

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

9:34 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Schumacher]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Being past the hour when the committee is scheduled to meet and there being a quorum present, we'll call the meeting to order. Hon. members should have a copy of the agenda before them and have had the opportunity to consider the agenda. The chair would call for a motion to approve the agenda.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, before we approve the agenda, I'd like to suggest a couple of changes. On item (d) we'd have the hon. Mrs. Mirosh replace me on that item, please; on item (e), Mr. Stelmach; and on item (f), Mr. Brassard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So (d) is the hon. Mrs. Mirosh. And did you say (e)?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, I'm sorry; that's under your name, Mr. Chairman. Item (f).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Items (e) and (f)?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Brassard moved the adoption of the . . .

MR. BRASSARD: I would like to speak to that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we don't have a motion really. Maybe someone could move a motion, and then we could speak to the motion. Would you like to move the motion and then speak to it?

MR. BRASSARD: I'll move the motion, and I would like to speak to it. I would request that we amend that motion to do away with our lunch hour and quit one hour earlier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion on the amended motion? The motion before the committee is by Mr. Brassard, that the agenda be approved subject to the changes proposed by Mr. Woloshyn and subject to us working through the lunch hour. All those in favour, please indicate. Opposed? Carried.

Now, just before commencing our work, for the benefit of hon. members who haven't sat on this committee before, I am one of them, and I hope hon. members will bear with a green chairman. This committee, like all other committees of the Legislature, does not, generally speaking, have the power to determine its own scope of activities. The committee operates based on duties assigned to it by statute, primarily the Legislative Assembly Act, instructions from the Assembly contained in specific resolutions, and by rules provided by Standing Orders or by established practice. Now, I suppose that is sort of an open-ended situation. In the case of this committee, the Members' Services Committee, its functions are those assigned to it, primarily by the Legislative Assembly Act, and by precedent.

Section 21 of the Act stipulates that the budget for the Legislative Assembly Office is prepared and approved by the Members' Services Committee and transmitted to the Provincial Treasurer for presentation to the Assembly.

Section 45 of the Legislative Assembly Act empowers the Members' Services Committee to make orders in specific areas related to support services and benefits for members. Further, the

Act, sections 46 to 51, provides the authority for the Members' Services Committee to set members' remuneration and allowances. Essentially all of the salaries, allowances, expense allowances, deductions, and reimbursements provided in the Legislative Assembly Act fall within the jurisdiction of the Members' Services Committee.

Finally, Acts such as the Financial Administration Act and the Public Service Act allow for the making of regulations, orders, and directives respecting those Acts. Section 19(2) of the Legislative Assembly Act allows the Members' Services Committee to make orders which either vary those regulations, orders, or directives or render them inapplicable to the Legislative Assembly Office or any particular officer or employee of the office.

These are the principal functions of the Members' Services Committee. It is not generally involved in the day-to-day administration and direction of the Legislative Assembly Office. The Speaker may choose to refer a matter to the committee for a management policy determination or to determine members' wishes or to provide an order which enables the administration to carry out its responsibilities to support and assist members in their duties. However, as with a department of government the general management of the Legislative Assembly Office is within the executive power of the Speaker and the Clerk, just the same as a department of government is managed by the minister and deputy minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, just two points. The first one is that in the last term we had some difficulties at times with meeting rooms. Room 512, which is a room that can commonly be used, is now fully wheelchair accessible, and I acknowledge and appreciate the work that Ken has done to ensure it has been done. It is now completed, so room 512 now becomes another option for us.

The second thing is on the agenda. I anticipated we would have a revised agenda that was going to include an item called Farm Sentry Awards. Was there not a memo sent over to you on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not that I've seen.

MR. WICKMAN: Is it too late to add it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. member, I think that should have been done when we were dealing with the agenda.

MR. WICKMAN: If I could ask the committee's indulgence in possibly making a motion to allow me to bring it forward, because it is something that benefits or affects all members of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that will be for the committee to decide. The chair is willing to ask hon. members if they're willing to add something to the agenda.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, this is the first meeting, and we're going to have other subsequent meetings, I'm sure. We haven't had any prior knowledge of this item, and I'm certainly not familiar with what it's all about. The agenda has been approved, and I think that it would be quite proper for this to be submitted for a subsequent meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the point made by the Member for Stony Plain. I just have a query. With

regard to being a new member of the House and of this committee, what is the structure of meetings in terms of will we be having more meetings in the next couple of months, or is this it until after the next session? Do you have any sense of that, Mr. Chairman? I understand it's at your call. Maybe the Deputy Premier can help me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The sense of the chair is that there will be meetings between today and the resumption of the Assembly in February. So there will be at least one further meeting of the committee, if not more, between now and February.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, one of the key things on this agenda is 3(l), the 1994-95 budget. If all holds true with this committee, if it's the same intent that it wants to look at the budget on almost a line-by-line basis as in the past, I can anticipate upwards of 10 days of meetings between now and the opening of the next session. One should be prepared to revise and organize their schedule. That would be one of the items that would have to be looked at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would that satisfy the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, that it can be placed on another agenda?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty with the item being on the next agenda, but do you require a specific written motion, or can I just give notice at this time that at the next meeting I'd like to see the item on the agenda?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it would be helpful for all members if the hon. member could write to the chair generally outlining what the problem is and enclosing any backup material that could be circulated to all members of the committee so they could come prepared to discuss it.

The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, now that we've dispensed with this, what I have is not new business; it's old business. I made an appeal last year to pay a bill from the native weeklies which had run an ad with Nick Taylor, MLA, and underneath it, native critic for the Liberal Party, instead of for the opposition. I was going to appeal that. That was brought before last year's meeting. Then it was said it would be put on the agenda this year. So I don't know whether it's old business, new business, or what, but these people haven't been paid for last Christmas. Maybe the Clerk will remember the ruling.

9:44

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair would suggest that the hon. member again write to the chair to ask that it be put on the agenda, because the chair understands the policy or the practice or whatever is that we're starting anew here, and things that were unfinished from the last Legislature fell with the last Legislature and will not be carried forward.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It would be new business then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it will be new business.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm sorry; then it's my fault. I thought it was a continuing from the last time. Okay; thanks a lot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will look forward to having that on the agenda for our next meeting.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It was just that I was told it was an appeal, and it was postponed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there's nothing further, perhaps we could move to item (b) on the agenda, which is Confederation Room Usage. This results from a meeting the chair had with the executive of the press gallery. It was suggested that it would be very helpful to the press gallery if they could be allowed to resume conducting interviews in the Confederation Room during sessions of the Assembly. The chair was not prepared to make a decision on that without consulting more widely and felt that this was the proper form for that consideration, particularly in view of the fact that it had already been dealt with in this committee on prior occasions, when it was decided that the present usage of the space was to be followed.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, just a question. If the committee agreed with the executive of the press or media gallery's request -- this may sound like a stupid question -- and if the Confederation Room reverted to what it was two and a half years ago, where would the government lounge be? Would there be a place?

MR. KOWALSKI: There wouldn't be one.

MR. HENRY: Being never in the back rooms of government . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Prior to the present arrangement the only lounge space was the small area at the rear of the Chamber, which is presently occupied mainly by the pages when they're not in the Assembly but also by hon. members who wish to get coffee or juice. But it's not a very large area, and I think that was the prime reason, although I wasn't on the committee.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The last day of the sitting I think showed the value to both parties of having, shall we say, their own lounges, although we feel welcome to go into their lounge and they certainly are welcome to come and talk to us in our lounge, including the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. The media currently, as I understand it, have a press room downstairs that can be booked at any time for larger interviews, which has been used by both sides. They currently have access to all members in their offices, and I believe that through the good graces of your office you have been more than lenient with permitting interviews surrounding the Chamber on its own. I would be hard-pressed to see why we should inconvenience some 50-odd members in the use of their lounge for the use of the media on a periodic basis. With all due respect to the media, I would just suggest that we leave things as they are. If there is in fact a problem for private interviews, I'm sure that your office could facilitate their needs in some other way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion on this matter?

MR. HENRY: Well, I notice that the issue was dealt with for over a year by the last committee, or really not dealt with: just discussed but not dealt with. It seems to me if the media folks are telling us that they still have a problem, then we do have a problem. Barring any other solutions, I think we need to be clear that, yes, we're all in our offices and media can come to our offices and interview us and whatnot, but we all know the nature of deadlines and such. It would seem to me that when things are happening in the Legislature, quite often, in my experience, the media needs to talk to members and ministers immediately, if not sooner, because of their deadlines. If there's a way that we could accommodate them in the Confederation Room -- because there is a problem outside, especially when you get

a controversial issue. Whether it be a member of the opposition or a minister or another MLA around the steps, there is a problem not only in terms of potential for slipping and whatnot but, frankly, for members to get out. That sometimes is a problem because of the crowd and whatnot. So if there's a way that we could allocate the Confederation Room or if there's another option that would allow a better situation, I think we should do that.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if you would, I'm going to move a motion

that we refer this to your office to hold discussions with the executive of the press gallery in an attempt to work out a viable solution.

Speaking to that motion, it is a problem now. There's no question about it. It's very difficult at times getting access through there for many Members of the Legislative Assembly, for members of the public that come through there. The media really have no choice. There isn't another alternative under the present structure for them. Possibly some type of partial use of the Confederation Room during certain hours, whatever. I'm sure some good, healthy discussions could result in a solution that would be possibly a compromise but would be acceptable to the various parties involved.

MR. WOLOSHYN: If there is in fact a problem, which I frankly have my reservations about, I would suggest, then, that another alternative be viewed. That would be that looking at the number of members who would possibly be inconvenienced for the sake of a one-on-one interview and looking at the size of the room that would be required, I would suggest that perhaps we would designate the opposition lounge to be the media centre. We would give up the back lounge for opposition use and restrict ourselves, other than coffee and passing through to whatever areas we go to, to the Confederation Room. Looking at the size and whatnot of that, if there is in fact a need for additional room this close to the Assembly, then perhaps the opposition lounge would be more appropriate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be an amendment to the motion that's before the committee.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member's come up with a very good point. If he would be willing to let me amend the motion so that all cabinet ministers will be forced to exit through the other lounge, then I'd be right with him. That's the whole point of having the thing over there: to keep the cabinet ministers from disappearing without going past the movie camera. So if he was willing to say that cabinet go through that lounge before they're allowed to exit, then I would vote for his motion.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, can I comment on that? My understanding from your opening remarks was simply that the media wanted a place to do interviews. Now, if the media are looking for cabinet ministers, that's a totally different kind of thing, and I would suggest that our cabinet ministers are more than willing to meet with them at any time, as you can see by the daily news. They meet with them even in public. So if the problem is not one of location but one of accessing individual members, I think that's a totally different issue, and perhaps we should address it in a different manner.

MR. HENRY: Two points, Mr. Chairman. Number one, I'm not sure I understand how we can amend or refer a motion to take a specific action, and I'll leave that to your discretion. It seems to me that the suggestion made by the Member for Stony Plain isn't a ridiculous suggestion, but the point is that there may be other solutions as well. I do support and I ask members to support referring it to the chair and let you meet with the executive of the

media gallery and maybe come back at a future meeting, hopefully the next meeting, with some alternatives that would be acceptable to the media gallery and might be acceptable to members.

9:54

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, as the member opposite has already indicated, it's been on the books or open for discussion for probably a year now. Since I've been on Members Services' this has been discussed, and I think it's time we put this issue to bed. I feel that we should just move along. We have a very heavy agenda, and the fact of the matter is that government members do need a lounge. Access to the media is always available by our members and by cabinet ministers, and we are able to meet at the convenience of the media. I believe that we should move along with voting this down and just leaving the Confederation Room status quo.

MR. WICKMAN: I think I'll close debate on my referral motion.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I wanted to speak before he closed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I think the point of media access to Confederation is really only for the scrum. Certainly the government members are right when they say that their people are available for interviews and so on. It's just the scrum at the end of question period. I would think, if anything, it would give them -- and the government members might want to look at giving them the back half.

