:41 a.m.].

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, hon. members. Thank you, Clerk Assistant, for getting these in a form that we can comprehend.

On the subamendment, the Chair still recognizes Edmonton-Whitemud as speaking to the subamendment as proposed by himself, and then the next in the speaking order is Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. WICKMAN: The only comment I would make, Mr. Chairman, is that I believe this would give it balance. It would ensure representation from rural Alberta, which I feel is very, very important. Now, when we say, "two representatives from a local

government," you could drop the word "a" and just say, "two representatives from local government." I talk in terms, of course, of these actually being appointed by the AUMA and the AAMDC, that they would have that responsibility to name the individual or the two individuals in this case that would be part of this independent commission.

The only other comment I would make on it is a friendly amendment to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands'. If we get too restrictive and start naming specifically the presidents of groups, it becomes very difficult, because they may choose to delegate that responsibility to a designate. So I hope we would see a friendly amendment that would read, "the president of the Alberta Chamber of Commerce or designate" and the same holding true of the Alberta Federation of Labour. You can't assume that these two individuals have the time, the desire. They may choose to appoint somebody from their body.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Chair allowed a certain amount of latitude. The member really was speaking to the amendment as well as his subamendment.

Hon. members, in line 2 of the subamendment as moved by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, delete the word "a" so it would read, "two representatives from local government, one appointed." That's an editorial deletion. Thank you.

Edmonton-Jasper Place, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, and the Member for Red Deer-North on the amendment.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, I think what . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. I'll put you on the list. The Chair can't have eyes in all directions at once. I'm sorry. I apologize. Thank you.

Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I think all the members of this committee are trying to grapple with how to deal with the sudden change of heart on the part of the government announced yesterday by the Premier. For the past three years there's been an attitude that this is the committee that can deal with all the problems, and we do so on a piecemeal basis. Generally, a member of this Assembly comes with a problem and we look at the problem. We try to find the wisdom of Solomon and decide whether it should be done or it shouldn't be done on a case by case basis. I think a system has grown in place which has some inequity in it, which the public perceives is more generous than it should be towards some members. Clearly we have a problem that we have to deal with, and I think both the Member for Edmonton-Highlands and the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud are attempting to put some flesh on the bones of the Premier's proposition by suggesting composition. I note that the original motion we're dealing with doesn't really address the question of composition.

It has been suggested by the Member for Taber-Warner that the subcommittee could be the instrument for drafting the commission, that what we're trying to do right now through amendments and subamendments could be done in a subcommittee. I think that could be done in a relatively brief period of time. So I would be willing to stand these two amendments down as long as we make certain that the committee has the authority to deal with the composition of the subcommittee, which would require a slight amendment.

Secondly, I think we have to make very good and sure that what we're dealing with here is not a stalling tactic, that this is a matter that can be addressed fairly quickly, I would say within 30 days maximum to draft the terms of reference: scope, mandate, and composition.

I guess what I'm suggesting is that we perhaps defeat the amendments as amendments and refer them to the committee with instruction to come back within 30 days with the package drawn up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place basically utilized some of the words that I wanted to. It's amazing how you can look at an issue and come up with two different angles. It was my assumption here that this amendment plus the subamendment were, in fact, initiatives to stall a decision, but now I hear from the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place, and his interpretation was quite the opposite, that there was some concern that the government was attempting to stall. That certainly is not the intent. The motion put forward by the Member for Taber-Warner covers everything that can be done, and I'll accept the motives of the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place and echo the thought of just having these two subamendments struck down and let the subcommittee then proceed with the scope and the mandate, because certainly the intent was to determine what the composition of the committee should be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: Well, that capsulizes my comments as far as the amendment and subamendment. We've got to move this along. The subcommittee can make these decisions. It still has to come back to this committee for ratification.

It's interesting, some of the terminology that's been used like "sudden change of mind" or "sudden change of heart." It's been heard in this Assembly for a considerable period of time, a number of days, by the Premier about his openness to this type of approach. That's been out there for quite a while. A number of members on all sides of the House have said for quite an extended period of time that they'd be in favour of this type of approach. So I think in an effort to minimize individual members trying to be the ones to claim total and complete credit for this type of motion, in fact there are a lot of members who have talked about this for a considerable period of time. It's moving ahead, and defeating the amendment and the subamendment will help it to move ahead even quicker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Foothills, on the subamendment.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, my only comment would be similar to Mr. Day's from Red Deer-North. I think the first step is the scope and mandate that we're recommending as Members' Services, and then after that, when the subcommittee would report back to Members' Services, you look at the options as to who would in fact do the review. I would caution members that before jumping into identifying players, there are bodies that are professional organizations as well. I think those things should be left until after the scope and mandate have been drafted and presented to Members' Services.

I would speak against the two amendments and caution members from leaping into that realm of it before you actually go into the scope and mandate as to what we're going to be looking at, and I think that's an important step that we take right away.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The question, then, before the House is the subamendment as moved by Edmonton-Whitemud. Those in favour? [interjection] That's correct. Thank you, hon. member.

