

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

9:07 a.m.

[Chairman: Dr. Carter]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we have a quorum, so I think we'll get busy. I'm also aware of the fact that the weather's great and all of us love being here all the time, every single precious moment.

All right. The agenda is there in the opening part of your books. Is there any addition to be made to the agenda? Not seeing any objections, I take it as a question. All those in favour of the approval of the agenda, please signify. Carried unanimously. Thank you.

The Chair welcomes the new members of the committee, the Member for Lacombe and the Member for Lloydminster, and the Chair always welcomes back the regulars.

What is your wish with respect to item 3(a), the committee meeting minutes of Thursday, January 21? The Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I move we accept the minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Item 4(a), Report on Historical Biographical Sketch of Members. Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: There's no update at this time, but I will ensure that we do have an update for our next budget meeting.

MR. McDOUGALL: Mr. Chairman, there is an update report.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I think that should be reviewed by the committee first.

MR. McDOUGALL: Oh, okay. Fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

It's the Chair's understanding that the subcommittee has had a meeting since our last regular meeting, so something's ongoing.

MR. BOGLE: There is some work under way, but the committee has not had a chance to meet. We will and report back at our next meeting of this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Item 4(b), the subcommittee on minister and MLA job evaluation study. The Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, in consultations with the consultants it's my understanding that in fact they are on schedule to have the report ready for committee members to look at, and they're aiming for March 18 as the date that had been talked about before. There had been some internal verbalizations, but in terms of the overall reality of the report we're looking at March 18.

MR. CHAIRMAN: March 18 for the report to come to the subcommittee?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, that's an interesting question: the subcommittee or the whole committee? It's immaterial to me, so it's completely the wish of the committee itself. I don't know the advantage of having it simply coming to the subcommittee without coming to the committee. I'm sure all committee members would like to see it. It may very well be that if we want to receive the report on March 18, we just set aside an hour or something to get the report, have an overview of it, and then we'll have to determine what it is we want to do with the report.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, could we deal with item 6 now, the date of our next meeting or meetings?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MR. BOGLE: There had been some earlier discussion about meeting on April 1 and 2, but John has indicated that that's spring break for Edmonton schools, and it affects John and it may affect other members. If there was a chance that we could hold our next meetings on the 17th and 18th . . .

MR. HYLAND: St. Patrick's Day.

MR. BOGLE: Yes; St. Patrick's Day is a good day to begin, Alan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First off, is it agreed that we just quickly go to item 6, Date of Next Meeting, and that would help us perhaps deal with this present item?

All right. With regard to the newly suggested date, the Chair is not available on Wednesday the 17th but is on Thursday the 18th.

Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: I'll be away that whole week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, are you available Monday and Tuesday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I could be.

MR. BOGLE: Well, Tuesday is our cabinet day, and our Monday mornings are agenda and priorities, and in the afternoon we have standing policy committee meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if the report is due on the 18th, then I don't suppose there's much benefit in meeting before the 18th. Clerk, is it your understanding that the interim report will indeed be ready that day or they're aiming for that day?

DR. McNEIL: My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that the consultant's intent was to meet with the subcommittee or the committee on that date, present the major findings of the report, get any further direction the committee wanted to give it, and be able to deliver a sort of total document by the middle of the next week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. So the consultant's understanding via the Clerk is for the initial report to be dealt with on the 18th at a meeting with the subcommittee and then coming back, if fine tuning is required, to the main committee about the 25th.

Yes, Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the comments of the Member for Barrhead: if we can bring that report directly here, if it's

done, let's do it rather than repeat that process twice and delay it that much further.

MR. BOGLE: Well, that's all true, and we're trying to find a date when members can all come in.

MR. WICKMAN: Right. I'm just speaking to the comments made here about the consultants wanting to go to the subcommittee first prior to it coming here. I'm just concurring with the comments of the Member for Barrhead that despite what the consultants may want, we just request that the report be brought directly here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in the wisdom of the Chair, I think the committee stands adjourned until 20 past 9 to allow negotiations to continue. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 9:14 to 9:23]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll reconvene. Thank you. The collective wisdom of the House is . . .

MR. BOGLE: Sit Wednesday, April 7 and Thursday, April 8, but that there would be either a special subcommittee meeting or a full meeting to receive the report on March 18.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry, Bob. Could you repeat that?

MR. BOGLE: Well, there would be a meeting on March 18 to receive the report by Peat Marwick.

MR. WICKMAN: By the subcommittee?

MR. BOGLE: Well, I think that's still open for debate. I'm happy if it's a full meeting of the committee. Then we would have our budgetary meetings on Wednesday, April 7, and Thursday, April 8.

MR. McINNIS: A suggestion for the 18th: perhaps that could be structured as a subcommittee meeting with all the members invited. That way there wouldn't be the quorum problem. If the subcommittee wishes to formulate a recommendation such as the one we've tabled, that we would send it off to an independent committee for review, they could do that on that occasion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. First off, item 6 on the agenda. The next regular meeting of the Members' Services Committee will be April 7 and April 8. The next meeting of the subcommittee on the evaluation study will be on Thursday the 18th. It will be a subcommittee meeting, and all members are open to attend the meeting. I would suggest that that meeting take place no sooner than about 10 o'clock in the morning or 10:30. We could say 10:30 on the morning of the 18th, place to be determined and posted.

MR. WICKMAN: I've just got one more question, Mr. Chairman. Possibly the Deputy Premier could answer this: can we be assured that we're not going to have a conflict with the spring session?

MR. KOWALSKI: On March 18? Well, the House would not be recalled for March 18.

MR. WICKMAN: No; I'm talking the other two dates, Mr. Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: On April 7 and 8?

MR. WICKMAN: Right.