I've been in that room occasionally. I'm not afraid to admit to my relatives that I occasionally fraternize with a Tory, Mr. Chairman. The whole works are all down at the other end, so there's lots of room at this end. For a half hour after question period, I think it would solve the problem. It's either scrum there or scrum out on the patio or the apron or whatever you want to call it here. Really, all we're talking about is scrum. We're not talking about hanging out for any length of time, or at least we hope we're not. I must admit they scrum in the House of Commons out in the front lobby. Maybe if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for here. It's a solution that we could look at: leaving that to half an hour at that end, provided they don't smoke, after question period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on the motion? The motion was that the Speaker work with the executive of the press gallery with regard to possible usage of the Confederation Room. That was the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, to close debate on my referral motion. A number of constructive suggestions have been made. The difficulty with making them here is that we don't know if they're workable or acceptable from the point of view of accomplishing the tasks that the media had. The only way to make that determination is through a consultation process. We can look at the past and say, yes, certainly this has been on the books for a period of time, but I sense kind of a different style with this chairman as opposed to the previous chairman. Possibly where the previous chairman was unsuccessful, you may very well be successful because of your style.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on the motion of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford? All those in favour of this motion, please indicate. Those opposed? The motion fails.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I would like to move that the Speaker confer with the Liberal opposition on the viability of using their lounge for press meeting rooms. I would not want to restrict Mr. Speaker's activities in any way, shape, or form, so I would suggest that he also include the executive of the press gallery and then reassign the back room for greater usage by the Liberal opposition. Just so that it's abundantly clear, the press would not be using the Confederation Room for scrums. I would on a personal basis, to get the Member for Redwater's support for this, take it upon myself to suggest to my cabinet colleagues that they should indeed walk out past the opposition lines when they so choose.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: The question is – well, two questions actually. Would the process the member indicated involve consultation with the media? Secondly, would the process be such that we would then look at the lounge at the back as the lounge for the opposition?

MRS. MIROSH: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I have no problems with it then, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That was an awfully long motion. I wonder, even with the fabulous memory of the Member for Stony Plain, whether he could remember what he moved.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: To accommodate people whose memories shorten with age, Mr. Chairman, it's quite specific:

that the Speaker consult with the Liberal opposition and the media executive to assign the current opposition lounge for use as a media room, and the back lounge would then be looked at as a Liberal opposition lounge.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You've changed it. I tell you; he has a different motion. Do we want him to repeat it again, or do we want another one?

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, I'm assuming, then, that the Speaker would then come back and report to the committee on this; right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that is a correct assumption.
Is the committee ready for the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

Item (c) concerns the proposed 5 percent reduction in members' remuneration. The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As all members may recall, last March there was a motion that came through here to reduce the executive salaries – the salaries of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and so on, and members of cabinet – by some 5 percent. In the intervening time this government has taken strides in trying to balance the budget and has indicated that the MLAs will also do their fair share, so I move the following. [interjection] My apologies for not having it out sooner, hon. member.

Mr. Chairman, you will see that the motion reads that Members' Allowances Order (RMSO 1992, c.M-1) be amended as follows:

(a) in section 1(a) by striking out \$38,335 and substituting \$36,420.

If I can refer members to the Members' Allowances Order, section 1(b) states:

an expense allowance at the rate of 50% of the indemnity allowance provided for in subsection (a).

So by amending the (a) portion, that would automatically amend the indemnity portion also. That would then take care of the total \$57,000-odd or whatever. I want it abundantly clear that the intention of the motion is to amend both the basic and the indemnities.

My motion further goes on to read:

(b) In section 3(2) as follows:

And these are various allowances that are paid out.

(i) in clause (a) by striking out \$10,000 and substituting \$9,500.

That would be, I believe, the Opposition House Leader's allowance.

(ii) in clause (b) by striking out \$8,000 and substituting \$7,600.

That would be the government Whip's portion.

(iii) in clause (c) by striking out \$8,000 and substituting \$7,600;

(iv) in clause (d) by striking out \$6,000 and substituting \$5,700;

(v) in clause (e) by striking out \$6,000 and substituting \$5,700;

(vi) in clause (f) by striking out \$5,000 and substituting \$4,750;

(vii) in clause (g) by striking out \$5,000 and substituting \$4,750.

The amendments to these sections 1(a) and 3(2) will come into force on January 1, 1994.

10:04

MR. N. TAYLOR: I have two small problems with them, I think. I'm not sure. Maybe the member can go through how \$38,000 reduced to \$36,000 also covers the expense allowance. I don't quite understand his reasoning there. I'd like to make sure it does. We should have a 5 percent reduction not only on the indemnity but on the allowance.

A number of government members serve on different boards, Syncrude or whatever it is, where they get paid a fair amount of money, certainly in excess of the lowest amount that's here, and that's not covered either. Maybe the member could tell me why he left out those two areas or if he did leave them out. Maybe I misunderstand it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The chair would point out that he did not leave them out with regard to the first matter. The chair would refer the hon. Member for Redwater to section 4 of the Members' Services order relating to remuneration, which says that the allowance provided for by section 48(2) of the Legislative Assembly Act, which is the tax-free allowance, shall be so much money, but in 1(b) of that order it says, "an expense allowance at the rate of 50% of the indemnity allowance provided for in subsection (a)." Therefore, it automatically follows that the tax-free will be 50 percent of the revised.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Then I just have a second question about government members serving on outside boards.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I would be pleased, as a courtesy, to answer the Member for Redwater. I believe he knows full well that those particular boards he's referring to are beyond – and I stress "beyond" – the authority of this committee. However, having said that, I would like to point out that those reductions have already been implemented. They are just in flow with what the government is doing, and there are not any exceptions.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't understand how that could be. I mean, how is it done? Are they rebating it to the taxpayer, or did the government ask that these members be cut by 5 percent?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it's amazing that people either don't remember or don't do their homework. I would refer the hon. member to the press release of the government of Alberta, dated

August 11, 1993, that outlined the complete cuts for all these positions the member was talking about, the downsizing of government. There's a four-page press release that goes on and on and on and talks about eliminating government appointments, eliminating 15 cars outright, et cetera, et cetera, reducing appointments and the like. It was all made public. There's a long list here. Nothing to do with Members' Services Committee. The government did it on August 11, 1993.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of the record, is it a fact that the necessary orders in council were passed to accomplish that last August?

MR. KOWALSKI: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was done by order in council last August.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Somehow I think we're not connecting in the usual charitableness the government takes when tail up and down the far end of the pasture on the wrong path. What I'm talking about is those that are serving. I know he has cut certain perks and certain appointments, but there are still members serving on other boards, much as the Member for Stony Plain said. It may well be that they're beyond the power and can't help having all this money thrust on them by a willing and compliant private enterprise out there that's just dying to have a government member and would refuse to pay him any less, but in view of that, I think maybe the Deputy Premier should write these outside organizations and ask that despite their largesse they reduce payments to government members by 5 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair will attempt to use this microphone to get the Deputy Premier's message across to the hon. Member for Redwater. The chair understood the Deputy Premier to say that in August it was announced and orders in council were passed that cut the remuneration of all members of the boards and commissions the hon. Member for Redwater has referred to, including members of this Assembly who serve on those boards and commissions because they were paid under the authority of those boards and commissions. So that has happened.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, the Member for Stony Plain said that there were those they had no authority over.

MR. KOWALSKI: This committee has no authority.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This committee has no authority for the remuneration of MLAs who sit on AOSTRA or boards of that nature. This committee does not set their remuneration. Their remuneration is set by order in council. The Deputy Premier has said that in August orders in council were passed cutting the remuneration of all members, including members of this Assembly who sit on those boards and commissions.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, we are getting closer to the point. I want this committee to recommend to cabinet that they write these organizations they have no control over, asking them if they will cut by 5 percent the remuneration to these people – this committee's recommendation – in keeping with the tenor of this motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, it has been pointed out that the government does have control over those boards and commissions, and the government has exercised control over them by passing orders in council directing that the remuneration cuts suggested by

the hon. member have already been enforced and have been in effect since August.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. This is rather embarrassing. Maybe the Member for Edmonton-Centre might move down there and assist in this regard. Let's just do it again factually, obviously very slowly, so the Member for Redwater can listen to this. On March 5, 1993, minute number 93.29, this committee moved and had reductions applied to 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. Their salaries were reduced by 5 percent effective March 1, 1993. That was done. Okay?

The second point. On August 11, 1993, the government announced that for those stipends the government could allocate by way of orders in council or ministerial orders, there was the elimination of a number of stipends provided to MLAs plus a reduction in those stipends a large number of members were receiving. They were adjusted. As an example, the chairman of the Citizenship and Heritage Secretariat had the stipend reduced not by 5 percent; it was reduced from \$2,500 a month to \$1,250 a month. It was a 50 percent reduction. Reductions were dealt with and adjustments were made in a whole variety of other appointments for MLAs. Now, that has already been done. It was done on August 11, 1993.

The one group still to be dealt with is the MLA salary portion, which we're dealing with today, 5 percent, to come into effect January 1, 1994. Now, somehow the Member for Redwater has in his mind that what we just talked about already happening has never happened. It has happened.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, we're doing beautifully. He went through all the others, and I appreciate being refreshed again in the Member for Barrhead's inimitable way. But there is one group we have not touched on, exemplified by directors on AOSTRA and Syncrude, that is still getting paid what the government requested they be paid some years ago.

MR. KOWALSKI: MLAs?

MR. N. TAYLOR: MLAs that are appointed to these boards.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's been covered.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's not in that list.

MR. KOWALSKI: Syncrude is. Why don't you read it? You can't be that dumb.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Either the Member for Stony Plain or the Member for Barrhead is wrong. Stony Plain said they had no authority over it.

10:14

MR. KOWALSKI: Members' Services has no authority over it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This committee has no authority, but the Deputy Premier is saying that cabinet has authority and cabinet has acted.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I will get letters from AOSTRA and these other boards to show that they got a reduction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: I simply wanted to second the motion, and I'm not sure, speaking to procedure, whether you require it. You don't require seconders? Then I have nothing to say except that I support the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair had Edmonton-Rutherford on the list.

MR. WICKMAN: I'd like to speak, yes. I have two questions, Mr. Chairman. First, possibly the Deputy Premier or the Member for Stony Plain could tell me in a nutshell: does the 5 percent reduction automatically apply to the various standing committees of the Legislative Assembly, not the outside ones, the all-party of the Legislative Assembly?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: For the purposes of the motion before the members, it's as written, and it applies to the basic salary, the indemnity of the Official Opposition House Leader, the third party House leader, which we don't have any more.

MR. WICKMAN: I know all that part.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: This motion is limited to that. There will be other motions coming up dealing with other matters.

MR. WICKMAN: I notice, Mr. Chairman, the next item only deals with the allowances which fall while the Leg. is in session. For example, for this particular meeting, if it were January 1, 1994, would there be a 5 percent reduction?

MRS. MIROSH: That's the next motion.

MR. WICKMAN: No, it's not. The next motion deals with allowances while the House is in session. I'm talking about out of session.

MRS. MIROSH: We're going to deal with it in the next.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. So there's an intention to deal with it. Very good.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I know last term what happened there happened there, but I do see some items here that are very similar to what we discussed in the last term, so I'm going to raise this one, and you can make a ruling on it. For example, the Confederation Room we dealt with before. One of the items we dealt with before was a process of establishing an independent authority or commission that would be responsible for reviewing, recommending, more or less implementing levels when it comes to pay and to perks. Does that particular motion that was on the table still stand, or do we have to go back to square one and start over on it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair would ask for advice from the committee.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, we're dealing with a motion. We have a motion. We're not all over the map.

MR. WICKMAN: No. I asked a question, Mr. Chairman. It's a question, not a comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question was whether there will be an independent review of remuneration.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, that's got nothing to do with the motion. Can we not just deal with this motion, get it behind us?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair would say that that information could be germane to an hon. member making up their mind as to whether they are going to support this motion or not.