Edmonton-Highlands, on the subamendment.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, I was willing to go along with the general drift here to abandon the subamendments and amendment until I heard Pat say what she just did, and I'm concerned. Would the mover of the original amendment, who has not yet spoken on the subamendment, clarify: is it his intention to allow the subcommittee to contemplate the composition of the external review panel? If it is, I think we can abandon the subamendment and the amendment. I heard the minister of public works say that that was what was contemplated. I turned around and asked Bob, and he said yes. Can we have that on the record, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. In here we don't have anyone recognized as Bob, but Taber-Warner.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly not the intent of the motion to limit the subcommittee on coming back to the full committee with whatever it considers necessary and appropriate so that we can get the job done, including composition.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. I'll withdraw my amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I think you cannot at this stage, hon. member, otherwise we'll have a floating subamendment, which is a very delicate parliamentary condition.

All those in favour of the subamendment as moved by Edmonton-Whitemud, please signify. Opposed? Thank you. The subamendment is defeated.

The amendment as moved by Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: I move to withdraw.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a request to withdraw. Now, I have the motion to withdraw. Speaking to the motion to withdraw the amendment.

MR. McINNIS: It's not a motion. She withdrew.

MS BARRETT: No; I have to get agreement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, she doesn't have the right.

MS BARRETT: We have to vote on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee has to. Thank you.

The motion to withdraw the amendment. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously for the record. Thank you.

**8:51**

Now, back on the original motion, I had a previous list which was Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll take this opportunity to now move my other amendment. My other amendment, which is very, very important to me and, I think, the democratic process, would read

that all meetings of the subcommittee be held in public. Possibly it would be the intent of the mover of the main motion to do so. If so, then it would be redundant to make the amendment as I've

made it, but on the basis that that is not clear, I do want to move it for the record and speak to it.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that it becomes more and more important as democracy moves along and as people become more and more involved and more questioning of the procedures of government that everything possible, with exceptions involving personalities, those confidential matters, be held in public. This is one instance where I see that there would be nothing damaging to hold it in public. According to the throne speech, we have a freedom of information Bill to be introduced. Our caucus has spoken on freedom of information and the New Democrat caucus has spoken on freedom of information, and this is an indication as to our sincerity when we talk in terms of freedom of information. This whole question, this whole matter in front of us, actually came about because the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods in going through public accounts focused public attention on it. Let's face it; the public are the ones really responsible for us sitting here today. I'm not convinced we'd be sitting here today had that whole matter not been made public, and we have to bear that in mind. I would have some difficulty, I would have to consider my options if we were to determine ahead of time that all these meetings would be held in camera. So I would strongly urge all members of the Members' Services Committee to support this amendment so that we have this debate properly in public, as it should be done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Cypress-Redcliff, speaking to the amendment, and then Edmonton-Jasper Place, on the amendment.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know why we need such an amendment. As I remember, the actions and the discussions of this committee and the subcommittees -- I can't remember a subcommittee meeting in camera before. I've been on one or two, and others have been on them. They've been open. Our committee has met with coverage of the press or open to the public, unlike many other internal boards of review or members' services committees across Canada. Among them, if my memory is right -- and I stand to be corrected -- the House of Commons meets in camera, and some of the others do. But we never have. With exceptions, when dealing with personalities and personal items, we've moved in camera, and when we were dealing with the first cuts of the budget, we were in camera. I believe those are the only times we've been in camera, and I wouldn't see a need to start meeting in camera. What would be the necessity of it? When you start to discuss personalities, of course, then, that option would be there. But no matter how you do it, decisions that are made in subcommittees or committees have to be made out of camera anyway. You can't make a motion or a decision in camera. I believe the only motion that can be made in camera is to move out of camera. You can't make a decision and pass a motion in camera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Jasper Place, then the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you. There is a procedural difficulty here. I had some recent experience with this. In the Select Special Committee on Constitutional Reform there were motions put that the committee go in camera, which the New Democrat caucus to a person opposed. Now, on that occasion the Liberals supported going in camera, whereas we felt public business had to be dealt with in public, but the procedure was that a motion was moved to go in camera. When we lost the vote on the motion, we walked out of the committee and the Liberals stayed. So it's the other way around, hon. member. You have to make a motion to have meetings in secret. All these meetings are public meetings, and I would fight to keep it that way. If it had to be the other way around, if you had to

move a motion every time you wanted a meeting to go in public, we'd be in all kinds of difficulty. I think the member should consider that for a moment before he uses this procedure to make his point that the meeting should be in public. We have a right around here to presume that these meetings are public, and I want to defend that right, especially against those who would go in camera.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, the one argument I'm going to make with respect to the suggestion made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is that it is redundant. I have to look back at tradition in the operation of this Members' Services Committee for a great number of years and look to see how decisions have been made and are being made, and they are made in a public environment. Please remember that the motion dealing with the temporary residence allowance was made in public. It was moved by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to increase the daily allowance from \$75 to \$100. That was done in public when Mr. Wickman moved it. I find it incredible that he would state here this morning the innuendo that there was some secrecy attached to that and it was only when the public found out. Mr. Chairman, that was done in public in an open meeting with media present on August 28, 1989. Hardly three years after the fact you have the gall to stand up and say: only when the public found out.

Mr. Chairman, the argument made by the member is a redundant argument. The operation of the Members' Services Committee traditionally always has been and always will continue to be open.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Is there a call for any other discussion with respect to the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's no right of reply on the amendment, hon. member.

MR. WICKMAN: You can't close debate?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; there's no right of reply on an amendment. It's on the motion. Thank you. It's in our own Standing Orders.

All those in favour of the amendment as proposed by Edmonton-Whitemud, please signify. Opposed? The matter is defeated.