MR. KOWALSKI: I think you can take some degree of comfort that we wouldn't be able to. If the estimates for the Legislative Assembly weren't ready to hear by this time, we couldn't come back, could we? Just don't carry the meeting on beyond two days though, Percy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Item 4(c), office furniture, Official Opposition, Edmonton-Highlands. Edmonton-Jasper Place, are you prepared to deal with the issue today, or is this to be tabled?

MR. McINNIS: In the absence of the member, I move that we table the item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.

Motion to table. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously.

Item 4(d): Confederation Room, Edmonton-Highlands. Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: There is a suggestion of some standing that the use of the Confederation Room be restored for news media interviews. I don't know if we're flogging a dead horse. I'd like an indication from other members whether they're prepared to reconsider that policy at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item 4(d): did we have a subcommittee that was supposed to be dealing with this?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have members of the subcommittee present?

MR. WICKMAN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Edmonton-Whitemud, you're on that subcommittee, I trust?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, we do have a subcommittee. The subcommittee consists of myself, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, and two members from the government side. The subcommittee has not been called. It's been so long, I even forget who the chairperson is. I thought the chairperson was either Dianne Mirosh or Pat Black. It has not met for a long, long time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; the minutes show that it's comprised of Grande Prairie, the Minister of Energy, Edmonton-Highlands, and Edmonton-Whitemud. It was my understanding that the subcommittee was going to meet. Was it not under the chairmanship of Edmonton-Highlands? Help me, members. I can't recall. Here it is, sorry, the next page. Edmonton-Highlands is the chairman of that committee, so I believe it's up to the chairman to call that subcommittee.

The Deputy Premier, and then Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, if this subcommittee is chaired by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands and includes three other members and if they haven't met and the Member for Edmonton-Highlands is not here today, I just move that we table this matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Motion to table. Those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried.

As a follow-up, the Minister of Energy has left the committee, so we would need to have a replacement for that subcommittee. Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: I'd like to move that the Member for Lloydminster take that spot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lloydminster to replace Mrs. Black on the subcommittee. Is there a call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Item 4(e), Electoral Boundaries Committee. Clerk, for the report, please.

DR. McNEIL: This was just really an update in terms of the financial status of that committee. Mr. Bogle indicated at the last meeting that there would be approximately \$70,000 left in the budget by the end of the fiscal year. Our estimate right now says it will be about \$75,000. The anticipated expenditure as of this date for that committee is roughly \$208,000, and as of the end of February the expenditure was almost \$175,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions, comments? Okay, and everything is wrapped up by the end of this month. Office closed. Thank you very much.

Item 4(f), Implementation of Revised Forms. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: At the last meeting this item was tabled to give the members an opportunity to review these forms with staff. Basically, what the forms do is just update the references to the Members' Services Committee orders under the consolidated Members' Services orders and incorporate the calculation of the GST in the expense claim forms, which was not there in the past. In essence, what these forms do is simplify for the employee who is filling it out the inclusion of the GST calculation in the expense claim form. We've sort of pilot tested these forms with staff from the three caucuses, and my understanding is that they're very comfortable with what's being produced. They don't reflect any changes in policy; they just reflect updating as far as references are concerned and simplification.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, how would we deal with the situation -- now, this is all bookkeeping here. Bill 55 has been proclaimed; we have new constituencies. I guess in all reality those new constituencies will not kick in until the date of the writ, so we're dealing with the ones that we know. As long as that's okay, then there is no problem. Then after the next election all these things will have to be revised to show the new reality. So you're not going to publish 47,000 copies of each of these forms knowing full well that they'll only be around for no more than 52 weeks from now anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now we've heard the date of the next election, possibly.

All right. Any other questions or comments with respect to this material that's really brought to us for information?

MR. HYLAND: Do we need a motion to accept that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is always willing to accept a motion. Cypress-Redcliff.

9:33

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we accept the new forms as have been circulated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

All right. Members' Services Committee Orders Amendments, 5(a). Who's going to enlighten us on this one?

MR. BOGLE: Has a motion been prepared?

DR. McNEIL: A draft order has been prepared.

MR. BOGLE: Okay. Well, members are aware that earlier this week the Premier announced that cabinet has accepted a 5 percent rollback in cabinet ministers' salaries. There are other offices that are tied to that amount or a portion of that amount, and the offices include the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chairman of Committees. It's important to note that a press release was issued this week by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Deputy Chairman of Committees volunteering a 5 percent rollback in their salaries. I did communicate with both Percy and Pam relative to the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party on a 5 percent rollback. So the order which is before us deals, I assume, with the cabinet, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Deputy Chairman of Committees, Leader of the Official Opposition, and leader of the third party. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: It deals with every one of those except the leader of the third party.

MR. BOGLE: Why is that?

DR. McNEIL: The Executive Council salary order affects all those positions except the leader of the third party. There has to be a separate motion with respect to a 5 percent reduction for the leader of the third party.

MR. BOGLE: Why?

DR. McNEIL: Because in the order the leader of the third party's salary is not tied to the cabinet salaries. It's listed specifically as a dollar number.

MR. BOGLE: How does a number relate to the leader of the third party? What is the salary?

MR. WORK: Okay. It relates back to section 48(2) of the Act. The equation is 25 percent of the rate of salary payable to a member of Executive Council. If you have your green book, it's sub 4 on page 16:

The allowance provided for by section 48(2) of the . . . Act shall be \$20,914.50.

MR. HYLAND: Which is the same as the Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MR. WORK: Yeah.

MR. BOGLE: Well, you're into legal semantics. We've been dealing with principles on the salaries for our Speaker, our Deputy Speaker, our Deputy Chairman of Committees, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the leader of the third party. I'm not sure where you're at. There's been no previous consultation, and I'm a little concerned about that, because I notified the Speaker's office on Tuesday or Wednesday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the understanding of the Chair that, because of the drafting of the Legislative Assembly Act, the Members' Services order that's before us deals with everyone except that leader of the third party. That then gets dealt with with a separate motion saying that it's a minus 5 percent.