MR. WICKMAN: Exactly.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, irrespective of what the answer to that question is, this committee would still have to determine whether or not and take a vote on it, so how could one member say yes, there would be and another member say no until there is a motion before the committee to make that decision? All we're doing is speculating, and we can't make decisions on the basis of speculation or subjectivity. We can only make decisions on the basis of fact. Fact: we have a motion. Nine members on this committee can say yes, there will be, but as we've seen so often, if it comes to the vote, a person says one thing and three minutes later votes the other way. How would we know?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair would say that really this committee is not like other committees of the Assembly when it's dealing with government policy. Remuneration for hon. members is based on the collective decision of this committee; it is not a basis of government policy. Therefore, it's very difficult to answer the hon. member's question, although the answer, if it were possible, could be germane. It would mean polling the committee on each individual member's attitude on that question, and that really wouldn't be in order when we're dealing with a specific motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, basically my question in a nutshell, Mr. Chairman. That previous motion that had been in the books, that was tabled until the Peat Marwick report came down, which it did – is that motion still within the books, or is it dead?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, just as the hon. Member for Redwater's question was decided, the same rule would apply to that motion. It is off the table and gone, so there is nothing like that pending.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's a question to the Member for Stony Plain and perhaps a statement first. It's difficult to deal with the whole package unless you see the whole package. Very clearly, when the government members indicated their desire to come to this committee, and then to get it out to the media, to provide for the 5 percent rollback, et cetera, there was some discussion at that point. It was my understanding that it would be applied to more than just the basic Members' Services order that we have before us – also to committee allowances and that sort of thing and committee chairs. Again, I'm not talking about the issue of those that are determined outside this committee. There's been some suggestion that (d) will deal with that. It would certainly be easier for me that if there are prepared motions, as the Member for Stony Plain seems to have, perhaps we could circulate all those. That would save a lot of time. Frankly, I believe if we're talking about a 5 percent reduction in MLAs' salaries and the allowances paid to those offices listed such as Whips and House leaders, then we should also be applying that to committee chairs and committee remuneration. As it stands in the agenda, unless we see the motion that is going to be brought forward by the hon. minister, unless we

see that motion beforehand, we don't know. The agenda simply says "special committees' allowances during session." But if that does deal with that . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Yes.

MR. HENRY: It does deal with that? It does have a 5 percent? Is there any problem circulating that?

MRS. MIROSH: Have you got this book?

MR. HENRY: Yes.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, on at least six occasions in the last three months, including consultation at about 5 minutes after 9 this morning between the Government House Leader and the Liberal House leader, the Liberal House leader was informed exactly what the intent was to do this. We have motions in that regard. It would be really helpful if perhaps a little more discussion and consultation on the other side were held.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, if the motions could be circulated, perhaps that would save a lot of the problems and a lot of the questions here, frankly.

MRS. MIROSH: But we're dealing with one motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HENRY: It's certainly the member's and the government's choice as to how to deal with those motions, but frankly I ask you to be patient with us in terms of asking the questions.

MRS. MIROSH: Sure.

MR. HENRY: Good.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I don't want to be difficult, but there's something I don't understand here. The particular item of dealing with standing committees outside of session is not on the agenda. There is one dealing with during sessions. Earlier there was a ruling that I could not add, for example, a new item on the agenda. Now, how is it that you're going to add new items on the agenda? Could I make an amendment at this time that

that particular 5 percent reduction apply to all the standing committees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I have great difficulty with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. If he would just be patient and look at what's happening and read the motion before him, the motion before him specifically applies to member allowances order (RMSO 1992, c. M-1). That deals with the list that was under that amendment. The next motion will deal with another members' services order called M-2 and those items under that amendment, which is what he is looking at. Now, to take a motion that is very specific so it can be implemented properly through our members' services orders, we have to go in a logical sequence. That is what we're trying to do. The question before all members of the committee is very simple. If they support the 5 percent reduction in the allowances, the salary as outlined in the motion I presented, they should vote yes; if they are opposed to a reduction, they vote no. On that basis, I would humbly request that we call the question.

10:24

MRS. MIROSH: Speaking specifically to the motion, Mr. Chairman, the Member for Stony Plain alluded to the 5 percent reduction. I would like to have on the minutes that MLAs have already taken a significant reduction with their pensions, since they do not have any. Without having that benefit would be in addition to this 5 percent, which would accumulate probably to a 30 percent reduction.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, am I to understand there's a basket of motions coming forward under (c) then? Are there some more motions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not under (c).

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. You don't like to table them all at the same time; just one at a time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To answer the hon. Member for Redwater, following disposal of item (c), which relates to the members' salaries and allowance remuneration, the next item to be called will be motions dealing with members' remuneration for committee work.

Is the committee ready for the question under (c), members' salaries and allowances?

MR. HENRY: One comment, Mr. Chairman. This goes back to the formation of the agenda. Perhaps, as you said at the beginning of our meeting, when we're submitting items to the chair for the agenda, we should include a bit of an explanation, because as it reads, it says to deal with "committees' allowances during session," and obviously the intent of the mover was to deal with much more than that. Maybe we could all be better at submitting more information to you so the agenda reflects that more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or less. I suppose the words "during session" could have been deleted.

Is the committee ready for the question on item (c), the 5 percent reduction in salary and allowances? All those in favour, please indicate. Those opposed? Let the record show it was carried unanimously.

Item (d): Legislative Assembly Standing and Select Special Committees' Allowances. The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This now leads into what members opposite were referring to. I would like to move that Members' Services Committee Allowances Order (RMSO 1992, c.

M-2) be amended as follows, page 22 in the members' services book,

1. section 2(1) is amended
 - (a) in clause (a) by striking out "\$100" and substituting "\$95",
 - (b) in clause (b) by striking out "\$165" and substituting "\$156.75",
 - (c) in clause (c) by striking out "\$260" and substituting "\$247," which is in keeping with the 5 percent rollback, and
2. section 2(3) is amended by adding "only" after "may" and striking out "both during and,"

so that it reads "Members may only claim a committee allowance for committees being held outside a Session of the Assembly." That should address the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's concern and the Member for Edmonton-Centre's concern. At the top of page 23,

3. Section 3(1) is amended (a) by striking out "shall receive" and substituting "is entitled to be paid."
- Take that "\$350 a month" and substitute "\$332.50," removing, again, 5 percent. So that should read: "The Chairman of a Category A Committee is entitled to be paid an additional allowance of \$332.50 a month."

4. Section 3(2) is amended

- (a) in clause (a) by striking out "\$35" and substituting "\$33.25,"
 - (b) in clause (b) by striking out "\$65" and substituting "\$61.75,"
 - (c) in clause (c) by striking out "\$105" and substituting "\$99.75",
5. and these amendments shall come into force on January 1, 1994.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Just a clarification, thank you. I will support the motion, but in section 3(1), by striking out "shall receive" and substituting "is entitled to be paid," a question. That's just to allow for the practice that some members choose not to collect. I believe the chairman of Public Accounts does not collect the payment for chairing that committee. A subquestion to that. With regard to committee meeting member payments, individual members as opposed to chairmen, is there some reason why that is not done? Some committee members of course, even outside of session, choose not to collect the allowances. Maybe being new I could ask the Clerk: is a committee member required to collect the allowance when they attend a meeting? If I choose, as I do, not to collect the allowance, whether in or out of session, then that's allowed under the system we have?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I think if the hon. gentleman would look at the wording in 2(1) versus 3(1), 3(1) says "The Chairman of a Category A Committee shall receive"; the words "entitled to" are already in 2(1).

MR. BRASSARD: I would like to just clarify that the chairman for the Public Accounts Committee is not the only chairman that doesn't take the allowance. I'd just like to clarify that.

MR. HENRY: Sure. It's the only one I was aware of.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair of this committee also is like the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question having been called, all those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, please indicate. Those opposed? Let the record show it passes unanimously.

Item (e), Representational Allowance of President of Executive Council. That got placed on the agenda by the chair as a result of a communication from the hon. the Premier asking that this allowance be terminated. This memo was dated September 27, 1993.

The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

MR. STELMACH: I wish to move
that the Executive Council Salaries Order (RMSC 1992, c E-2) section 2 be amended by striking all the words after "Act" and substituting "shall be in the amount of \$0.00." and that this amendment shall come into force on January 1, 1994.

10:34

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions or comments on this motion? The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Am I mixing up the two here, apples and oranges? Didn't the Premier request that it be done at the time? Are we embarrassing the Premier at all by leaving in to January? Am I mixing up the two?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody have any information on that? The hon. Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, when members were reviewing the agenda for this particular meeting and the motions were being looked at – I know that in the view of the Premier he'd be very, very happy to have it effective today, and quite frankly there'd be no problem with doing that. We just wanted to be consistent with the dates of all of these, and that was the only reason January 1, 1994, was struck in. It could just as easily be amended. In the position of Premier Klein he'd be very, very happy to have this thing effective today. He isn't, in my understanding, collecting anything.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions or comments? Is the committee ready for the question? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: I may be wrong on this one, and I will stand corrected if I am. I understand that when this was first discussed in the media, there were two allowances: a \$5,000 representational allowance and a \$5,000 clothing allowance. I'm not sure if those are the right terms. Am I confusing – were they being talked as one? Are they both part of this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair has had section 51 of the Legislative Assembly Act brought to its attention, which says:

there shall be paid to the President of the Executive Council a representational allowance at the rate per year prescribed by the Members' Services Committee.

That is the only reference to representational allowance, so apparently there is only one.

MR. HENRY: Then my question for the Clerk or the chair is: then what we see in the Members' Services order that's been circulated – and it's 1992, c. E-2 – is the total amount that's being paid to the Premier as amended today, et cetera?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.
The hon. Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, while this is a request of the Premier and the motion is here – and I will vote in favour of the motion that my colleague has put forward – I do want to make comments with respect to this motion. We're talking about the position of the leader of the government of a province. We're talking about the expenses – inordinate, ordinary, out-of-pocket, and what have you – that are never identified, never expensed. Our leaders have challenges before them. They have expenses before them that are not ordinary to the other 2.6 million people in the province of Alberta. When this allowance, as modest as it was, was invented nearly a decade ago or more, as I recall, it was set at something like \$5,000 a year and had never ever been adjusted from the early 1980s through to 1993.

Now the salary allocated to the leader of Executive Council, to the Premier of the province of Alberta, is a whopping \$56,865 a year, less now 5 percent and less any pension plan, Mr. Chairman. That's all disappeared in 1993. There are many, many executives in this province, whether or not they're presidents of universities or chief executive officers of the MUSH sector in this province of Alberta, who make a lot more money than the Premier of Alberta makes. There're certainly in the private sector countless numbers of individuals who get stipends quantumly higher than that allocated to the Premier of the province of Alberta.

The Premier of the province of Alberta also is required to attend numerous social functions where a request is made, an invitation is made to his spouse. In this case, Mrs. Klein is a very honourable woman, a delightful lady who receives numerous of invitations, who

represents the people of Alberta with a great deal of honour and a great deal of dignity. Expenses are incurred, but there's no mechanism, Mr. Chairman, for any recompense whatsoever. The only mechanism that was ever allocated was this representational allowance. It's modest, unchanged for over 10 years. Now it's the Premier's request, because I guess of a flurry of politics – I mean, let's embarrass the Premier and say that he gets a modest representational allowance. Good politics, for a day or two. What does it really do to the office, and what does it really do to the impact of the spouse associated with the Premier? The Premier would never come to this committee. He's not the kind of individual who would come to this committee and say any of these things, and he's not asked me to do that either. I want to make it very clear: he's not asked me to do it. Quite frankly, he's asked me to do the opposite: to make sure that this committee eliminates it. I'm prepared to vote according to the wish of the Premier.

I think in the end what politicians do is shoot themselves, one toe off at a time. In the end we are going to change this environment and this society of ours from a democracy where men and women of all ranks, of all, quote, classes in the economic structure will no longer be able to offer themselves for public office. What we're going to do is eventually work towards a plutocracy, where only the rich will ever offer themselves. Why wouldn't you? You'd have to be in a position, if you're going to reach a certain age in life, that you're going to have to have an income. You have a responsibility, either male or female, not only to yourself; you have responsibility to your spouse; you also have responsibility to your children. If we eliminate everything that provides a modest recompense against the expenses incurred, then in essence the only people who will be offering themselves for political office are those who will have an independent source of wealth, will have their own independent pension plan. They will not, in my view, be representative of the vast range of people that live in our society. It would be absolutely prohibitive for anybody in their 20s or their 30s to want to seek political life, almost impossible for anyone in their 40s, if they are interested at all in working towards retirement, to protect themselves because our code of ethics now makes it almost impossible for an elected person to do anything. We have to be very cognizant and careful of that.