MR. WICKMAN: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. Can I ask if all meetings, including the subcommittees -- I'm talking of the subcommittees, where traditionally I've never seen a member of the media or a member of the public there -- will now be held in public?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, that's not a point of order. I await your citation, though, if you want to make it into a point of order somehow.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm simply asking a question in response to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you raised it as a point of order, hon. member, not as a question. I'm sorry; I have to deal with what your words are. Thank you.

The Chair would also point out that we've had research done across the country. This is the only Public Accounts Committee in the whole . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Members' Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Well, it feels like it. Well, it's public accountability in the Members' Services Committee. It's the only one in the whole country that is held in public and consistently has been that way. The other phrase known for this committee in other jurisdictions is boards of internal economy.

Now, we are still on the main motion. The Chair recognizes Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, it took me an hour to get a chance to speak to this. I tend to take the government at face value that they want this matter reviewed, and I would like to do everything I can to expedite that review.

I think there are a couple of amendments needed for this motion. One, which is purely housekeeping, would be to add in the fourth line the word "composition" after "scope" and before "mandate" so that it would read essentially that "the committee shall consider the scope, composition, and mandate of the proposed external review." That's simply to take care of the matter of the substance of the amendment and the subamendment. So I would so move, and I have a second amendment, if I may.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mover, is that a friendly amendment? Is that accepted?

MR. BOGLE: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. It's agreed to without having to have a subamendment. All right. That's what the motion now reads.

MR. McINNIS: Now, the second business, a little more substantive, I think. It has been suggested that the government wants to move expeditiously. I think we have a problem dealing with the purported five-year freeze, which appears to conflict with the idea that we want an independent review of these things. I mean, if we accept that a system which has grown like Topsy may have some inequity in it, there is certainly no reason to say that we have to delay the search for the truth for any period of time, two years, one year, or whatever.

I think essentially the task here is purely a technical one: that the subcommittee of this committee is simply to draft scope, composition, and mandate and not conduct the review, something that shouldn't take any length of time at all. But given that members have an outrageous schedule during session, I'm prepared to add "within 30 days" as an amendment at the end of the motion so that this subcommittee will review and report back to the Members' Services Committee within 30 days. I so move.

9:01

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Proposed amendment 3 is a 30-day report back.

Speaking to this particular amendment, Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I reluctantly must speak against the amendment. As the hon. member mentioned, we are in session. I'm not sure how long it will take the subcommittee to do its work. This is an extremely important task. They may in fact be able to complete the task within 30 days. They may need a longer period of time. I do not know. To place an artificial time line and put them in that kind of pressure cooker is, in my view, unrealistic. Therefore, I'm opposed to it. The intent clearly is that we move in the direction in which the motion has been placed. I've read into the record excerpts from the Premier's letter to the Speaker of the

Assembly and chairman of this committee. I think the goodwill is certainly there.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'll move a subamendment to the amendment. The subamendment will change "30 days" to "60 days."

Speaking to that, I think it's very, very important to recognize what the Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place has done. It is important that there be some guidance, some time line, something specific as to when the matter would come back, and I don't want to see that amendment defeated on the basis that it may be deemed to be unreasonable. Thirty days could be questionable when we talk in terms of consulting these various organizations and having them get back to us if indeed they are interested in putting a member on this commission. So I would be satisfied to live with 60 days. At least that fixes it, and it doesn't allow for the thing to be stalled for a period of time.

There are some very, very urgent matters, Mr. Chairman, that have to be dealt with, because many members, particularly in the Tory caucus, have indicated that they're waiting for guidance from the outcome before they determine what they're going to do with their subsistence allowance, for example. The Member for Barrhead made reference to my moving the motion to increase it, which I did in public in the committee, but I did it on the basis of a reasonable amount, and I'm not convinced at this time -- and time may tell -- as to whether that amount is reasonable or unreasonable. The thing the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out was that the application of it was very unreasonable and the original intent was never to allow a system to be in place to provide extra dollars for people that live within the Edmonton area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Now, on the subamendment, 60 days, the Chair recognizes Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, the whole purpose of this exercise is ultimately to establish some type of independent review which will in timely fashion review presumably at least a very broad scope of MLA benefits. I don't see why we have to allow 60 days to get this definition and a recommendation for the composition drawn up. I remind you that it was on this spot three years ago that I was able to make representation for this type of thing.

Surely five members of the Assembly can get together. While the House sits at night, when the House adjourns at 5:30, a lot of times after you finish your phone calls, get something to eat, often you've got time to meet before we resume at 8 o'clock. There are all sorts of ways we could do this. I think the 30-day amendment is really appropriate, so I speak against even expanding to 60 days. Let's get on with it.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, my sentiments are similar to Ms Barrett's, except I would like to make a sub-subamendment to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; I'm sorry. That's not possible. Not until the subamendment is either approved or defeated, hon. member. But you still have the floor.

MRS. BLACK: I think it's very important, Mr. Chairman, that we get on with the job, and putting a time frame on it is rather silly. If we move as quickly as we can and as practical in bringing together the five members who would sit as a subcommittee, then that's the thrust of the motion, and I think that's the intent of this committee. There is a possibility that they could be completed even before 30 days, but they may need 45. I don't think you put a time frame on

that. Let's get the job done, and let's get going on this. We've heard subamendments and subamendments on the first motion of the day. I think time is of the essence on this for all parties, not any one party. So it's important that we move along quickly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

On the subamendment, the 60 days, is there a call for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the subamendment as proposed by Edmonton-Whitemud, giving the time period of 60 days, please signify. Opposed? Defeated.