The other routing is to ignore this one for the moment and to just pass an omnibus motion which says minus 5 percent, list the various categories, and then a second Members' Services order gets drafted.

MR. BOGLE: There was a motion by Percy Wickman in this committee in 1989 which increased the leader of the third party's salary. In fact, it was the highest increase of any member. So clearly this committee is the committee that sets the salary for the leader of the Liberal Party.

MR. WICKMAN: I don't have any difficulty making the appropriate amendment, but I did want to speak to the item once the motion is moved. I do take exception to the comments being made. That motion was presented on the basis of the increase in the number of members within the Liberal caucus. That's very straightforward. You know, let's not attempt to mislead the situation. That was the basis that it was done.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, now I'm confused. Is the leader of the Liberal Party's salary tied to the number of members?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. WICKMAN: But it was recognized. Because of the doubling of the members from eight to 16, the figure of half of that was used.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Taber-Warner.

MR. BOGLE: I will move
that the salaries of members of Executive Council, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, the Deputy Chairman of Committees, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the leader of the third party be reduced by 5 percent effective March 1, 1993.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's the motion before the committee. Now it's capable of discussion.
Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll kick off the debate. I certainly understand and sympathize with the factors that have led the government to want to roll back salaries. Clearly there's a mood in the public that some of the pay and benefits may be too high. I think there's a feeling that the process that we use to arrive at these things is wrong, and of course that's a debate we've had around here many times. I would like to indicate that I'll be supporting this motion. Our House leader announced on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition, I think on the day the announcement was made, that he was prepared to accept the 5 percent pay cut.

I would simply observe that these are the kinds of problems you get into when as a committee we try to deal with these issues. When

the issue came to the committee back in 1989, after the Assembly had moved to invest the authority in this committee, I thought it was with the understanding that we were going to go to an independent review to establish those things. Without doing that, then clearly we have to make decisions on an ongoing basis, and this is one of them.

It's worth noting that the pay cut amounts to a \$200 per month decrease, which is a sizable amount of money for most people, although I think it should be observed that for cabinet we're talking about a pay package which is in the neighbourhood of \$8,670. So it's relative. It's substantial, but it's relative.

I'll be supporting the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'll keep my comments relatively short. I have a school picture-taking at 9:45.

The 5 percent decrease in that portion over and above the base MLA \$57,500, one-third tax free, is symbolic. It sends, I guess, what you would call a partial message. But let's not forget -- and I would hope that when the matter comes before us by the consultants -- that what the public is saying out there, what they find really, really offensive is the MLA pension plan and the opportunity for retiring MLAs. It's in the estimates: over a million dollars for the relocation allowance and immediate commencement. This is not going to satisfy the public if that's the attempt. This is not going to show the fiscal restraint that Albertans are asking for. It's the other issues that really, really claw at them and are clawing at them throughout all of Alberta, not just Edmonton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Additional comments on the motion? A call for the question.

Taber-Warner.

9:43

MR. BOGLE: Just to sum up, Mr. Chairman. The question of an independent committee, as raised by John, is one which we will debate further in this committee. But it must be recognized that no matter how the matter of remuneration, expenses, and pensions is dealt with by elected people, whether in the 10 Legislative Assemblies, the two territorial Assemblies, the national government in Ottawa, or indeed going down to the municipal level -- and Mr. Wickman was a member of a municipal council and well knows that it's fine to strike an independent committee. They can come back with recommendations, but as Harry Truman said, "The buck stops here"; a decision must be made by the Assembly. In this case the Assembly has transferred that responsibility to the all-party Members Services' Committee, but no matter how hard we try to put the issue at arm's length, all that body can do is make a recommendation. The final decision is made by the elected people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion: minus 5 percent. Opposed? Carried unanimously.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, could I ask for a five-minute tabling as a courtesy while I go downstairs?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have nothing on the table at the moment, but if you'd like to go visit your group, sure.

MR. WICKMAN: Are there other items coming forward?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee stands adjourned until 10 minutes to 10 or upon your return, whichever occurs.

[The committee adjourned from 9:45 a.m. to 10:07 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, hon. members. I'm sorry for the delay. I apologize. There was miscommunication with one of the secretaries in our section.

I have before you now the two Members' Services orders which are consequential upon the motion that was previously passed. Our requirement is that these again be voted on by the committee, and then they can come into effect. The Chair will sign them.

The first one is Members' Services Committee Order 1/93.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, could I move both, or do we have to do them one at a time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's cleaner procedurally to do them one at a time.

MR. HYLAND: Okay. Mr. Chairman, I'd be prepared to move Members' Services Order 1/93.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Discussion? The Member for Barrhead.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification here on Members' Services Order 1/93. Section 2(a): clause (a) is amended by striking out "\$59,858" and substituting "\$56,865." Who does that apply to? Is that the Premier?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is the Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: And (b) is the other members of Executive Council?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Executive Council plus the Speaker and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. And (c) would then apply to the Deputy Speaker?

DR. McNEIL: Item (c) is the minister without portfolio.

MR. KOWALSKI: There aren't any.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Then what about the Deputy Speaker?

DR. McNEIL: The Deputy Speaker is 50 percent of the salary of a member of the Executive Council, and that's in the Legislative Assembly Act.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then the Deputy Chairman of Committees is a function of that.

DR. McNEIL: The deputy chairman is 25 percent of the salary of a member of the Executive Council.

MR. HYLAND: So he's covered or not covered?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Consequential upon setting the salary of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker in turn is a function of that. The

Deputy Chairman of Committees is a set function as well. They all follow through on that one.