Great politics in 1993, great politics. I mean, slam anybody in elected life, reduce this, reduce that, eliminate pension plans, eliminate everything because everything is a perk; isn't it? Mythology, Mr. Chairman. It's not a perk. In my humble opinion there's modest recompense for the people who are elected to be the board of directors of the most important corporation in the province of Alberta, called the government of Alberta. There are countless numbers of individuals or people who sit in this Assembly who have outside sources of income from whatever their circumstances are and other men and women who sit in this Assembly who are dependent on one source of income because they devoted themselves to public service and because they have not tried to violate anything in the code of ethics. They have not tried to get around anything in the code of ethics, and they've been honourable about it. But the honour can also lead to some danger signals.

I accept the integrity and the wish of the Premier with respect to this. I just believe that this is now going to become an added burden on him. He'll never complain about it. You'll never hear him whine about it. You'll never hear him say what I've been saying this morning. He'll take it, and he'll take it with a lot of class and a lot of dignity. I really truly believe that he didn't even know he was getting it, and he probably felt kind of embarrassed about it. I know he did. He talked to me the day that it came out and asked that we deal with it. In the end we're wrong, and if we're not careful, the

democracy that we have in the years to come is going to be very different from the democracy that we have in 1993.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Barrhead-Westlock has presented rather an impassioned presentation, but I think there's another very, very important side of the coin that we look at, and that side of the coin is what's being asked of people that are in the public employ, what's being asked in terms of health care workers, what's being asked in terms of educators, what's being asked of persons that may be out there now making \$16,000 or \$18,000 a year. Those are the persons that are going to hurt, those at the lower end of the scale. They don't have the options in life that many of us may have in terms of being flexible enough to move into different type of careers.

Before we can even preach any type of fiscal responsibility, before we can even preach rollbacks, we first have to set an example, and I think that example is now starting to be set. The pensions were dealt with. We're now seeing a 5 percent rollback. At one time possibly this \$5,000 clothing allowance had some rationale. It was in an era when there was so much money floating around. I can remember the year when then Premier Lougheed gave the municipalities \$1 billion to go out there and spend, spend, spend because he had to get rid of that money. Today, Mr. Chairman, the economy is different, and what we're doing today is a reflection of today. If we do things right now, possibly five, 10 years down the road we may be in a different state of economy so that some of these issues could then be readdressed by a new group of people that would be in here.

10:44

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Member for Barrhead-Westlock makes some very good points. I would hope that when we get a chance to move that an independent committee assess what people get paid in the public sphere, he would support it. I think the public is upset – and they certainly have a right too – in that we have little pockets and little sidelines. They seem to think that not having the courage to come out and ask for the higher salary, we try to make up for it with odds and ends here and there. This is why I think the independent commission looking at it as more of a salaried profession, where there were little or no sideline perks, would be interesting. I think it has to be done by an independent review. We can't be fixing our own at all times, although we're supposedly the ultimate court in the land.

Being a somewhat greater vintage than even yourself, Mr. Chairman, I still recall it being introduced as a \$5,000 clothing allowance. The representational allowance, I'm not absolutely positive – and I would like to hear from the Deputy Premier that there's only one \$5,000. Somehow or another the representational allowance only crept in in the last few years. I don't know whether that is extra. Or is it another name? I was here when it was introduced as a clothing allowance. I remember being quite critical of it, because I equated it to so many dollars an inch, and that got me in a lot of trouble with the people that were longitudinally challenged, as you might say. They didn't like their equipment. I know it was at that time associated solely with clothing. So whether we have an extra or not, I would like to know that.

I would hope that the Deputy Premier and the Member for Barrhead-Westlock would support my motion, when it comes forward, that we have an independent view. I agree that a Premier

should be worth more than a good hockey player, but apparently they're not. There are all kinds of things. I've held a lot of jobs in my life, and I was never paid as much as I thought I should be paid. Possibly a lot of my people thought I was paid double what I should be paid. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore has got a big grin on. We've been associated in the past in some of our ventures. The point is that pay should hardly ever be decided by the group that's receiving it, and I would like to see an independent commission look at this whole thing.

I'd like to finish by asking: is he sure that this isn't just another name for what was passed originally in the early '70s as a clothing allowance?

MR. KOWALSKI: First of all, Mr. Chairman, in looking at the salary range of hockey players in the National Hockey League, I'm not sure there's a regular hockey player in the National Hockey League who makes less than the Premier of Alberta. So when the hon. gentlemen for Redwater talks about it, the Premier's position is certainly worth more than a hockey player. We're actually even trying to get the Premier's salary up to what might even be the minimum in terms of what a regular would make. I dare think that there's not one that would make less than what the Premier of Alberta gets, but that's not the point. The Premier is not advocating this. He's not requesting this. I'm saying this on my own.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I guess there's a lot of mythology with respect – this is a representational allowance. I think the Legislative Assembly Act very clearly has the words in it. But we are in a political environment; we also are in a media environment, and as years have come, there have been all kinds of synonyms used to describe the representational allowance. So there's a lot of mythology with respect to it. The hon. member is smiling because he plays the game better than most that I've ever run across in my life. He knows what it is, but then you will always find a synonym for it. You'll exploit it in the environment of politics and in the environment of mythology in which, unfortunately, we have to conduct our business. It's a representational allowance. The Legislative Assembly Act, section 51, very clearly identifies what it is. There is only one. It will now disappear on the basis of the motion that we have before us.

MR. WOLOSZYN: I was going to stay out of this because I felt the hon. Deputy Premier made some very excellent points to put into perspective the role and the remuneration for our people in politics. I don't think there's any question that the Premier of this province has the highest possible office. I find it rather distressing the last few months that led up to this. As the Deputy Premier stated: shooting ourselves, one toe off at a time. It came up in a committee where I was present, in a committee where the Premier put forth his budget, and this was a budget item to his office under the legislation. It was all done properly. I believe it was a media person who said, "What is this item?" and that was quite properly their role. The subject and comments after that I found to be quite unpalatable because they were just strictly politicking of the lowest order.

I would like to remind everyone that a year ago May the leader of the third party, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, was receiving a top-up to cover expenses for party business of some \$1,200 per month. This was at a time when that particular party was showing a deficit in its budget, and this is all information that's there. The rationale was that it was a leader's discretionary fund, that it came out to cover expenses he incurs while on party business. This was in addition to the moneys expended on his behalf by the province of Alberta to the tune of some \$115,000. He's a politician. He was doing his job. I find it rather interesting that the leader of the third-level party in this province found it necessary to incur to

his party an additional \$1,200 per month each and every month to cover his expenses.

We sit here and say and have some degree of satisfaction – and I would hope not – that the Premier of this province is having a discretionary allowance of less than \$500 a month being taken away, an allowance that is paid for, that is offered to the people in the budgetary review, on the table. It wasn't secretive or anything like that. We're sitting here saying, "Oh, this is the climate to do it; maybe 10 years from now we'll change it." Well, I would say to all of us on both sides of the House that politicians now are entering into difficult times in any province, any state, anywhere in the free world almost, and it's about time that we started to recognize what leaders do. It's about time that we started to tell the people. I would have hoped that members of the opposition at that time would have said, "Five thousand dollars: that's a mere pittance for the Premier of this province," not turn around and say that that is going to somehow make the person at \$16,000 a year comparable to the Premier. I would like to see the lowest wage to anybody in this province well above \$16,000. I'd like to see an unemployment rate of less than 1 percent, just the ones who are between jobs, but unfortunately the reality isn't there. Let's look at them objectively. I would suggest that perhaps if the leader of the third party a year ago was entitled to some \$14,000 of expenses from any other source – because I heard earlier this morning that no matter what the source of an MLA's money is, Members' Services should get involved in it – perhaps letter writing should go on to the Liberal Party to suggest that they don't have that practice in view of the time of restraint.

10:54

I would say that I am supporting this motion for the very reasons that the Deputy Premier said. I respect the Premier, but I do not agree with it. I don't agree with the fundamental direction it's going. I would like to be on the record to say that the Premier of this province, no matter which party he's from, no matter who he is, deserves far more recognition than the salary he's currently getting and certainly deserves to be compensated for out-of-pocket expenses, if not totally, then to some degree, and that's not happening at this particular time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Vegreville-Viking.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since the Member for Stony Plain has decided at the last minute to enter the debate, I think I'll join him on that one. I just want to respond to a couple of things. I appreciate many of the comments made by the members for Edmonton-Rutherford and Redwater as well as the Deputy Premier. I appreciate the point being made that we don't want to end up in a situation where only the independently wealthy can represent people in this Legislature. I would never want to see that happen.

I appreciate the comments about politics and the nature of politics and public life, but I hasten to point out a couple of things, just to set the record straight. Number one, with regard to the comments from the Member for Stony Plain, the leader of the third party at the time never collected \$1,200. It was a budgeted amount of up to \$1,200, and it was for receipted expenses only. Those were expenses that perhaps some people would try to call legislative expenses, but in the view of myself, who was chief of staff of the caucus at the time and a former president of our party, I felt very, very strongly that there were some expenses incurred that, while they may have been able to slip past the Clerk or the administration, were in fact very political and not related to legislative duties but rather political duties, such as fund-raising, et cetera, and it would not be appropriate to spend public dollars on those.

To reiterate, the hon. leader of the third party at that time never collected the full \$1,200 but only for receipted expenses. In addition, that was because our budget was made public. We don't know, frankly, whether the Premier's party provides that or not because the budget isn't public. Perhaps they don't, and I'll assume they don't. We don't know if those kinds of expenses, nonlegislative expenses and non-Premierial expenses, if I can call it that, purely political expenses, are picked up by the party. We have no knowledge of that.

In addition, I want it to be on record that the leader of the third party during the last term turned back a portion of his salary in the form of a donation to government-related agencies on a regular basis, a substantial portion. In addition, in 1988, when the leader of our party did become the leader, before he became an MLA, our party did vote an amount for a salary for the leader because he wasn't an MLA. In fact, that was voted for. It was budgeted for, and if you want to talk about fiscal responsibility, that individual, that leader, never did collect a penny of that salary, because at that point the party would have had to go into a deficit position or we had other priorities. He offered not – and I think that should be on record – to collect that salary for that period, because frankly the party had other priorities at that point.

I also just want to point out that I don't want to get into a game of one-upmanship with anybody, frankly, in the Legislature. We are here to do a job. Many of us have talked about the need for an independent review of the allowances and salaries, et cetera, available to MLAs, because quite properly some things, as the Deputy Premier said, that perhaps are viewed as perks by some individuals or by some of the public are in fact compensation for out-of-pocket expenses, et cetera, and perhaps shouldn't be perks. I point out that in the federal Parliament there are some associations and groups who say that the 52 trips back and forth from Ottawa for Members of Parliament are a perk. Well, in fact, not one member is turning those down, because the member has responsibilities in Ottawa and back at their own constituency. I think we all agree that that's legitimate, but it is viewed by the public as perks.

When we want to talk about pensions – and that's been raised several times here – let's be very, very clear and on record that members of our party called for a review of the pension and a reduction. There was I think a general consensus that the pension plan was out of line in view of the fiscal realities and was much richer than the pension plans offered to other public servants, et cetera. The position of our party and I believe frankly of the party that the Member for Stony Plain sat with in the last session was that there should be an independent review with a view to bring it in line with other public service pensions. If you want to talk about plain politics, back to the Deputy Premier's comments. It was the government who came up with the decision to eliminate that rather than send it to an independent review and have a more reasonable pension. If you're talking about not creating an MLA's position to be one where you have to be independently wealthy, then the government should have thought of that at that particular time. Again, as the Deputy Premier says: we can continue shooting ourselves one toe at a time. Let's be very clear that this is not a one-sided practice around here. It has happened on both sides. Again, the easiest way to solve this whole thing is to look at an independent review and make it binding on all of us.