We return to the 30-day reporting period. A call for the question on the 30-day amendment. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? The matter is defeated. Thank you.

Persons who have spoken on the main motion -- do you like my colourful scorecard? -- are Taber-Warner, Edmonton-Highlands, Edmonton-Whitemud, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I didn't speak on the main motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member. You did. When you move, you then have spoken to both.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, no.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member. It's the rules of the Assembly. I didn't make up these things, but I have to enforce them. It's the rules of the House that apply. I know you've been here quite a while.

MR. WICKMAN: Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a call for the question on the main motion. All those in favour of the main motion, please signify. Opposed? Let the record show unanimously.

One small editorial thing on the motion. I think in line 4 it would be "the subcommittee shall consider," because it's referring back to the original subcommittee of line 1.

Thank you, hon. members. I think we should take 2 minutes to have a short stretch and return.

[The committee adjourned from 9:10 a.m. to 9:17 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're ready to continue, please. Thank you.

The Chair understands there's a motion of organization here. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the subcommittee be made up of the members for Red Deer-North, Cypress-Redcliff, Grande Prairie, Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Whitemud, and the subcommittee would be chaired by the Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Red Deer-North, Cypress-Redcliff, Grande Prairie, Edmonton-Highlands, Edmonton-Whitemud, with

the Chair being Red Deer-North. All those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

The next item of business, Capital Residence Allowance. Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. In a need for clarification and actually reflecting some of the remarks made by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud in terms of members are waiting for guidance on this particular issue, I'd like to bring forward a motion that at least in the interim is going to hopefully bring some clarification into the whole question of permanent residence, temporary residence.

It is an interesting situation. The structure of the particular members' services orders that we have now have been in place as far back as some 20 years. A number of the items which form the framework of the benefit structure that is now in place for MLAs -- a lot of that structure was actually put in place as a result of independent commissions and independent surveys. All of these orders over the years have been done in Members' Services Committee, which is in public. It's already been said this morning that we are the only one in the nation that holds these meetings in public. All Members' Services have media present. The reports of members' benefits, allowances, et cetera, are published annually. They appear in all the newspapers on an annual basis. They have for years. With all of that, we still have some concern and some need for clarification. In spite of the public nature in which these have been formed over the years, there still is a need for some clarification.

With that, I'd like to propose a motion that would do that. I'm saying it would take place now, hopefully, should the committee approve it, yet there is an interim aspect to this in that members' allowances, just because of a motion today, would still be given any consideration deemed necessary by an independent committee so chosen by the subcommittee. So this is to deal with some matter of urgency in the fact that there are a number of members looking for guidance on this, and indeed a significant part of our taxpaying population would like some clarification on the issue.

The first part of the motion, then, would deal with the definition of a permanent residence. I have copies of this here. If we could have these circulated, I'll just wait till they get handed out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North, let's just wait a moment till we all get copies, please.

Please proceed, Red Deer-North. Thank you.

MR. S. DAY: Part one of the motion would be:

The definition of permanent residence means the residence the member declares in a form prescribed by the Clerk and filed with the Clerk's office to be that member's permanent home with which a member may maintain personal, legal, business, community, or family ties or which may be considered permanent by the member through other criteria such as being the community in which the member is counted for census and enumeration purposes.

Number two would be in terms of defining "temporary residence." A member may claim an allowance for temporary living expenses while carrying out that member's public or official duties in or near the city of Edmonton.

However, there are a couple of provisos here.

(a) Members representing constituencies within the city of Edmonton are excluded.

That is, to be clear about that, excluded from making a claim on allowance for temporary residence.

(b) Members representing constituencies which border the city of Edmonton [which at the present time are] (Clover Bar, Sherwood Park, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Westlock-Sturgeon, and Redwater-Andrew) are also excluded from making claims for temporary residence, with two possible exceptions.

Given the fact that some constituencies are very large and stretch a considerable distance:

- (i) Where the permanent residence within the bordering constituency is more than 100 kilometres by primary highway from the Legislature Building in Edmonton.
- (ii) Where the member who represents a constituency bordering Edmonton works 14 hours or more in any day, including travel time, the member may claim the allowance on a daily basis.

This is only on a daily basis on those days where more than 14 hours are put in on that particular day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's in your motion, "including travel time" and "14 hours?"

MR. S. DAY: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

I think first, hon. members, let us deal with the first paragraph as an issue. Then if we can resolve that, we would move on to the second.

MR. McINNIS: May I ask a question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. McINNIS: Which are the members who are holding in abeyance their decision about the capital city allowance? I know that the constituencies mentioned were Clover Bar, Sherwood Park, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Westlock-Sturgeon, and Redwater-Andrew. Are they all in abeyance waiting for us to make a decision? Do you know, Percy?

MR. WICKMAN: Are you talking Westlock-Sturgeon specifically? If you're talking Westlock-Sturgeon, the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon is prepared to abide by the findings of the independent commission and, in the interim, a suitable motion.

Now, I have some amendments to this motion that I want to move at the appropriate time.

MR. McINNIS: Is he collecting at this time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The problem is the Chair has no knowledge to be able to respond to your question about who's in it and who isn't. You know, that's left indeed with the relationship of the member to the Clerk's staff.

Might we now narrow the focus on this paragraph one, this definition of permanent residence? Is there any comment on this?