MR. KOWALSKI: Including the leader of the third party, consequential.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The leader of the third party is Members' Services Committee Order 2/93.

MR. KOWALSKI: Order 2/93?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, because that one I think is another separate section in terms of the Legislative Assembly Act. I'm sure that when the Legislative Assembly Act is next revisited, a lot of these things will be put in proper perspective.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, I just want to be sure that I'm clear. Item (a) relates to the Premier; item (b) impacts the ministers, the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, and the deputies.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it has an impact upon the Deputy Speaker, yes, and the Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MR. McINNIS: Item (c) affects no one at the present time because we don't have ministers without portfolio.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is correct.

MR. McINNIS: So the deputies are covered by virtue of the fact that they're a percentage of clause (b). Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a call for the question on Members' Services Order 1/93?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Members' Services Committee Order 2/93. This is the one dealing with the leader of the third party.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move it.

MR. McINNIS: I wanted to move it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm glad to see both of you are keen to move it. The Chair recognizes Edmonton-Whitemud as the mover of the motion. Is there a call for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Clerk, would you like to take us to an overview of the budget document, please.

The Chair apologizes to hon. members. The material was delivered to you today on purpose because last year there was a budget leak.

DR. McNEIL: The budget that you have before you is a maintenance budget. The overall increase for the A budget is projected at .4 percent. Had there not been an increase in the number of members who are not members of Executive Council, the budget would have

had approximately a 2 percent decrease, but with nine additional members, that reflects specifically in the caucus budget for government members' services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shall we go through the sections as you have it there, or do you want to take questions as we go along? Hon. members, what's your pleasure?

MR. BOGLE: Could I recommend that we have a quick run through the elements first and then come back, go through it, and ask questions, so that we all get a flavour of what's in the document.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

DR. McNEIL: If we go to the first section then, Administration, this budget projects an A budget increase of .4 percent. This is almost totally due to increases in health care, Blue Cross, dental plan, and pension plan costs that were implemented in the past year. Projected to decrease in that budget is Supplies and Services and a decrease in the fixed assets, which is not a significant amount anyway. Admin. services provides the financial admin. support and human resource management services to the Legislative Assembly Office, so it incorporates the administration and personnel functions. It incorporates no adjustments for managers nor any market adjustments for nonmanagement staff.

Do you want to go down page 1, or do you want to go through the individual detailed pages?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my preference would be to get a broad overview of each section and then allow us the opportunity to go away and study it in more detail.

DR. McNEIL: Fundamentally, under the Administration section this represents a maintenance budget. The only increases incorporated here would be for benefit cost increases that have taken place in the past year, and there are reductions in the Supplies and Services budget of approximately 15 percent.

We do have a B budget item here for consideration, which relates to the need to provide additional resources in anticipation of an election sometime within this next fiscal year. There's a lot of documentation and additional processing of various documents and so on required during the pre-election and postelection periods.

That's an overview of Administration. Are there any questions in terms of that overview?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think, David, at this time let's go on to the overview of each section, and then we can work our way back. Thank you.

MR. McINNIS: I have one question about relocation of constituency offices. Is that normally borne by the constituency office allocation involved, or is it from a different budget than that?

DR. McNEIL: In terms of the costs of rental and so on it's borne by the constituency office budget, but there are things like stationery, for example. If it's a new location and new stationery has to be supplied, that comes out of the MLA Administration budget. Contracts have to be terminated with lessors. Fee-for-service contracts have to be terminated. There's a lot of administrative activity surrounding an election, which is likely to take place within the next 52 weeks.

10:17

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Overview with respect to section 2, MLA Administration, please.

DR. McNEIL: MLA Administration. The increase in this particular budget is due to two things, primarily air travel costs because the bulk ticket programs, through which we purchased the majority of airline tickets for Calgary-Edmonton travel and which provided us with a 15 percent discount, have been eliminated. We no longer realize that. We are attempting in various ways to see if we can get some type of discount structure. The increase in Supplies and Services reflects that problem, if you will. The other expenditures in that control group relate to the increase in, again, the benefit rates across all of the benefit programs.

MR. WICKMAN: I have just one question on this section. On what basis is a determination made that becomes I guess so specific in terms of the \$1,122,009 in terms of re-establishment allowance? What formula is used to arrive at that figure?

DR. McNEIL: That again is an estimate. You'll notice it's a B budget item. It's put in there as just a rough estimate based on the number of MLAs who have already indicated that they would be leaving and on the experience at the last election. The alternative here would be to not put it in the budget and put forward a special warrant request when the specific number was known.

MR. WICKMAN: Just to follow up, Mr. Chairman. How many would this be anticipated to cover? How many are you anticipating would receive relocation?

DR. McNEIL: I think this one was based on 25 members. At the last election we had to turn over 21 members.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I wonder -- the comments that the Clerk made relating to the cost of airfare. The approach to the airline companies is done in co-operation with the department of public works, because with the whole group at once, when you're talking about the amount of travel that the civil service and the MLAs would do, it's got to be a major negotiated item. It should become quite a pot of money to negotiate with.

DR. McNEIL: We'd be more than pleased to pursue that possibility, to see if there was some way we could obtain a better discount structure collectively than we can as the Legislative Assembly Office alone. The Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services may have a . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: The reality is that with the changing marketplace the airlines are not too enthusiastic or conducive anymore about doing that sort of thing. There just doesn't seem to be that much more flexibility. You certainly know about the economic health of the two carriers we have in Alberta. They're not negotiating at all. There are no great cost savings to be found anymore in the marketplace.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any additional comments with the overview on the MLA pension administration, Clerk?

DR. McNEIL: No. No comments in terms of MLA administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then we move on to the overview of section 3, House Services.