I leave it at that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question?

The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking to sum up.

MR. STELMACH: I just wish to close debate. We're covering many topics other than the motion that I originally made. So I would suggest we get back to the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

All those in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking, please indicate. Opposed? Carried unanimously.

The next item on our agenda is (f), Automobiles of Legislative Assembly Standing Committee Chairmen. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. As we all know, it's been the practice to supply a number of automobiles to various chairmen of standing committees, although I should note that not very many of them have accessed those automobiles. So to keep this portion of our Members' Services in line with the intent of the government, I'd like to move that

the transportation order (RMSC 1992, c. T-2) be amended as follows:

section 2(2) is amended by repealing clause (c).

I could read that if you wish, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman of a "Category A" committee which I referred to earlier

as defined in Members' Committee Allowance Order (RMSC 1992, c.

M-2), excepting a committee which is not a Standing Committee.

I move that motion.

MR. HENRY: Just a question perhaps of the Deputy Premier. I'm very sure this applies to standing committees of the Legislative Assembly. Does the government have any plans with regard to the four standing policy committee chairs, or has that already been dealt with? I apologize if it has been dealt with, with regard to removing their vehicle. That's the one question.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make an amendment to the motion: that section 2(2) be amended by repealing clause (b) as well as (c).

As we all know, the leader of our party has been entitled according to a Members Services' order to a vehicle since 1989, and he's chosen not to accept that vehicle. Clause (b) is, "The leader of a recognized opposition party" is entitled . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Section 2(1)(c) is more appropriate.

MR. HENRY: Okay. Perhaps it would be:

repealing 2(1)(c) and clause 2(b) as well as (c).

If we're going to eliminate vehicles for those positions, then let's do it.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I understand that the Member for Edmonton-Centre has amended my colleague's motion. That's good that there would be an amendment coming in here, because it's certainly not the intention of the majority members of this Members' Services Committee to do that. Certainly the honourable way would have been for an initiative to come from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and their representatives in here. So I think my colleagues would accept that, to eliminate the vehicle for the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. That would be fine.

In terms of a question that the hon. member raised with respect to standing policy committee, Mr. Chairman, that matter has already been dealt with. It was dealt with this summer, as I recall.

So, Mr. Chairman, we have a motion here repealing clause (c), an amendment to add a repealing of clause 2(1)(c).

MR. HENRY: And (b).

MR. KOWALSKI: And (b)?

MR. HENRY: And 2(2)(b); sorry.

11:04

MR. KOWALSKI: That's kind of interesting. We don't have another "leader of a recognized . . . party" in this Assembly, so we would be going out and seeing some retribution. That leader may choose politically that he or she would want to stand up and make the case for it in the public debate. Would the majority here not ever be accused of victimizing the minority in an arbitrary way?

MR. HENRY: I'll accept – we'll limit it to amending it to be 2(1)(c). Fine.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, there's one other point I want to make with respect to this. It has to do with (2)(a), and it has to do with the position. Now, in the motion the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury is dealing with, we have dealt with category A committee chairman, have dealt with the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Because these are offices of the Legislative Assembly, we don't know what the position of the Speaker is, we don't know what the position of the Deputy Speaker is, and we don't know what the position of the Deputy Chairman of Committees is. It might be helpful in part of this discussion to receive a comment from the chairman with respect to those three positions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the comment from the chair would be that the chair has not discussed this matter with his deputy or the Deputy Chairman of Committees, but the chair is prepared to discuss this entire area with them and would be prepared to take a position on it at our next meeting.

Are there any further questions or comments?

MR. HENRY: Just one, again to the Deputy Premier. I know the issue of the standing policy committee chairs' vehicles has been dealt with, but I just ask again the question: has the government or is the government planning to eliminate the vehicles for the four standing policy committee chairs? That may have already been dealt with, but the Deputy Premier just said it had been dealt with and did not indicate how.

MR. KOWALSKI: I'm not aware, Mr. Chairman, that any of the four standing policy committee chairmen have a public vehicle. I'm not aware that they do. When we in the August 11 release eliminated a total of 18 vehicles, we made that all very public. Again, I am just not aware that any chairman of any standing policy committee has a public vehicle.

MR. HENRY: Okay; I accept that, Mr. Chairman. I'm ready for the question on the matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This question will be on the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, which calls for the repeal of section 2(1)(c). All those in favour of the amendment that's been added to the motion of . . .

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Chairman, you had earlier said that you were going to have some discussions with the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees, so that sets that portion of 2(1)(a) and (b) aside. The amendment the hon. member across added was to add it to section – that it be amended as follows, and that's repealing the clause under section 2(2), and we would be repealing clause 2(1)(c). Would that be the addition to the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. It's adding the repeal of 2(1)(c) to your motion.

All those in favour of that amendment, please indicate. Carried.

Therefore, the question now is on the amended motion, which calls for the repeal of sections 2(1)(c) and 2(2)(c). All those in favour, please indicate. Those opposed? Carried.

The next is (g), Members' Services Order Changes as a Result of Electoral Boundary Changes, which is now being circulated.

DR. McNEIL: This is just a housekeeping amendment to two members' orders, the Members' Allowances Order and the Transportation Order, substituting the new constituency names. In the case of the Members' Allowances Order, substituting "Redwater, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, St. Albert or Sherwood Park" for the former constituency names. In the Transportation Order, again striking out "Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Fort McMurray, Dunvegan, Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River" and substituting "Athabasca-Wabasca, Lac La Biche-St. Paul, Fort McMurray, Dunvegan, Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River."

So I would ask a member to move each one of those motions if they are inclined to do so.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I would be pleased to move that Members' Allowances Order (RMSO 1992, c. M1) be amended as follows:

Section 5(1) is amended as follows:

(a) in clause (a) by striking out all the words after "the constituencies of" and substituting "Redwater, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, St. Albert or Sherwood Park, or"; and

(b) in clause (b) by striking out "Clover Bar, Sherwood Park, Wetaskiwin-Leduc, Stony Plain, St. Albert, Westlock-Sturgeon or Redwater-Andrew" and substituting "Redwater, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Stony Plain, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, St. Albert, or Sherwood Park."

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's slightly technical, but at the risk of not being able to share a Coke occasionally with the member for Vegreville, Vegreville has been left out of this, although it was part of the old Redwater-Andrew. Andrew has been taken over by the Vegreville riding, and now the Vegreville riding – not the riding anyhow. We're talking about where the MLA lives, but it's quite possible to live, Mr. Chairman, in Vegreville and be much closer than a number of these other constituencies. For instance, in Redwater, my own constituency, it's quite possible to live a couple of hours from Edmonton. I don't, but I mean it's quite possible, whereas in Vegreville you could live within that mile drive. So I would submit that Vegreville should be included in the list of possibilities. Now, you may have a reason; I'd certainly be open to it. I see Vegreville wants the floor.

11:14

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Chairman, it's quite possible that the representative for Vegreville-Viking might live in Viking, which is close to 200 kilometres from Edmonton.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I'd have to go back and read it, but I believe it says: if the residence of the MLA residing in any of these constituencies lies within 100 kilometres. Well, there are sections of Vegreville-Viking that are within 100 kilometres of Edmonton. That's all I wanted. I'd like to amend it, just for clarity purposes, that Vegreville-Viking should also be included in that 100 kilometre drive. Of course, I suppose you're right; Barrhead-Westlock comes within 100 kilometres too. What I'm saying is that unless someone can show me the light, maybe they should be

referred back to the committee. We have a problem if we say that it has to be 100 kilometres because there are more constituencies than we have here within the 100 kilometre boundary. So why select these particular ones?

DR. McNEIL: These particular constituencies all border the city of Edmonton. The original order was based on the principle of defining those constituencies that border the city of Edmonton as excluded. That same principle is followed with this change, so the ridings that are named here are those constituencies that share a border with the city of Edmonton. This is on the first order.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, can we take a break?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. We have been sitting for an hour and three-quarters, and seeing that we're not going to stop for lunch, I think this would be an appropriate time to recess for, say, seven minutes.

[The committee adjourned from 11:17 a.m. to 11:34 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe the Table has circulated to everybody copies of the existing order that is proposed to be amended, which makes the proposed amendment more understandable.

Are there any further questions or comments on this matter before calling for the vote? All those in favour of the amendment to Members' Allowances Order (RMSC 1992, c. M-1) as proposed by the hon. Member for Stony Plain, please indicate. Opposed? Carried.

There's one more motion. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: Further to that, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Transportation Order (RMSC 1992, c. T2) be amended as follows:
Section 1(b)(i) is amended by striking out "Athabasca-Lac La Biche, Fort McMurray, Dunvegan, Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River" and substituting Athabasca-Wabasca, Fort McMurray, Dunvegan, Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any question or comments on this?

MR. BRASSARD: Just for further clarification, Mr. Chairman, if I might. On the notice that was passed to members, Lac La Biche-St. Paul was included, but it is not felt that is a remote area by any stretch of the imagination, so I've removed that. I apologize for its presence on the document.

MR. WICKMAN: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question having been called, all those in favour of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, please indicate. Opposed? Carried. That concludes that section.

Next is number (h), Christmas Card Postage. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make a few comments and propose a plan of action to deal with this item. I raise it because I myself don't feel that the existing policy is restrictive enough. I think there are a number of factors that have to be looked at. One is: is there a need for additional Christmas card postage, period? Is there a need to send out Christmas cards? Christmas cards, in my opinion, are becoming very, very environmentally unfriendly. People do chuck them. At one time it used to be a big ego trip to get a Christmas card from an MLA. I used to get one

from the Prime Minister with all his children and his dog. That same dog appeared in about three different photographs on Christmas cards, mind you.

MRS. MIROSH: Now we get a different dog.

MR. WICKMAN: Dianne probably got one too.

MR. N. TAYLOR: He was talking about the MPs.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh.

MR. WICKMAN: In any case, different folks have different strokes when it comes to dealing with this. Some of our members, for example, don't send out any Christmas cards. Some do. Some will spend X number of dollars; some spend less. Myself, for example, I dropped Christmas cards about three years ago. I substituted a similar expenditure for calendars, which are much more practical in terms of people getting some usage out of them. At the present time, as long as one buys Christmas cards, as long as I address and personalize every one of those envelopes, I could, technically speaking, send one to every member within my constituency and the taxpayer would be obligated to pick up the postage. What I would like to see happen here is possibly just a little subcommittee formed – it's too late for this year – where we could sit down, discuss it, and come up with a recommendation that would deal with the budget for 1994-1995.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, Mr. Chairman, we are going to be going through the line-by-line budget, I believe, in the beginning of the new year if not sooner. The issue with regards to Christmas cards is, I believe, up to each individual member. We're all grown-up big boys and girls who understand fiscal restraint. Our Premier indicated in a memo to members that we are in a mode of restraint and asked our members not to send out Christmas cards and to use their dollars in a discretionary form. I just believe this is an issue that should be left up to each member. Each member's constituency budget is there for whatever they wish. I believe that when we're doing our line-by-line budget, we can talk about postage then.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, just to respond to that, though, the information the member gives, in all due respect, is incorrect. It does not come out of our budget. The postage for Christmas cards is extra and above your normal postage plus your constituency budget. You pay for the Christmas cards, but you don't pay for the postage. That's the point I'm trying to make. You could spend \$2,000 on postage that would not reflect in your budget or would not reflect as part of your postage allocation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I assume, then, that the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is planning to vote against the motion. I will be voting for the motion, but given the likelihood that it might fail, what I would ask for from the Clerk – and bear with me. Being a new member of this committee, I'm not sure whether the postage for Christmas cards is a separate line item. What I would like the Clerk to do, if that's possible and if it's not already being done, is for this season to keep track of how much money is being spent specifically on Christmas cards. When we do get to the budget, we can discuss that issue aside from the constituency mailings in the caucus, et cetera, so that we do know how much money we're spending on Christmas card postage from the general.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could get a clarification from you. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just said something which sort of surprises me. Whatever Christmas cards that I would deal with would come under my constituency communication allowance. The hon. member says no. Is there another source of funding for this that I'm unaware of? I've been here for five terms, and the only Christmas cards I have ever provided for were under my constituency communication allowance. Is there another fund they have in the Liberal caucus, or is there another fund that exists elsewhere? The postage comes under my constituency office.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, there are clearly – the Clerk may clarify this – two categories of postage. For your constituency, regular letters that are mailed, \$1,206 a year. In addition to that, you are given an unlimited allotment, upon request, for Christmas card mail-outs for the postage, not the cost of the cards. You buy the cards, but the postage comes over and above that.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I know about the \$1,200, but do you mean to tell me that some members would actually go and make a request of the Speaker or the Clerk for additional amounts?