MR. McINNIS: I think probably this will help in some measure. In the beginning I thought the question of MLA's residence was not really relevant to the calculation, because residence is a discretionary thing. You can live wherever you choose. Some members, especially in cabinet, choose to live in the city of Edmonton because most of their business is here, and their temporary residence is in their riding, but then you get some situations that the public finds unacceptable. So I think it is reasonable to have a member declare a permanent residence one way or the other and to work from there in terms of the calculation of the benefit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question, then, on section one? Thank you.  
Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: My question, Mr. Chairman: under this definition, what happens in the situation -- I guess this question is through you to the mover of the motion -- where a person living in another city or another municipality has basically moved their family to Edmonton, which becomes their primary residence for everything other than maybe voting in municipal elections, and back home may maintain what some people would define as being more a temporary residence; for example, a rental accommodation? The family is here; the property that they may own may be in Edmonton. Would those members no longer be eligible for the subsistence allowance?

9:27

MR. BOGLE: If I may share a personal example with the member, Mr. Chairman, it might help clarify the situation. For 11 years I served in Executive Council. My family were with me here in Edmonton. We chose not to have a weekend marriage, and with the distance back to the constituency of Taber-Warner, it was just not practical, in our view, to have a separated situation. However, our permanent residence throughout that 11-year period remained our home in Milk River. It was a home we owned. It's where I voted in municipal, provincial, and federal elections, and it's where we were counted for census purposes.

What this motion proposes is that the member would fill out a declaration. The fact that a minister may relocate his family because of his ministerial duties here in Edmonton in no way affects the permanent residency of that member. This definition merely gives a clarification on the matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Red Deer-North, summation, then, on paragraph one.

MR. S. DAY: I think it's abundantly clear as read, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: The questions are not clear.

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. McINNIS: I took it completely the other way.

MS BARRETT: So did I.

MR. McINNIS: You say you can declare your residence to be anywhere you want it to be whether you live there or you don't?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry, hon. member; I'm caught in the business of the formal rule that you have spoken. I will have a two-minute recess so that you might obtain the clarification informally.

MS BARRETT: I still haven't spoken.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely.

[The committee adjourned from 9:28 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did consult with the mover of the motion and some other members, and I want on record some sort of clarification, I believe. My reading of this motion at first was that you had to actually call your permanent long-term home, wherever it is, when you submit to the Clerk. Then when I heard discussion, it sounded to me like if you move away from -- I



don't care -- Elk Island or somewhere and you just keep a mailbox there, you could call that your permanent home for the purposes of later on declaring temporary residence allowances. I want the mover of this motion to make it absolutely clear that anybody who tries to run a loophole through this so that they can pretend they've got a permanent residence 100 or 200 kilometres away from Edmonton wouldn't get away with it. [interjection]

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would be Red Deer-North in closing debate on it. Edmonton-Whitemud, you did speak earlier.

MR. WICKMAN: No, I just asked a question, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, sorry.  
Red Deer-North.

MR. S. DAY: Mr. Chairman, it's fair comment, and it allows me to bring to the attention of the committee what I believe are key words. First of all, in the first line there we're talking about residence. You can't live in a mailbox. We're talking about the word "home." You can't live, again, in a mailbox. There are some further definitions down here which show, for example, how a person could prove that to be so. Also, in the days in which we're living, if anybody was to try and skew this by literally just having a mailbox, certainly the ire of the public and the eye of the media would quite appropriately denounce that type of thing, and no member would realistically be able to survive that type of scrutiny.

So this clearly points out with words like residence, like home, showing some examples how that can be declared and also how it can be proven, how somebody could find out, indeed, where they're living.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The ire of the fellow members, their fellow colleagues also comes into play, I'm certain.

All those in favour of paragraph one of this motion, please signify. Opposed? One member did not vote. Could I have this again, please? All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Moving to the second -- well, it's early in the day for a lot of this, especially those of us that went to cheer on the Oilers last night.

MS BARRETT: Well, that's a change of heart. All right; call the *Calgary Herald*.

MRS. MIROSH: We're not talking about that; we're talking about those of us down here at work last night till 11 o'clock.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Even the Speaker gets some time off once in a while. Thank you.

Red Deer-North, paragraph two.

Sorry to cause such an international scandal here.

MR. S. DAY: Paragraph two is presented as read and hopefully will clear up questions in the minds possibly of members or possibly of constituents that the constituencies within the city of Edmonton are excluded; you cannot claim a temporary allowance. You cannot claim a temporary allowance if you are representing constituencies which border the city of Edmonton.

There is the recognition that in some of those, being rural constituencies and therefore being large and covering many, many miles, you could actually live in a constituency bordering Edmonton yet be over 100 kilometres away from the capital. That's why that exclusion is put in there.

Also, in terms of the 14 hours, it is my reasonable consideration, in discussion with colleagues, in discussion with constituents, that a member who lives in one of these neighbouring areas -- not an Edmonton constituency but a neighbouring one -- and is working 14 hours and having to return again early the next morning on those days could reasonably be deemed to make a claim on an individual basis, on a daily basis, for some temporary allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, an amendment to the motion. I read the motion now to be part 2. The amendment to the motion would be to delete two under (b).

Speaking to that, Mr. Chairman, first of all I would make the point that this is on an interim basis until such time as the independent commission sets the rules in place. Secondly, I assume that by the previous motion we've taken care of the problem of members declaring, filing a declaration that I hope would be public, as to where their residence is. So that will tie that one down.