DR. McNEIL: Mainly a no-growth budget. Essentially the benefit cost increase is being absorbed by small reductions in travel, insurance, freight and postage of materials and supplies. Essentially a no-growth budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, just half a moment. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, is this your school group you would like to introduce, please?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I could. Through you to members in the Members' Services Committee, I would like to acknowledge the presence of one class of bright-eyed grade 6 students from Keheewin elementary school. There is another class probably following behind. If you all want to stand, we'll welcome you to this committee meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A note of explanation to the students. It's the honoured tradition of this House to applaud by thumping on desks. It's not something for you to take back to school and do. It's the traditional way of applauding in this House.

The committee is working through budget estimates for the Legislative Assembly Office, which is a group structured somewhat like a government department, but it is not the government. This group is responsible for all the political parties that are represented in the House.

All right. With respect to House Services, of course this section deals with general management and Table office services; committee services; production of House documents; House records management; security, ceremonial, and legal advisory services.

Might we move on to section 4, the Speaker's Office. Mr. Day, would you like to make a comment there?

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, again this is a maintenance budget. The small increase was due to the increase in employer contributions for dental plan, Blue Cross, LTDI, workers' compensation, UIC, and Alberta health care. All other items were held at their '92-93 levels.

MR. McINNIS: I have a general question that doesn't apply to this particular item. Is the 5 percent pay cut, the one we just took, factored into these estimates?

DR. McNEIL: No, it is not, but obviously it will be at the next meeting.

MR. WICKMAN: A general question too, Mr. Chairman. Could my memory be refreshed as to specifically what portion of the budget includes the allowances for the constituency offices?

DR. McNEIL: Well, it's the MLA Administration.

MR. WICKMAN: That includes all the items for the constituency offices?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions or comments at this time with regard to the Speaker's Office? Thank you.

Section 5. Actually 5, 6, and 7 are in the hands of committee members themselves.

DR. McNEIL: The budgets put forward here represent budgeting at the same level per member as last year, which is \$45,100 per

member for the government members' budget. The increase there is strictly related to the increase in the number of private government members.

MR. BOGLE: So to be clear, the three caucus elements do not reflect an increase in dollars; they reflect a shift in where members are out of the 83-member Assembly.

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

10:27

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Section 6 is the Official Opposition Services.

MR. McINNIS: Something's leading the way by taking a cut here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Forgive me, Edmonton-Jasper Place. The comment was . . .

MR. McINNIS: I'm sorry. I was just joking that we were leading the way by taking a cut here, but I understand this reflects the change in party status of one of the members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I understand that. Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I understand that we set the amount for the Leader of the Official Opposition and it follows through in a percentage amount for the leader of the third party. The operation of their offices that's added to their caucus allotment is the average of the ministers' offices. When we initially set that, I think we sat down and averaged the ministers' offices from estimates and then took the average. I wonder if that's been looked at again. Is that still relatively in place, or should it be up or where should it be?

DR. McNEIL: It has not been looked at. There's a leader's allowance component in both the Official Opposition budget and the Liberal caucus budget. That leader's office component, if you will, has just been increased by a percentage each year since that was initiated. I think the initial number, something like \$276,000, was the cost to operate a minister's office. So that \$276,000 has just been escalated by a percentage each year to determine the leader's allowance for the Official Opposition, and the leader's allowance for the Liberal opposition was just a percentage of that number. The principle on which it's based in terms of the average cost of a minister's office has not been reviewed since it was implemented in, I think, 1988 or '89.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But if the committee decides to give directions at a future meeting, we'll make the adjustments at that time. All right then. Thank you.

May we move to item 7, the Liberal Opposition. Clerk, that reflects the change in the numerical makeup of the caucus?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

All right. Questions or comments?

If we might move on to section 8, Legislature Committees. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Okay. The overall budget for Legislature committees shows a 6.7 percent decrease over the estimates for last year, primarily realized in hosting budgets, payments to MLAs, and travel. There will be no funds budgeted for the Select Special Committee

on Electoral Boundaries, nor have there been any funds budgeted to this point for the Select Special Committee on Parliamentary Reform. We had no budget estimate for that committee last year, nor have we received any direction from the chairman of that committee for any expenditure of funds for fiscal '93-94.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if I might interject at this stage and ask: would it be the committee's wish to again have chairmen of these various subcommittees come before us at the meetings on April 7 and 8? I see a few nods. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you prefer to have them scheduled into the first day rather than the second so that if there are any adjustments to be made, we can do that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you; taken as agreement. So the committee secretary will contact them. Thanks.
Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Just to add, these committee budgets were based on discussions between the Clerk Assistant and the chairman and, in most cases, the deputy chairman of each committee.

MR. HYLAND: I wouldn't think we would need the ones like Public Affairs and that that never meet, would we? We would be talking Law and Regulations; we wouldn't be talking about the ones that are . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: For absolute clarification, we would also then deal with the matter of the Parliamentary Reform Committee, because that's one we don't have a document on at the moment. Agreed?

DR. McNEIL: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Clerk, if you'd like to, I suppose, read into the record what we have here projected under the summary on 8.

DR. McNEIL: The projected decrease is 6.7 percent of the overall Committee budget based on the data that we have at the present time. Reductions are primarily in hosting, payment to MLAs, and travel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's an important point. Thank you.

Do you want to go through these that are in the section now or wait until our meeting on April 7?

MR. WICKMAN: I think we should wait till the chairmen are here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: April 7. Thank you, hon. members.

With respect to item 9, Legislative Interns. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Day can address that budget since he's been primarily responsible for the operation of that program.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, you can see that the budget shows a 75 percent decrease. As administrator of the program, I am making a recommendation that the program cease for the '93-94 fiscal year. The numbers you see before you are the current year interns that are

employed three months beyond the end of this fiscal year: April, May, and June. So we have figures before us that show those payments for April, May, and June, and at that point the program would be discontinued.