MR. WICKMAN: Ken, you're the one that made the motion in the last term.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. To help clarify this, perhaps the Clerk can summarize the situation for all members.

DR. McNEIL: The policy has been for the last number of years that members who apply for postage for Christmas cards receive that postage out of the MLA administration budget, the general postage budget, and it's not allocated to their particular constituency budget for Christmas cards. That postage last year totaled approximately \$26,000.

MR. KOWALSKI: Do you have a listing of all that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, the Clerk does.

DR. McNEIL: Seeing this item on the agenda, I went and did a little research to see what the cost was last year.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'd certainly like to get some more information with respect to this matter. As we go through the budget guidelines under item (I), we might want to get some more on that. If there are these additional postage allocations, maybe the Clerk should be able to extrapolate them out of the Legislative Assembly budget and identify them. Maybe the easiest way, then, to administer or deal with this would be to have them apportioned according to a caucus basis and have the caucus Whip or somebody take care of it, rather than having the Clerk being put in this situation.

MR. HENRY: Or eliminate it completely.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, of course. Of course.

MR. WICKMAN: That's why I proposed a committee to come up with a recommendation.

11:44

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion before the committee is that a subcommittee be formed to bring a report back to the committee. That's the question.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I appreciate that being the question, Mr. Chairman. I think perhaps the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would be prepared not to have the committee process in view of the fact that this is going to go under discussion on the budget, and I think all members here would be more than happy to have it there. As well, the Clerk is the person who has the information, and as I understand it, he'll be able to provide us with that information when we start deliberating the budget line by line. I think just to save time and effort it could be perhaps debated there, because I certainly am supportive of the direction or the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, yeah, that would satisfy me, if in conjunction with the '94-95 budget we could get the stats as to how much was spent by each member and so on and so forth, and then from there we address it and we make a decision as to whether there are any dollars for Christmas postage in the next budget and, if so, what the guidelines or restrictions are.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Just as a sort of sideline argument, I guess it's too late to do much this year, but on this question of a sort of sanitized, politically correct – I question the whole philosophy of paying for Christmas cards. Why should anybody if they're not a Christian have to send out cards or something during the Christmas season in order to access the funds? In other words, there is a whole concept – although a good chunk of your society is Christian, I'll agree, there are a lot that celebrate other occasions during the year. So to pick out and spend \$25,000 or \$26,000 a year on Christmas cards I think is something that's probably gone by its time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, considering the discussion before the committee, would the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford be prepared to withdraw his motion if the committee agreed to it?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, certainly, Mr. Chairman. Certainly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any opposition? The motion is withdrawn.

The next item is (i), Disposal of Constituency Office Furniture and Equipment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to say a few words on this and possibly get a report for the next meeting from the Clerk. After this last election I had a number of horror stories come to my attention presented by new Members of the Legislative Assembly. When they went to their constituency offices, there were cases where virtually everything was stripped, gone. There were other cases where members left everything behind, including cellular phones and such. There were cases brought to my attention where some departing MLAs were able to buy at a depreciated value whatever goods were in that office, such as fax machines, cellular telephones, and such. Then information provided to me as well was that some members – this is information that was given to me – that were defeated turned equipment back to public works, forcing the new MLAs to rebuy some of those items; for example, a cellular phone or a fax machine. I guess what I want is specifically a policy from the Clerk as to what happens now when it comes to disposing of constituency office furniture, supplies, equipment, and so on when an MLA is defeated or chooses to retire.

DR. McNEIL: All the material in the constituency office that has been purchased by the Legislative Assembly Office remains the property of the Assembly. The furniture, which is provided by Public Works, Supply and Services, remains their property. In some instances some of the material that was picked up from the offices

after the member left was declared surplus, and it was declared surplus through the normal process of declaring goods surplus through the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services.

MR. WICKMAN: So they could walk away with it?

DR. McNEIL: No. Nobody can walk away with anything. It's declared surplus, and if a member requested to buy a particular piece of material that was declared surplus, then they would have to pay the surplus value of that good.

MR. WICKMAN: Were there instances of that happening?

DR. McNEIL: There were a few instances where that happened, yes, but very few.

MR. WICKMAN: So the new member going in that office would not get that piece of equipment?

DR. McNEIL: No. The only equipment that was declared surplus – each office is provided a standard set of equipment, and each new member was provided with that standard set of equipment. Anything that was declared surplus was not part of that standard set of equipment. For example, if a copying machine, which was once provided to each office, was declared to be outmoded, out of date, and surplus, then the Legislative Assembly Office would provide that member with an equivalent, a standard copying machine.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, to the Clerk. There are many instances, like in my office, for example: my constituency budget buys furniture in addition to that supplied from public works. For example, we have bought a fax machine. We have bought a cellular phone. We have bought some additional furniture that was required. Now, can that particular furniture be turned back to public works when one leaves office, or can that person buy that at a depreciated value, or must it remain in that constituency?

DR. McNEIL: It doesn't have to remain in the constituency. It's still the property of the Legislative Assembly, or the Crown, and it depends on whether that equipment is out of date. For example, in some instances there were cellular phones that were five or six years old that were declared surplus because they were no longer up with current technology. Those phones that were declared surplus were then, if the members wished to purchase that surplus product, bought by private members. Otherwise, they go to surplus sales, and they're auctioned off.

MR. WICKMAN: I raise it because there was one instance in our caucus where a member went in and there was virtually nothing in the office. There were others. In my instance, for example, in 1989 every item was left there, including a little dictaphone. There was nothing removed from that constituency office other than personal files. I think that's the way it should be. Some new members walked into a similar situation. In Norwood, for example, the previous Leader of the Official Opposition left everything behind, with the exception of files. But there were others. A chair that may have been bought with constituency funds was removed; our understanding is that that person was then able to buy that chair. I think that's wrong. Everything that is bought with constituency money should become the property of that constituency, subject of course to public works really owning it. But why should one member have to go out and buy a new cellular phone, while some other member walks in and finds a cellular phone there?

MR. HENRY: Perhaps I can cut through some of this by asking the Clerk a question. As I understand, the concern is that when an MLA changes, one retires or is defeated, some of the equipment that may have been purchased out of the constituency allowance is then not available to the new member in some instances. When equipment is declared surplus after an election, who makes that decision? Is it the retiring or defeated MLA, or is it the Legislative Assembly? For example, the cellular phone. May we get a response from the Clerk? Who makes the decision in terms of is that declared surplus and then sent through the normal channels to public works to dispose of? Does the Leg. Assembly make that decision?

DR. McNEIL: There's a request that we assess it and make a request through public works that it be declared surplus.

MR. HENRY: Public works would declare it surplus upon the recommendation of the Leg. Assembly?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, first of all, all property paid for by the taxpayers of the province of Alberta is the property of the taxpayers of the province of Alberta. It is not the property of a constituency office. It is not the property of a constituency organization. It is public property. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford knows that we have a policy. This committee has written a policy of what goods are allocated to a particular constituency office. Invariably, individual members over the years have then come back and said, "Look, the list we have is a standard list; there are unique circumstances in, quote, my constituency. I require certain things." The process for that is to have that individual MLA send a letter essentially to the Speaker, to the Clerk, and if it's one of those things that can be dealt with, that doesn't violate any major properties, it's usually forwarded to the minister of public works with a request: can you accommodate? In most cases the minister of public works has accommodated. There are some cases where you could not accommodate.

As time goes on, all equipment is periodically looked at by public works to see, number one: is it serving the purpose of what it is? I mean, if it's 1993 and there's a television, as an example, in a particular constituency that was bought in 1981 and it's black and white and it's costing more money to maintain it, you declare it surplus. It goes through the normal disposal system. An individual member can go down to our surplus shop on Fort Road in Edmonton and buy it on a public tender kind of thing. You have those kinds of circumstances, the same way that after June of this year the shopping list that came to the then minister of public works for renovations and changes to the Liberal caucus offices was horrendous. They didn't like any of the desks the previous MLAs had. Everybody had to have a new desk. Well, you deal with that on an ongoing thing.

11:54

Then let's make sure we deal with the whole thing. There is a very pure policy with respect to this, a very clear policy. If some MLA has violated something or some previous MLA has violated something, if goods have disappeared, goods have been absconded, well, there are policies. There are criminal charges that can be laid. We should identify those if the hon. member has one. There's a former MLA in Edmonton that's done that. He should take the appropriate steps to make sure that it's dealt with. There are policies in place, very clear policies, to deal with all of those.

MR. WOLOSZYN: I think we should keep some things in perspective. This year was a year of boundary changes, and that

really put some different twists on it. I'll go back to the phone I inherited from my predecessor in '89. It finally was costing more to maintain than it was worth, and it was turned in to AGT as surplus. I think the net gain to anybody – and I certainly didn't take the piece of junk – was zero. They scrapped it, literally scrapped it, so it's nowhere around. Stony Plain existed before and after the election, except for Spruce Grove, which was taken out, and other things adjusted to it. I didn't get any adjustments for the constituencies that I'd gained, nor was I required to give out anything to the part that I lost. The Leg. Assembly made that decision. My successor could very well have said, "Gee whiz, he stripped the office." When I moved out, everything went because that still stayed as Stony Plain constituency's items. We just moved it from Spruce Grove to Stony Plain.

The other side of that coin is quite good too. Stony Plain constituency, quote, unquote, paid for – it was in a shopping centre – a cube sign. It's a requirement of the shopping centre. Due to the Clerk's lack of support of Stony Plain, the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert got a free \$700 sign that is now a part of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. She painted my name over and put her name on it, to add insult to injury. She has kept the sign, and the reimbursement to my constituency, which bought it before, was zero. But those are the rules. So we have to be careful this time as to just how many empty offices are there for whatever reasons and not necessarily attribute unfair motives to people departing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: I would like to close debate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, well, we'll have Redwater, then.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I just wanted to point a correction to the Member for Barrhead-Westlock. He said that all the Liberals have new desks. Mine looks like a dance has been held on it. I thought it went back to the time of Noah, but I checked the inside scratching of initials and it only went back to Reiersen in the Social Credit days in the '40s. I don't see too many new desks. If he sent a bunch of new desks over to the Liberal Party, somebody must have hijacked them on the way over. As I wander around, there's every assortment under the sun but not many new desks.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I'd be very happy to bring the former leader of the Liberal Party up to date with the requests of the new leader of the Liberal Party presented to me in late June. He was going to have big wooden desks for all his boys and girls, plus updated telephones and updated this and all the rest of that. I mean, let's talk here about purity of argument.

MR. N. TAYLOR: All I'm saying is you'd better check with the transport group, because they didn't arrive. Don't get me wrong; there's nothing like the patina of age, as you know, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford wishes to close debate on this matter?

MR. WICKMAN: Okay, to close debate, Mr. Chairman. Again, the simplest way to deal with this item – a concern has been expressed – is to get a report back from the Clerk for the next meeting as to what the existing policy is, how it is applied. The Deputy Premier made reference to the fact that former MLAs can go to public works surplus and acquire a piece of equipment, whatever. He used the term: through some type of public tender. I don't know if that means it's advertised and other people have the opportunity to buy

it at the depreciated value or if the negotiations are between public works and that one individual. I simply want to know what is happening, if there is any cause for us to be concerned, if there is cause for us to put a new policy in place. Information never hurt.

MR. CHAIRMAN: After the discussion, is there agreement in the committee that perhaps the Clerk can bring a summary? There apparently is agreement in the committee that the Clerk will bring a report on this subject to our next meeting.