9:40

Now, this one's not tied down tight enough by the motion. I simply can't buy the rationale. I have no problems with the rest of it; the 100 kilometres I think is fine. But I have a real problem with -- and I can cite examples. The Member for Stony Plain, for example, was timed by I think it was ITV: 28 minutes to his residence. From Sherwood Park, 23 minutes to his residence. I can look south of me. The Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc is seven miles south of me. No one can tell me that that extra seven miles, which would take -- what? -- seven minutes, maybe six minutes on that highway justifies the need to file a claim for a subsistence allowance.

So taking out that (ii) makes it very, very clear that these members, these constituencies named in (i) are excluded. Now, if the independent commission deems that the 100 kilometres is unreasonable, that it should be less, it should be more, so be it. Let them make that recommendation. I'm looking for an interim solution, and I think that on an interim basis (b)(ii) should be deleted totally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The amendment is to delete 2(b)(ii). Other speakers?

Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Perhaps the member does have a point in that I think it's unreasonable to expect that the taxpayers provide a hotel room every day of the week, potentially, or during session for members in these borderline constituencies. But if you live up to 100 kilometres from this place, you know, 60 or 70 kilometres, and you've worked a 14-hour day, I don't want to be on the road with somebody who's driving home at that hour, especially if it's an hour or more commute.

The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon collected \$21,793, which is unreasonable, but I'm not prepared to say that it's unreasonable that he should occasionally have a hotel room if he's worked a 14-hour day. I think that's not unreasonable at all. I appreciate that what we're doing is interim; it's pending review. If Mr. Taylor, for example, has to drive to Bon Accord after a 14-hour day, I don't think it's at all unreasonable that he should have on those rare occasions -- and I think they are relatively rare; 14 hours, hon. member, is a pretty long day -- the potential to have a hotel room.

I don't think we're talking about something that maybe happens a few times a year. We sometimes have sessions in this place that go

till 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning as a result of things that needn't be discussed in this committee. We do have sessions that go that late, and then members are required to be at meetings that start at 8 o'clock in the morning. You can't drive an hour home, get any rest, and drive an hour back. On those occasions I don't think it's unreasonable that the potential for a hotel room be available, but that's on a per diem basis, as I understand it, per day. We're not talking about this kind of formula where you get every day in session, and I think the formula goes something like every three months, 30 days out of session. We're not talking about that; we're talking about the occasional opportunity to get a hotel room and not be a hazard on the road. So I think in this case the proposal is actually a reasonable one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Barrhead, followed by Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'm speaking to point (ii), the one that was amended by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. The Member for Edmonton-Jasper Place once again has used the words that I would have wanted to use with respect to this. I think safety is one very important aspect with respect to all of this. I can understand where the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud comes from on these matters. Sitting in the House here night after night, I see very few members of the Liberal caucus in the House, and I'm sure they don't fit into the category of the 14-hour day. But this is geared toward those individuals who are here. When this House sits till 10:30, 11 o'clock at night and the member then is expected to be back at a meeting at 7:30 the next morning, the last thing in the world that individual, whoever he or she is, should do is be out on the highway from 11 o'clock to 12:30 or 1 and then get up at 5 o'clock.

Mr. Chairman, some of us have traveled a long time in the 13 years we've been in this Assembly, and I think the least we can do is recognize that for those occasions where it's necessary, this provision should be put in place. This is not something that's going to be put in place 30 days a month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm going to ruin my reputation, because I'm going to agree with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. That's it; the reputation's shot.

The point he makes is absolutely valid. I mean, there are a lot of times when we stay late. It's not commonly known that we start our meetings in the morning. The House sits in the afternoon and then sits again at night. The earliest we're going to adjourn is 10:30, and we often go much later than that. By that time, if you're facing an 80-kilometre drive to get home, you might not be a safe driver at that point.

I would like to ask one thing. I realize that every time I do this, I'm basically closing myself out of argument, and that's okay. Are we asking for receipts? Is that implicit in this motion or in the Standing Orders? The Clerk is nodding no. Okay, but the onus is upon the member staying in a hotel under those circumstances to be able to prove it somehow if required?

MR. KOWALSKI: It's honour.

MS BARRETT: Okay. If everybody is sort of making the same assumption, that it's done on the honour system but you do have to declare that you were here when you say you were, as an interim

measure I think that's fine. So I would speak against the amendment.

MR. BOGLE: Question.

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

MR. S. DAY: Well, these are interim measures, as has already been pointed out by Edmonton-Whitemud, so these are subject to change should the external committee find that there does have to be a declaration. In making the claim on 2(b)(ii), you have to show the dates. So if it shows up on a member's claim form that December 25 you claimed, then obviously there's going to be some question raised about that. The date definitely has to be recorded so it can be checked. On the safety factor, our own labour laws require that truck drivers can only maintain a certain length of hours, of days, et cetera, so it's given that reflection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're on the amendment, the amendment being to delete 2(b)(ii). Those in favour of the amendment to delete, please signify. Opposed? The amendment is defeated.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. WICKMAN: The question is on the main motion now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question on the main motion.

MR. WICKMAN: My question just . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Forgive me, hon. member. You have already spoken.

MR. WICKMAN: That was on the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I'm sorry, hon. member. The rules of the House again say Standing Orders.