One of the reasons for my recommendation, Mr. Chairman, is that this budget has been held at zero percent year over year and we have relied on corporate sponsorship. Last year we lost our major sponsor, Petro-Canada, and this allowed the program some significant operating expenditures. Prior to that we had lost Benson & Hedges, and at this point I don't feel this program can survive without that outside sponsorship.

10:37

MR. CHAIRMAN: One other sponsor who has been very generous with us is Canadian Airlines, and all of you are quite familiar with the challenges Canadian Airlines has at the moment. They indeed have been supporting us in this current year, and in fact just this past week the interns were given tickets by Canadian Airlines to fly to Yellowknife so we could have three days working up there. For the Speaker to accompany the interns on that trip to the Northwest Territories, the Speaker's budget is the one that covers that airfare and the cost of a hotel. Again, in conversations with Canadian Airlines, we're very concerned that their sponsorship will also fail.

MR. McINNIS: Just so I understand, Mr. Chairman, the rationale for eliminating the program is that the funding that's been available for operating expenses is no longer available and there's an unwillingness to cover those costs from taxpayer-funded sources. I accept that, although that doesn't speak to the need to eliminate the program altogether. I mean, it seems to me it may be possible to scale it back as opposed to eliminating it altogether so that for the same number of dollars we could carry fewer interns and possibly have less travel. I just wondered if that option was canvassed or if there may be some other reasons for terminating the program that I'm unaware of.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, in response to Edmonton-Jasper Place, one of the things we've done year over year is do exit interviews with each of our intern groups. They feel that the travel component, the ability to see various infrastructures here in our own province, to use the expression "to get out from under the dome," to visit Yellowknife, for example, which is unique in that it is consensus government, to also see how our federal government operates -- those were all integral components of the internship program. In canvassing them, they felt that if those components were removed we would really not meet the nationally set criteria for a legislative internship program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: Thank you. Well, I'm in agreement. When we look at the economic situation we're in, if we terminate the program and examine the impact, negative or positive, here in this Legislature, I think it's one area we can cut without too much loss. It's a tremendous program for the individuals involved -- there's no question about that -- but there are so many millions here in Alberta that have to be considered too. So I think this is one program that -- for the time being, we can proceed with the recommendation that it be removed.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if Mr. Day can respond. If memory serves me, at one time the enthusiasm, which I guess is the right word, of people in the universities wasn't there to the extent it was previously. I wonder if that support has changed any in the

last few years in letting respective interns know about the program and that sort of thing.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, the internship program at one point supported eight legislative interns. Due to budget reductions and loss again of outside sponsorship, it was reduced to six and then to four. During those subsequent reductions from eight to six to four, the university community was far less enthusiastic about their support for the program and advertising it and encouraging applicants to apply. Since I've had responsibility for the program, however, over the past three years the quality of the candidates has been exceptional. That is not so much the advertising that would be done by the university community; it's word of mouth that has spread back from our graduating interns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In actual fact, if I might add here, we had more applicants in the last couple of years when we went out to actively solicit applications, whereas before we'd been pretty much reliant on some of the departments of political science at various universities. So in fact we had more applicants because the program was better known. There's no doubt about it that it's with the greatest reluctance that we bring forward this recommendation to terminate the program. Given the overall economic situation of the province and also the challenge to downsize, this is one area where I as Speaker can see some money being saved and no one in the department has to lose a job. I agree with Edmonton-Jasper Place that there are other reasons for the viability of the program, but this is what we bring forward as a recommendation. Of course, it's all in the hands of the committee. Thank you.

Number 10, Public Information Branch.

DR. McNEIL: The public information branch incorporates the previous *Hansard* and visitor services budgets, reflecting a reorganization in the past year. Again, a maintenance budget here with a decrease in Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits and a small increase in Supplies and Services.

Under the Supplies and Services budget, we have implemented a program of a Legislative Assembly display going to teachers' conventions and fairs and exhibitions in the province to disseminate more information about the Legislative Assembly and the role of the member and so on as part of our public information efforts.

As well, we instituted in the last year, as an experiment I guess, placing an ad in the major daily newspapers at the end of the session listing the Bills passed at that session and advising people of the province to call our number or call their MLA if they wish to have any more information about a particular Bill that had been passed.

So again, overall a maintenance budget in comparison to last year.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman, one of the things I have difficulty with in understanding the budget is that within each of these categories it's a line item budget. It doesn't separate how much is for visitor services, how much for *Hansard*. I don't know if there's some way to prepare a summary sheet that kind of puts total dollars beside functions rather than a line item in a couple of areas like that, just to help me understand.

DR. McNEIL: We can do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

There has certainly been a very favourable response to the perambulations of the Legislative Assembly display thing under visitor services, especially with the teachers' conventions and some of the trade shows and the Stampede and Klondike Days, for example, and the Medicine Hat thing.

An interesting sidelight that MLAs might find amusing is that depending on how hot certain issues are politically in the province, after visitor services staff have come back from fielding a lot of questions at some of these displays, I say to them, "Now you have a better understanding of what it's like to be an MLA." I forget what the issue was, but I think it was at Red Deer that they had in the neighbourhood of 3,000 people coming up to them and going at them as if they were the MLA. So it's an interesting program.

Section 11.

10:47

DR. McNEIL: I'd defer to Blake to discuss this.

MR. McDOUGALL: Okay. The Legislature Library's 1993-94 budget submission is a maintenance budget and represents no overall increase. In the Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits area we have a 1.5 percent increase, which is the result of a reclassification of one manager. That's to compensate for my being involved, being taken away from a number of my responsibilities in the library, and being assigned administrative duties in the Legislative Assembly Office.