The next matter, (j), is Sign Language Interpretation/Closed Captioning. That matter was placed on the agenda as a result of a meeting the chair had with the president of the Alberta Association of the Deaf. That association requested that the Legislative Assembly consider adopting real time closed captioning of Oral Question Period in place of the current sign language interpretation service. At that meeting, Mr. McCarthy, the president of the Alberta Association of the Deaf, stated that it would cost approximately \$225 an hour or a minimum of \$28,000 per session, depending on the length of the session, to have this service provided. A company in Calgary that provides such services says that that cost could go as high as \$33,000 to \$35,000 per session, which is pretty expensive compared to the \$6,580 based on a \$45 hourly rate for the current interpretation service. That \$6,580 was spent for the 1992 session.

I should point out to the committee that the Speaker's office has had communication from one person expressing dissatisfaction with the interpretation service, but on the other side of the coin there has been absolutely no communication from any other members of the deaf community or people associated with the deaf community expressing any dissatisfaction with the present service.

So with that background, the chair will certainly open the matter for any discussion the committee wishes to have on this matter.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the motivation of the Alberta Association of the Deaf, but very clearly this has budget implications. I'm wondering if it would be advisable for us to receive this for information and then perhaps deal with it when we're dealing with the budget. If this indeed is a better way of providing services to the deaf, I'm sure all members of the committee will want to do that, but we're also dealing in the reality of our budget. I don't think it would be advisable to look at this kind of increased expenditure however valid it might be outside the context of our total budget, and that point's been raised on other issues here. So I'd agree with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Olds-Didsbury.

MR. BRASSARD: I agree with the points raised, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Deputy Premier?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I would just refer all members of the Assembly to page 1 of the role of the Members' Services Committee, the document provided to us this morning by the Speaker. I just quote the last line:

However, as with a Department of Government, the general management of the Legislative Assembly Office is within the executive power of the Speaker and the Clerk, just the same as a Department of Government is managed by the Minister and Deputy Minister.

I wonder if this in fact is even a matter that should be before the Members' Services Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think it probably could have been kept within the ambit, but in the spirit of more openness and wanting to involve all members, that's why it was brought forward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

12:04

MRS. MIROSH: I concur with the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there are no further questions or comments, we will oppose this matter on the basis of the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. So what happens to it now?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will be discussed under our consideration of the budget.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A good old theological term called limbo.

MS HALEY: Well, no. It's going to go into the budget to be looked at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford I'm sure will have an opportunity of raising it as any other member that would wish to.

The next item is (k), Investors Group Financial Services Inc. Proposal. The Clerk has something to say on that.

DR. McNEIL: Just a submission from a gentleman from Investors Group saying that he'd like

to discuss a non-contributory, flexible, totally-MLA financed pension saving system that will also reduce their income taxes.

There's a commitment to put this forward. The question is whether or not the Members' Services Committee would want to deal with this issue on a collective basis or whether this is up to individual MLAs to determine their financial future.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, this piece of paper should just be accepted as information and filed. We can get 555 salesmen out there coming here and wanting to sell things. In my view this is not part of this agenda. It's a letter. Accept it as information, and let's move on.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm a little worried. Now, mind you, it may be that the Member for Barrhead-Westlock knows something I don't, but I think a group can buy things cheaper than individuals. I thought that maybe if this committee asked for bids, much as a committee did some years ago . . . I think we were on a committee together. Was it health insurance, a Red Deer group? Actually, he's nearly as old as I am, but he dyes his hair, Mr. Chairman. Nevertheless, back in those ancient days we left open, the Speaker did, a month or two for people to make proposals for group purchases of the premiums, and then the committee looked at it. There's no question, I think, that as a group here they could probably make available, provided that maybe 40 or 50 percent of the MLAs bought it, a pension plan paid for solely by their own funds that would be more economical than individuals could buy themselves. I feel like I can make a motion like this because I'm beyond the pension stage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Three Hills-Airdrie.

MS HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to comment on the concept that anybody can come forward from an investors' group and bring up the idea that we're all going to sit down and get involved in another pension plan with them. We all have our own personal options and abilities here. I have a self-directed RRSP, which I look after myself. I'm not interested in becoming part of anything to do with a government pension. Clearly, the people told us they didn't want us to have one. It was voted by a previous Legislature to get rid of the plan. I don't see this as a Members' Services function. Members can look after their own pensions at this point.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, in keeping with our philosophy of this caucus being free voters, I disagree with the Member for Redwater. I agree with the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie, who summed it up, I thought, very, very nicely. The pension plan has been dealt with. I put my own finances in place. I'm sure most members have. There are probably more than five; there are probably 5,000 that would come out here with proposals, one being my nephew, whom I have chosen to deal with as an individual because he gives me good service. The way it's been dealt with, the pension issue is history, and let's just leave it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to agree with the Member for Redwater but also with the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie. The decision we've made is that the members deal with their own retirement plans in terms of RRSPs, et cetera, but the Member for Redwater does raise the issue that it may be beneficial for members to do group purchases using their own funds, not a government pension plan. I'm wondering, because I can see us getting a number of other kinds of proposals across our desks, if the way to do this is to just ask the Clerk or the Speaker to do a survey of those members, simply a memo asking which members might be interested in participating in some sort of group purchase, again using their own funds and not any public money. Then if there's interest, we can go through the process as a committee acting for our members, the same way we do with health insurance, et cetera, of going to tender. Surely before we start receiving submissions, maybe we should see if there's any interest in us doing that for our members, again reiterating that we're not using Members' Services or government money but simply if members want us to seek proposals. I would suspect the answer is no, but we should give members that opportunity. That would relieve the Speaker of the responsibility of having to bring it forward to the committee every time a new investment group comes to the Speaker. I would make that motion, that it would be appropriate for the Speaker or the Clerk . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Perhaps Investors Group Financial Services can do that themselves.

MR. HENRY: I was making a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was in the process of making a motion.

MR. HENRY: Thank you. Patience, hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

I'd like to make a motion that

the Speaker write to all MLAs to determine if there is interest in forming a group for purchase of group RRSPs, again making it clear that it be with the MLAs' own money, period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, actually the correspondence related to a pension plan. The chair will inquire to see if their proposal regarding a pension plan is affected by group purchasing. The chair's initial feeling is that pension plans are not like insurance policies in any way. That's the whole purpose of insurance based on a large group; of course, in group insurance volume purchase does have an effect. Pensions are so individual, depending on age, that the chair can't see how group purchasing of a pension plan would benefit anybody. The chair will inquire as to whether they feel they have something to offer a group that is more advantageous than individual, and if they can answer affirmatively, then we will advise hon. members.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, with that wisdom, perhaps I'll withdraw the motion if it's acceptable to everybody. We'll just leave it in the Speaker's hands.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, my comments have absolutely nothing to do with the subject of MLA pensions or anything like that. They have to do with the process. Every one of us each and every day would receive 25 to 50 letters from individuals wanting to sell us something. I look at this and there are six or seven files. A letter goes to an individual. He passes it on to another individual, who passes it on to the Speaker, so it comes on the agenda of the Members' Services Committee. Let's try and avoid doing it. We just spent 15 or 20 minutes, eight or nine people elected to make big decisions and important decisions. We're not here to have to deal with the Tupperware salesmen – I hope we're not – in Members' Services Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: I can give you a good deal on a watch, Ken.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I beg your pardon?

MR. WICKMAN: I was saying I could get Ken a good deal on a Liberal watch.

MR. KOWALSKI: I know. I've seen the Liberal watch. That's where I got my ideas from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next item and the last item under New Business is the 1994-95 Budget Guidelines. The chair feels that all hon. members are aware of the general budget guidelines of the government. The Treasurer has reminded the chairman of this committee that he has eyes on this branch of government's public dollar expenditures. Therefore, the Clerk has prepared a budget guideline for '94-95, which perhaps he can present to the committee.

12:14

DR. McNEIL: The purpose of this guideline, as you see it, is to provide a framework for the managers of the Legislative Assembly Office to develop their budgets subject to further direction and guidance from this committee. As a way to start the process, we thought we would ask the managers in the Legislative Assembly Office to develop their budgets within this particular set of guidelines, essentially saying achieve a 20 percent overall reduction by '96-97: targeting at least a 10 percent reduction in '94-95; 5 percent, '95-96; 5 percent, '96-97; and reflecting at least a 5 percent reduction in the salaries, wages, and benefits category in the 1994-95 budget estimate. So what we're seeking today is a ratification, approval, any amendments to that sort of framework. We'd appreciate getting some feedback on it.

As well, there's another issue with respect to the Legislative Assembly budget as a whole, and it relates to an issue that was raised earlier. That is the MLA administration budget, which includes a number of different categories of expenses – postage is one of them; mileage allowances, the mileage budget, air travel budget, and so on – which, in order to effect meaningful reductions in that budget, which is about 60 percent of the total for the Legislative Assembly Office, would require some consultation with this committee or a subcommittee of this committee to look at alternative ways to focus on reductions in that particular budget, because it doesn't come under the responsibility directly of any of the managers of the office.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, it's going to be an interesting process with respect to the estimates of the Legislative Assembly, because if I look at the estimates for 1993-94, in essence I see in the voted statement a budget this year of \$46,818,469 made up of \$24,880,533, Support to the Legislative Assembly; \$11,098,151 for the office of the Auditor General; \$1,229,400 for the office of the Ombudsman; \$9,413,430 for the office of the Chief Electoral Officer; and \$196,955 for the office of the Ethics Commissioner.

What the government has to do, of course, is deal with a budget, and all intents would be that it would be made public by the latter part of February of 1994. Now, in the overall budget, fiscal policy of the government, this portfolio of \$46,818,469 is not exempt from the need to re-allocate, the need to restructure, and the need to review. This Members' Services Committee will have a responsibility, in my humble opinion, of going through all these budgets and having to deal with the support to the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker will advise us this morning of how we should deal with the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Ethics Commissioner. That would be important to us.

We do have a Legislative Offices Committee, which is an all-party committee of the Legislature, and they would look after, as I recall, the Ombudsman, Chief Electoral Officer, Ethics Commissioner, and the Auditor General. They look after all four of them, so that committee should in fact get some statement from Members' Services very, very quickly to initiate a very quick process as to how they're going to deal with those budgets and work towards a budget targeted guideline of at least 20 percent. Obviously the Chief Electoral Officer – the amount of dollars available in '93-94 is an inflated one because there was an election this year but will not be in the next four years, so the base used obviously would have to probably be the '92-93 budget. But that work should get under way. That Leg. Offices Committee should be meeting quite a few days between now and the middle of January, at which time this committee should come back to look at all these other budgets. It would seem to me we're going to have to be pretty determined. The MLA administration package, of course, is not dollars to MLAs. What they are are dollars to the citizens of Alberta, but we'll have to be in a position to be pretty aggressive about the whole thing. It would seem to me that with such little discussions as Christmas cards, who's going to have Christmas cards in 1994 is almost a given when you look at the herculean task of finding presumably a 20 percent reduction of \$46 million or some \$10 million, \$11 million, \$12 million. We're talking big numbers.

I would think caucuses and the Whip for the government caucus should be alerted to the fact that the caucus budget he currently has the ability to manage in this fiscal year – and the Whip of the Liberal caucus should understand and recognize that the current budget they have in their caucus may be very different than the budget they'll be looking at after April 1, 1994, depending on the will of this

committee. They're going to have to be prepared to take necessary steps now to in fact prepare themselves for that.

If you wanted a comment on guidelines, there's no way I'm going to sit in this committee and allow those other four offices to believe they're going to get the same budgets in '94-95 that they're getting today. They are part of the whole restructure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further comment? Is there any objection to the guideline that has been circulated?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, this is a guideline the Clerk would use for those elements within the budget that would deal with the administration. I have no problem at all with that.

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. KOWALSKI: The scenarios that would be looked at – there will always be ups and downs. If any of them says 10 percent, it might be higher in some and lower in others. That's just the basic guideline. It's no problem.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, it's my understanding that the Government House Leader and our House leader have come to an agreement as to the '93-94 budgets for the various caucuses. That's all in place now? There's nothing that needs to be done?