MR. WICKMAN: I didn't want to speak. I simply wanted to ask a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Sorry, hon. member.

MS BARRETT: You ask your questions and then move your subamendment. I mean, that's the way it works.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, things change in that respect, because I didn't realize . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. member. The Chair declares a two-minute recess.

[The committee adjourned from 9:44 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: [Not recorded] motion. All those in favour?

MR. WICKMAN: Can I move another amendment, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, sir. Hon. member, you make one amendment. In order to do that, you speak to the main motion. Therefore, you've been precluded by yourself to continue to speak on the main motion.

MR. WICKMAN: I could challenge the Chair, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know you can, but you're wrong, hon. member. I'm sorry. It's our own Standing Orders.

Now a point of order from Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I think the member does have a point, that he may have more than one amendment. That happens on occasion, that amendments are considered at least seriatim. I think it probably would have been helpful, perhaps, if he had given indication that he had more than one amendment the first time around. Well, perhaps that is the point. But I want us to be clear that you can move more than one amendment if you provide notice of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can only speak once to the main motion. You see, what we're dealing with here is that in the ordinary course of events, there would be more members of a caucus present and the other members of the caucus would take up the motion, to be able to do the amendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the support of the House.

All right. Call for the question on the main motion. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously, let the record show.

The Chair would like to briefly point out that in the parliamentary tradition we do refer to the phrase "hon. members," because it is a time-honoured phrase but is also one that applies. That's one of the things that does indeed occur. In my role as Speaker together with the Clerk in our supervision of the records, we have indeed increased the availability of records for the members themselves so they can keep abreast of what their own spending patterns are on a monthly basis. That's one thing that we deliberately did in the Legislative Assembly in this last six years which helps hon. members to keep track of what's going on together with the staff that work with them.

Perhaps it's not too well known publicly, but an attendance roll is kept by the Sergeant-at-Arms each day so that we have those records, which are indeed made public at the appropriate time, for the attendance of members. Each individual caucus has been very good at sending notes to myself or my office so that we in our office keep track of who is indeed present when the House is sitting. So that accounts for part of this discussion that we've just had.

The other thing that I do want to point out is the business of travel. We do know that some members have to travel up to six and a half to seven hours one way to get home, and the concern is there, and has been, that we're running on borrowed time before someone else gets killed on the highway. The members leave here tired because indeed they do work 12 and 14 hours a day sometimes; quite frequently. And they're dead tired, because they're running from meeting to meeting to meeting, and phone call, phone call, phone call, plus all the other pressures. They leave late and they arrive home late at night. It's just a great concern to me as Speaker because sometimes I am a mother hen as to how many members really are in jeopardy in terms of their traveling. So I appreciate the comments that have been made by the committee. Thank you.

Now, item (b) I understand is our next issue, the Confederation Room. Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Whitemud.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, I sent a letter to you on April 27 to ask that the following motion be placed for consideration at this meeting. I hope members got copies of this in the package that was distributed. Good.

Be it resolved that the Confederation Room be reallocated to members of the media and MLAs for the purposes of conducting interviews at all times when the House is sitting.

As you know, the room was available to reporters for several years, and then two and half years ago it was allocated as a government members' meeting room. At the same time, a room on the other side of the Chamber was allocated as an opposition members' meeting room. We contended at the time that this would cause disorder and in fact jeopardize safety if reporters, particularly electronic -- and I mean TV -- who have to have tripods and very heavy cameras that cost about twenty thousand bucks a pop, have to be sort of trailing people around on the marble floor, which is the floor outside of this Chamber. In fact, it has proven to be extremely difficult. The reporters -- and this is true -- have come to call an invisible line the line of death. Okay? They're not allowed to cross in front of it. The apparent reason was so that reporters and MLAs weren't too close to those doors right there, but the problem is that it forces reporters and the MLAs being interviewed into a much narrower hallway or onto stairs where everybody is in danger of tripping and falling. Just last week I talked to a camera operator and said: "Oh, watch; your microphone line is front of you. You might trip."

It is a totally dangerous environment out there. It was much more sensible and well organized when reporters could call us into the Confederation Room, and we would go and we would be in a carpeted environment, a very large room. The acoustics were good...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Keep your whispers down a little lower in the press gallery, please. Thank you.

Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: There was no slipperiness involved; the acoustics were good. We used to have a couple of tables lined up, and what would happen is that reporters would stand in sort of a queue and spread out, depending on which story they were following. It made absolute sense. I urge the committee to support this motion. Let's bring this room back to the use of the media.

If the government members would like a separate room, I certainly can offer on behalf of the New Democrat caucus -- I don't know what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would say -- that the room that is on the west side of the Chamber could be made available to government members and the opposition. New Democrats, in any event, are willing to forgo a separate meeting room.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud, followed by Red Deer-North and Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, is a referral motion acceptable at this time?

MS BARRETT: To whom?

MR. WICKMAN: A referral motion.

Let me speak, Mr. Chairman, to the motion as presented by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, and then I'll make my referral motion and you can deem at that time whether it's acceptable.

I agree with the comments that have been made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. It's a very, very difficult situation. She submitted a letter that day; I submitted a letter that day. Her letter is timed at 4:15; mine's timed at 5:15. It's her motion, which I support, but I have a sense here that if we just go with this motion today, it's going to be defeated. I don't want to see it defeated.