Supplies and Services. We're cutting that because there will be less funds required for printing. I wish to note, however, that we've put money in to continue the book project. Last year, you'll recall, during the consideration of the library's budget \$25,000 was added for the MLA book. I've put that amount in again in case the committee wishes to proceed with that project, to help cover those ongoing expenses, so this maintenance budget does provide for continuing that particular project.

In the Purchase of Fixed Assets it's a 75 percent decrease there because there are no major office equipment items being purchased.

There's a B budget item in the Information Systems budget to complete the acquisition of an on-line system for the library, but the explanation for that, the detail, is in the Information Systems area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When is it anticipated for that all to be completed?

MR. McDOUGALL: That would be in '93-94 as the last phase. It's two phased. The first phase is under way presently.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Minister.

MR. KOWALSKI: At the bottom of the page there's a note about revenue. Is this the only revenue source in the whole Legislative Assembly estimates?

MR. McDOUGALL: No. You're looking at what would be page 1 in the library summary? Yeah; that is the library revenue. There's another major revenue area in publications; you know, with all the publications, the subscriptions that we have.

MR. KOWALSKI: Another page, then, in these estimates?

MR. McDOUGALL: I'm not sure if it's shown under the Public Information Branch. Let's take a look here. We don't have it noted or displayed, no.

MR. KOWALSKI: These dollars flow to the general revenue fund so they're not seen as an offshoot anywhere in here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything we take in flows to the general revenue.

MR. McDUGALL: Yes.

DR. McNEIL: We'll make sure that that's in here for the next go-round.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you like it as a total from each and just as a separate page so that we have that? Then it's highlighted.

MR. KOWALSKI: As long as it's identified. I just want to see the true reality. If you are bringing in a revenue of \$50,000 or \$100,000, I think it would be of interest for the committee to know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, with the discussion of the B budget item under Information Services or from this item, in other legislative committees, especially Leg. Offices, what has been done from time to time is that if the office has had any money left out of the present budget, they've been allowed through the committee to transfer it to something, maybe a year or six months earlier than what they were going to, to help out the situation of the following budget. Can this be done in the library, for example, on that system?

MR. McDUGALL: That's possible, yes.

MR. HYLAND: Perhaps then, Mr. Chairman, we could have Mr. McDougall come back with the possibility of what it would cost, what's left, and what could be done with it for the next meeting.

MR. McDUGALL: The remaining cost is displayed in the Information Systems budget presently. It's at the very back, the detail of that cost, and the rationale is there. We couldn't recover that amount of money at year-end, but we try to, you know, recover some funds.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.
Clerk, still on the library.

DR. McNEIL: We would have to do that before the end of the fiscal year, and since the next budget meeting is not scheduled until the 7th and 8th, we would need your approval at this meeting, I guess, to maximize the expenditure in this fiscal year.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, we've picked the 18th for our meeting to deal with the other. If we had a proposal before us, we could probably deal with it quickly one way or the other at that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I see the Clerk shaking his head in agreement.

Are we ready to move on to section 12, Information Systems? Clerk, please.

DR. McNEIL: The Information Systems budget, including the B budget submission related to the data processing system for the library, projects an 11 percent decrease in 1993-94. Essentially, the A budget is a maintenance budget, and in the B budget the expenditure in '93-94 is significantly less than it was in '92-93, bringing the total to minus 11 percent.

I'd just make another observation about this budget. The philosophy we've implemented with respect to keeping current with respect to the data processing system is to have a budget for the maintenance and upgrading of equipment that we do on a regular basis rather than waiting five years and then having to replace the

whole system. So our equipment and the system are being maintained and upgraded as we go along within the same amount of funds that was budgeted three years ago for the system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A far more rational approach than the cataclysmic thing we were once faced with. Good.

Any general comments about section 12? Edmonton-Jasper Place, thank you.

MR. McINNIS: I'm just curious that this seems to be the only area where there's any pay increase at all for staff. There's a 3.8 percent increase due to market and merit adjustments. I take it that means that we're probably out of whack in the Information Systems area, that there's an adjustment needed. Or did I just miss that? Maybe that applies in other areas as well.

DR. McNEIL: No, the only adjustments that will be applied will be merit adjustments -- we haven't budgeted for market adjustments -- and those would be people who were in effect tied to the bargaining unit classifications and eligible to receive those merit adjustments in the next fiscal year.

10:57

MR. McINNIS: So that may apply, actually, in some of the other budgets?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, it may apply in some of the other ones as well.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Might we move on to section lucky 13, Electoral Boundaries Commission. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: In effect, the budget for next year for this commission is zero. This really just gives you an accounting of the allocation of the funds. In '92-93, \$87,548 was spent for the commission, and the balance less the '91-92 overexpenditure was transferred to the Electoral Boundaries Committee upon a motion by this committee in November.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. So that's tidy basically. All right. Thank you, Clerk.

These documents will now stay with committee members, it's my understanding. Final revisions will be prepared.

DR. McNEIL: I guess there are two alternatives. Given the order today, we could take them back, update them to reflect the adjustments, and then return them to the members within the next week or 10 days.

MR. HYLAND: I think that would be better.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Thank you. That seems to be the general agreement of the committee. So when we're finished our meeting, if you'll leave the documents, then we'll have them collected and revised.

Are there any other comments, about the budget first? Any other directions at this stage, again realizing it's preliminary and that the documentation was delivered earlier today?

MR. HYLAND: So, Mr. Chairman, then perhaps at the meeting on the 18th we'll have one page or something where we can look at some movement of funds within the envelope.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

MR. HYLAND: On the 18th I would expect, after the discussion and the questions I've put to the Clerk, to have something on paper where if there's a possibility, for example, that a B budget item can come out of this year's funding, we'll have that documentation so we can deal with it quickly on that date -- otherwise, we're into the next fiscal year -- which then allows us a reduction on the budget next year.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that was the indication, and the Clerk agrees. Thank you.