MR. KOWALSKI: For this fiscal year.

MR. WICKMAN: That's what I'm talking about. So the agreement you and Grant Mitchell had is in place. Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair understands from the hon. Deputy Premier that what we're really concerned about is what starts on April 1, 1994.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. That one's been resolved by the two House leaders. I'm glad of that.

I have one other question. Secondly, when we talk in terms of preparation for the '94-95 budget, I do agree with what the Deputy Premier has said, that not only those particular functions of the legislative process have to start working on their budgets now, but I believe we may have to allocate a fair amount of more time to this particular process in '94-95 leading into the new budget because of the restraint we are under and call forward all the departments that fall under the Speaker's office and the Legislative Assembly and go through those budgets with a fine-tooth comb, whatever. It's going to be, I think, a bit lengthier. The '92-93 budget, for example: we never really had the opportunity because of the election to do that. Prior to that, we'd spent a couple of days at it, but you know, I think we should start preparing as soon as possible so we know well in advance as to what to expect for the next fiscal year. I see tough times.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything further?

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, can I get a clarification from the Law Clerk about the process here, about how we, this committee, might choose to deal with those budgets we have not normally dealt with in the past. I mean the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Ethics Commissioner. We have a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly that basically looks at these four areas. It's an all-party committee holding their meetings in public. Would it be appropriate at all for the Members' Services Committee to look at those budgets, or would that have to

come by way of a report from the Legislative Offices Committee to this committee? I would really appreciate getting a good, clear understanding here of the protocol and the legality of this as well.

12:24

MR. WORK: Well, Mr. Chairman, section 21 of the Legislative Assembly Act renders the Members' Services Committee responsible to "prepare and approve . . . an estimate of the sum that will be required to be provided by the Legislature" for the Legislative Assembly Office. Now, I'm going to defer to the Clerk on how that is actually doled out, but I think that provision renders this committee responsible for the operating budgets. Each individual Act – the Election Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Ombudsman Act, and the Auditor General Act – renders the Leg. Offices Committee responsible for the office per se, the hiring, the replacement of any of those officers. Now, again I'll defer to the Clerk, but I think that's where Leg. Offices' authority ends. It's just with respect to those legislative officers, those four individuals. Then the budget thing, I presume, comes through the authority of the Members' Services Committee over the Legislative Assembly Office budget. Now, I'm making a leap from legal to financial there, and I'm on thin ice.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it's really important for us to have an understanding here, because there is a time element involved in this. I somehow feel in my mind – and I can't quantify this – that those particular four areas have sort of been forgotten in this whole process because this is the first time Members' Services has had to have a meeting, whereas all other government expenditure things have been in very, very minute evaluations going on now for months. We're now going to be up against a time frame, perhaps the second week and, at the latest, the third week of January, when we're going to have to deal with not only the support of the Legislative Assembly budget but these other four.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe the Clerk can give us some further clarification.

DR. McNEIL: Historically, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has reviewed and approved the budget submitted by those four offices.

MR. KOWALSKI: Okay. Submitted, reviewed, and approved. But would this committee take precedence over a recommendation of the Leg. Offices Committee?

DR. McNEIL: I think we need to do some more research on that. My off-the-top-of-the-head analysis would be no, but this committee approves the budget of the Legislative Offices Committee and therefore through that mechanism might provide advice to that committee as to guidelines they might wish to impose.

MR. KOWALSKI: My dilemma with this whole thing is: if we were to assume that this committee would go to a 20 percent guideline and be determined that this is where this committee wants to go but has no authority over those other four and they all come in with the same budget, then you've just destroyed the Legislative Assembly budget if you want to meet that 20 percent. It doesn't exist. Forget about your 10 and your 5; you're looking at 50 and 80.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the chair understand the position to be that the Legislative Offices Committee has developed a budget for these four offices and then it comes to the Members' Services Committee for approval? If it does come to the Members' Services Committee

for approval, then surely that enables Members' Services to alter the budget as developed by the Legislative Offices Committee for those four departments.

DR. McNEIL: Under the Election Act, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices shall review each estimate submitted pursuant to subsection (1), which is preparing the budget, and, on completion of the review, the chairman of the Committee shall present the estimate to the Provincial Treasurer for presentation to the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's directly from the Legislative Offices Committee to the Treasurer?

DR. McNEIL: The same as we present directly from the Members' Services Committee to the Treasurer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then that would indicate to the chair that there is not any oversight by this committee over the Leg. Offices Committee.

MR. KOWALSKI: In fact, that's a clarification that's really important. So in essence we're not dealing with those four budgets. This committee is not. Could we have absolute clarification of that, Mr. Chairman? Could I also ask as well, if that is the conclusion after a more time-consuming review, if that is the case, that those messages be conveyed to the chairman of the Leg. Offices Committee so that with a fear of God they'd better be doing something because we're running down into short times for them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair feels that the Deputy Premier has made a valid point.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. HENRY: The Deputy Premier raised my concern in his last comment. I don't want to be in a position here where the government has indicated that they want a certain reduction over the next three years in the Leg. Assembly budget, and when that comes to the Leg. Assembly, it includes those offices. If we're going to be on the hook, if I can put it that way, then the committee should be on a hook equally. Again, if we want to communicate back and forth and say one committee can take more reduction than less to bring the overall, I don't want to see a situation whereby we're sending the Clerk and his staff back to produce a 50 percent reduction in order to accommodate the other committees who have chosen not to reduce their recommendations. So I support the Deputy Premier.

DR. McNEIL: We'll develop a written opinion further to the discussion on the role of this committee vis-à-vis the Legislative Offices Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That concludes the discussion on the '94-95 budget guidelines.

The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I just wonder if we need a motion sort of enshrining the agreement between the two House leaders. I was going to be prepared to make a motion that at least the opposition caucus office budget – to put in print what I believe is the agreement that has been worked out. Would that be in order?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There was some discussion here a few minutes ago that indicated that the agreement between the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader made last summer with

regard to the budget for the opposition caucus is in place and will remain in place for the balance of the fiscal year. It was also advised that that agreement was for this fiscal year and that April 1, 1994, would see the beginning of a new budget for a new fiscal year based on the work of this committee.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, if there is a requirement to do some additional work in clarification of this, we could have the Clerk give us the numbers, and the next time we meet in this committee, they can come forward with motions. It's within our guidelines. We don't have any problem with that.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, just a clarification. In terms of the budget – that would be the caucus allocations, and the agreement's been reached between the two House leaders and whatnot – does the budget need to be . . . Not the overall budget. It seems to me there were other items such as the postage being on a pro rata basis, et cetera, rather than the old formula with three parties. Does that automatically happen; i.e., does the Liberal caucus' postage budget increase from what the old formula was, which was approximately 17, 18 percent of the total? Is that now redistributed on a pro rata basis, or do we have to do anything? That may well be a management issue, and reviewing our terms of reference or the role of this committee may be simply a function of the Speaker directing the Clerk to make those – I'm asking a question here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the Clerk has some information in that area.

DR. McNEIL: With respect to the postage allocation for this year, we would propose that the total amount of postage money that was allocated to the caucuses prior to the election be reallocated on a per member basis for the balance of this fiscal year.

MR. HENRY: Is that including all members or simply non Executive Council members?

DR. McNEIL: That would be non Executive Council members.

12:34

MR. HENRY: Okay. That answers that question.

I understand there were other arrangements with the two House leaders beyond the caucus budget with regard to travel, et cetera. Has that all been taken care of? Perhaps I can ask the Deputy Premier.

MR. KOWALSKI: There's certainly an understanding with respect to it, and we're looking forward to motions that would come forward with respect to it and clarify it. Some are policy issues that can only be dealt with by the Members' Services Committee and would come up when we go line by line through the whole budget review, which have nothing to do with budget. They have to do with policy. They may have budget allocations.

MR. HENRY: We would then need motions in the Members' Services Committee to . . .

MR. KOWALSKI: Yeah, I would say that, because they are policy matters. We would deal with them when we go through the budget in dealing with that.

If you want me to give you an overview of what the workout was in terms of the caucus allocations, I'm just looking for that. You know, Mr. Mitchell has a copy of it, and I think the Clerk has that as

well. I think everything's being administered in this budget on that basis.

MR. HENRY: Perhaps if the Clerk has a copy of that, rather than take up a lot of time, we could ask the Clerk to identify those issues.

DR. McNEIL: I don't have a copy.

MR. HENRY: Perhaps, then, the two House leaders can ensure that the Clerk gets a copy of that and then identify those issues for us that we need to change policy on and which are simply management issues that the Speaker and the Clerk implement. Is that a fair way of approaching this?

MR. KOWALSKI: Sure. I just don't have my file with me here.

MR. HENRY: I believe all hon. members are with me. To reiterate in case some weren't with me on that, I was suggesting that because it's not clear which of the items are simply administrative transfers and which require policy changes, the two House leaders submit to the Clerk what was agreed upon and the Clerk come back to either the House leaders or the committee with the breakdown of which require motions on policy changes, and the rest are simply administrative. If that's agreed upon, I would end with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Clerk has something to add.

DR. McNEIL: In my remarks I raised the question as to whether there would be any interest in having a subcommittee or possibly the chiefs of staff work with our office to look at some of the issues in the MLA administration budget with respect to postage and so on that we would like to explore before we have our line-by-line review of the budget. There are some issues with respect to postage and so on that have been raised today that might require a little more work before we meet with the full committee. I just wanted to raise that question again.

MR. WOLOSHYN: From my perspective, I'm very comfortable with the director of the government caucus staff and the Liberal caucus working with you to get information in advance of what the issues may be. That would be helpful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there anything further under this item? If there isn't, we've concluded the new business.

The next item will be the date of the next meeting. The hon. Deputy Premier has indicated that we really should pay attention to the calendar as the days flick by. Are there any suggestions as to when we should meet next, a practical time?

MR. HENRY: As I understand it, we'll be dealing with budget. Perhaps that depends on when the administration can have some drafts or some information. We need to do it sooner than later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want it to be left at the call of the chair in consultation with representatives of both parties?

MR. KOWALSKI: That's probably the best thing you can do today, Mr. Chairman. It would seem to me that the second and third weeks of January should be big weeks for this particular committee because of the timing. If there's goodwill, it may not take four days or five days or six days. It might move very quickly.

MR. HENRY: Perhaps I could ask the Deputy Premier a question. The Deputy Premier has been referring to the second and third

weeks in January. Perhaps this is more appropriate for administration. Has the Treasurer indicated when he needs the final products from this committee in order to be included in the overall budget?

MR. KOWALSKI: Actually, this committee is kind of unique in the sense that there's been a separate estimate, so I don't think we're up against the same kind of time frame the government would be. If the Provincial Treasurer is working toward having a budget tabled in this Assembly by the third week of February, which I think is a realistic time frame, in reality we don't have to have this finished until that time because it is a separate budget. In fact, it doesn't even have to apply by the normal guidelines because it is a separate budget, so maybe we're not up against that same degree of pressure. But it would probably be convenient just for everybody – once we get into the third and fourth weeks of January, everybody is dealing with their own issues and we're getting ready for the session, so there's going to be a limited amount of time to deal with it. It's only that perspective I come from, Michael.

MR. HENRY: Just one last point. I don't mean to delay this. I know the government has certain caucus days and certainly the opposition has certain caucus days, and we schedule around those. Today is a regular caucus day of the Liberal caucus, and it worked out well this week because we did change, but could that be taken into consideration?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If that's the feeling of the committee.

The next item on our agenda is a motion for adjournment.

MR. KOWALSKI: Before you do that, Mr. Chairman, may I say one thing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You certainly may.

MR. KOWALSKI: May I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on the way you've conducted this meeting. You know, this can be a very, very acrimonious committee, and I hope it doesn't – I say that personally, and I say that to my colleagues. We've browbeaten my colleagues on this side. We can't do that. The acrimony of the past did not make for good governance in this committee, and this committee should be able to work better than it has worked in the past.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Premier has moved that the committee do now adjourn. All those in favour, please indicate. Opposed? Carried. The committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12:41 p.m.]