There is a problem there and it has to be resolved, and if reverting back to the original system we had is not the answer, then I want to hear discussion on some other answers. What I'd like to see done -- and the mandate has to be very, very clear with this, Mr. Chairman. The mandate has to be to review and look at appropriate solutions and report back to this committee. That would be the establishment of a subcommittee, consisting of the members for Grande Prairie, Calgary-Foothills, Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Whitemud, to look at that situation with the Confederation Room, to look at other options that are there to deem the whole situation with the media more workable.

It is not workable at the present time. The media have a role to play. We have a role to play. There is a very, very important link. The media is our avenue to the public. In some of the incidents that I've seen out there, where members have been told, "Move back, back, back," there's no dignity involved. It can be very difficult, I'm sure for other members as well as me, to even try to get through there on occasion. You can't expect the media, when they're doing an interview with the Premier or a cabinet minister, to suddenly clear a path to allow a member to flow through. That's not reasonable, Mr. Chairman. If we put our heads together, I'm sure we can resolve this.

If I knew the Member for Edmonton-Highlands had the support of members behind her, I would support that and I would not bother with the referral motion, but I'm afraid that her motion's going to be defeated and we're left with the existing situation as is.

9:55

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the Chair understand that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has made a motion, or this was just speaking to this particular motion?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, first I asked if I have permission to refer a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The member certainly has not been denied motions to amend and so forth today, so if this is a motion to refer, that then would take some precedence. Who are you referring or deferring it to?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, to read my motion specifically, I move

that this motion be referred to a subcommittee to be made up of the members for Grande Prairie, Calgary-Foothills, Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Whitemud and to report back to this committee after exploring and reviewing possible solutions to the problem that currently exists.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer-North and Edmonton-Jasper Place, on the referral.

MR. S. DAY: I would comment on this whole area and also be directing my comments towards the motion.

I think we need to look at the whole question of the relationship between media and members. I know that I try, as do most members, to make myself available to get information to the media, to help them do their job. I think a significant number of the media people both in this building and outside of it are honourable and ethical in what they do. The fact is that when there's a group of media and a group of members, there does develop a certain swirl of activity, a certain turmoil that can happen in a spontaneous way. There's even a book out on that. I'd recommend it to all concerned. It's called *Feeding Frenzy*, and it categorizes and catalogues the spontaneous phenomenon that happened in that type of an incident.

A recent incident was used by some to indicate that there was a need for improvement of relations. That incident involved a member of this Assembly in an alleged altercation with a member of a particular camera crew. What was fascinating in that particular incident was that if it had been something that had happened with a citizen and a cameraman or a citizen and another citizen in public, all recordings of that incident would have said "the alleged assault," "the alleged altercation," "the suggested altercation," whatever. Media is usually very careful not to say, "This person did this," and therefore was guilty. There was suggestion of legal action and everything else, yet in spite of that, the particular person who was alleged to have offended the other person was presumably tried, convicted, and executed. It took a very different tone than normal types of altercations where there's going to be some suggestion of a legal follow-up. So that does serve to show that there has to be some discussion and some relationship improvement between media and members here.

I have found myself, as others have and have reported to me, many times in this swirl of activity, and I don't mean just outside the Assembly here. In other locations in and out of this building I have been hit by cameramen, not on purpose I don't think. I have been hit, elbowed, pushed. I've been struck by a camera, one of these 20-pound cameras, if that's what they are. I've been stepped on physically, pushed. In bringing that to the attention publicly of a reporter on a radio show, I was told: yeah, well, you guys are supposed to be used to that. I don't think any of us have to get to the place where we have to be used to either a purposeful or inadvertent type of physical punishment, if you want to call it that. I don't think these are done intentionally; I think they happen on the spur of the moment. It shows that things need to happen to improve relationships.

I think the media need to also police themselves, just as we have to. Over this last period of time when there's been a lot of interest on allowances, I've had situations where reporters have phoned members' homes. The members haven't been home. They've talked to their children. They have not identified themselves as reporters. They have asked questions about their parents' living arrangements. That is highly unethical. Those types of things I think also need to be looked into.

We've had situations over the past few days. Members have been phoned close to midnight and asked: are you in your room right now; what do you do with the room when you're not in it? We've had a situation over the last few weeks -- and this is not a partisan issue; it was done to an opposition member in a time of extreme grief over family loss -- where there was considerable bombardment, and not just by phone call but right at the individual's particular residence.

We've had situations where reporters have told us in terms of where they've been given information about, for instance, how we've cut travel costs or cut allowances, "Yes, I'll put that in my article," and the next day it not appearing. We asked the reporter about that, and he said, "I put it in; the editor pulled it." Now, those types of things are obviously judgments that editors and reporters have to make, but I think it should be on the record and it should be open for discussion.

We do need improvement. We do need to look at things. The Confederation Room is not going to be an answer to a problem, because these things did not happen in the Confederation Room. It's interesting that the opposition is offering our coffee area to the media. They may be interested in offering their own. The line of death does not exist. If they want a situation like in Ottawa where you have to stand behind the little velvet tubes and not cross that line, maybe that has to be looked into.

The only reason I bring this forward, Mr. Chairman, is to suggest that we do need to talk about these things as members and as media members and media representatives. Just looking at what room people are going to stand in is not going to solve these issues. It goes far beyond that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

The committee stands adjourned. The next meeting will be held after due consultation with representatives from each of the three political parties. We must leave because of the committee that's due in here one minute ago.

[The committee adjourned at 10:01 a.m.]