Additional comments or direction?

MR. BOGLE: I would hope that at the meeting on the 18th we'll be able to identify anticipated unexpected funds, and I look at MLA Constituency Offices as an example. I know from our caucus -- I don't know about the other two caucuses -- there are some of our members who do not use their funds very extensively; there are others who use them to the maximum. I'd like to see identified what anticipated funds will be left in those areas.

I think Alan's comment is absolutely bang on, that there should be no B budget items for the next fiscal year. If we're going to do something on the upgrading of the computer equipment in the library service, for instance, it should come out of any savings that can be identified in this fiscal year. The re-establishment allowance figure in my view should not be included in this budget. That's presumptuous, because in addition to the members who have announced they're not planning to run again, there could be a number of members not returned. I look at the entire Liberal caucus as an example.

As an overall, I would like to suggest, and I'm not sure if a motion is necessary,

that our target should be a 5 percent reduction, in keeping with the aim of government where departments are trying very hard not just to maintain the line at zero but to come in with decreases, and that the new budget document that we look at on the two days in April reflects a 5 percent reduction, with no B budgets.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair will take that as a motion. Speaking to the motion, Edmonton-Jasper Place.

MR. McINNIS: I'm just trying to understand the effect of passing the motion. The member's requesting that the Assembly administration prepare an alternative set of estimates with an overall global target of minus 5 percent. Would that be to replace these or as an alternative beside? That's one question. I have another here.

MR. BOGLE: Well, the intent was that it would replace these figures, recognizing that this committee has the final decision. So if we come to an item -- for instance, I use as an example the Commonwealth Parliamentary conference this year in Cyprus, and I note that the administration had recommended that one delegate go. Now, that would be a departure in policy from what we have adopted in the past. In the past we have sent two delegates to conferences. So that's something that might be adjusted upward. There are other things that might be adjusted downward. All it is a guideline to the administration, recognizing that the MLAs who sit on this committee will make the final decision.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it's an instruction to the department to bring that back for our next regular meeting.

MR. McINNIS: Just on Cyprus, we have a former member of the press gallery here who resides there. Perhaps he could attend on our behalf.

I mean, how you get from zero to minus 5 percent is a pretty important question, Mr. Chairman. It involves I think some substantial decisions, and I sort of feel as a member I'd like to be in on that somehow. I think it's good to have the administration put forward some suggestions. I'd just like to see when we get it back how that was done so we can understand what the impact of the minus 5 percent is, because there may be alternative ways to do it. I think it's a pretty good objective to put forward minus 5 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd see it as documents prepared for comparison, and then we'd go line by line and the committee can change.

MR. BOGLE: We've already agreed that this book will be updated and members will have, I'm assuming, a second set of figures that they can look at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think it's a very, very noble motion, a very noble objective, and with a degree of sincerity on the part of all of us I would hope that we can in fact achieve it. To at least give that initial direction to have as a base, as a guideline, minus 5 percent I think gives us something to go on. Of course, there are a number of factors that will occur between now and then, such as the study on the MLA perks, pay, pensions, and such, that could affect that outcome considerably, but I think the member is taking it in the right direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: In terms of Mr. McInnis's questions, we'll put together a binder of minus 5 percent, and at the start of every section we will have a summary of where in that particular budget the reductions are taking place and our analysis of the implications of that reduction in each of those areas, just so there's a summary as well as a description within each of the detailed pages.

MR. BOGLE: Yeah. I'd assumed, Mr. Chairman, that there would be an explanation. This isn't just an arbitrary figure being pulled out of the sky and rough cut. There has to be a rationale for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

On a point of information on this motion.

MR. McINNIS: It's just a question with regard to the direction that the transition costs, I guess I'd call them, between the current Legislature and the next Legislature be left out of the budget. It's just a general question of how those would then be financed. Would that be left to the new government to solve that problem?

MR. BOGLE: Well, one of the ways is that at the end of the fiscal year when we look at -- and we'll be able to identify on the 18th the dollars that will be left over. I just used one example, the constituency office allowance. There will be dollars left over in various areas, and the same will occur at the end of the next fiscal year. So I'm saying I believe those costs could be absorbed in that. I don't believe there's a need for any B budget items.

11:07

MR. McINNIS: It's important: no B budgets. But is it possible to carry the funds forward from one fiscal year to the next?

MR. BOGLE: No, I'm not suggesting that. I'm saying that as you near the end of a fiscal year, departments of government and the Legislative Assembly staff can identify areas where dollars had been earmarked but not expended. As long as there's the proper authorization for transfer of funds, then you can pick up those costs. So we should be able to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BOGLE: The administration will give us the cautions, but if they go back and look historically over two to three fiscal years, there are areas you can identify where there's been an under-expenditure year after year after year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Including this committee.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Whitemud, do you wish to introduce another group?

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity. To the students up in the government galleries there -- I can't see them; I guess they're sitting back. There they are. This is the other grade 6 class from Keheewin elementary school who are visiting us this morning. I had my photo taken with them earlier, and I go and visit their school in April. I would ask through you, Mr. Chairman, that all members of this Members' Services Committee use the traditional method of pounding on our desks to give them a warm welcome as they stand and are acknowledged.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We have a motion before the committee for preparation of documents with respect to a minus 5 percent scenario for comparison and examination of the committee when it next meets. All those in favour, please signify. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Thank you, hon. members.

Any other items that need to be dealt with at this time? Failing that, perhaps we can entertain a motion to adjourn. The Member for Lacombe. All those in favour of the motion, please signify. Opposed? Carried.

Thank you all very much. See you on the 18th, if not before.

[The committee adjourned at 11:08 a.m.]