

## Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

9:34 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Schumacher]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The chair sees a quorum and would like to welcome everybody to the first meeting of the Members' Services Committee for 1994.

I believe copies of an agenda have been circulated. Could there be a motion to approve the proposed agenda?

Mr. Brassard, to speak to the motion.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes. There's an item on here that I would like to replace or reposition, and that's 5(b). I'd like that under Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes, Mr. Chairman. There are certain comments that were made regarding that item that aren't reflected totally in the minutes, and I would like to move that item up to discuss during the approval of the committee minutes. Any trouble with that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm sure that could be discussed under that item; couldn't it, Mr. Brassard?

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I would just like the discussion to take place before we get into all of the lengthy budget estimates. I guess that's why.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the next item will be the approval of the minutes, and if you're not happy with the minutes, then that item will be able to be raised at that time.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay, I'll raise it at that time then.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, if I may?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: I'd like to move (j), Caucus Budgets, on this agenda to right after 4(b), Administration, in between 4(b) and 4(c).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Item (j) should be moved between (b) and (c). Is there general agreement to that?

MR. BRUSEKER: Why?

MRS. MIROSH: Well, one of the reasons is that a lot of our people who work for our caucus are concerned about the decisions that we're going to be making and the jobs.

MR. BRUSEKER: What difference does it make whether it's at (b) or (j)?

MRS. MIROSH: Well, because we want it done first. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Mrs. Mirosh has the floor.

MRS. MIROSH: It's just that we would like it discussed at the beginning, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty with what's being said. I recognize that it is a three-day meeting we're scheduled into. If you went by the normal process, it could be possibly as late

as Monday before we start tackling something like 4(j), Caucus Budgets. I share the same concern the member has expressed. There are people that are anxious to know what's going to happen. The only request I would make is that at that time, when we move that up, we also consider moving up the budgets dealing with the constituency offices because again that involves staff that is very, very concerned. So if the mover of the motion would agree to that friendly motion, I'd like to support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the suggestion is that (i) and (j) be moved up to the third position.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. I'm very sensitive to the staff positions.

MRS. MIROSH: Just (j) right now because there's a larger impact in this building. Constituency: a number of our members have maybe one person. But (j) is really impending staffing in this building, our caucus budgets that pertain to this building.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the position before the committee now is: Mrs. Mirosh would like to have (j) moved up; Mr. Wickman would like to have both (i) and (j) moved up.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Make them two separate motions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we should deal with one at a time. Mrs. Mirosh having made the first suggestion – all those who are agreeable that (j) be moved up to follow Administration, please indicate. There seems to be general approval for that.

Now, Mr. Wickman would also like the MLA Administration, which includes constituency offices . . .

MR. WICKMAN: That in the binder here is noted, I believe, as item 9. Somebody could correct me if I'm incorrect. Yeah, it's listed as item 9 in the backup material, but it's actually 4(i).

MRS. MIROSH: Right, 4(i) on the agenda. We're talking about just the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So all those in favour of giving (i) a higher priority than it presently holds, please indicate. Four against four. Let me see now. The chair would make the observation that the MLA Administration is probably the largest single thing that we have to deal with in these whole deliberations. As has been pointed out, we are spread over three days. The chair can see some use to introducing this area earlier rather than later. It doesn't mean that it has to be concluded at the first cut. The committee is the master of its own order. It could then be deferred for some other items, but at least if it were moved up, it would get an earlier exposure and perhaps assist with handling some of those other things. So the chair is inclined to break the tie in favour of moving it up.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Moving (i) up?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: So it would come after Caucus Budgets?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, and it's very closely related.

MR. BRASSARD: Just for clarification: it would be the overview and then it would be Caucus Budgets and then MLA Administration and then Speaker's Office?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. It would be the overview, Administration, Caucus Budgets, and then MLA Administration. The original proposal was to put Caucus Budgets between (b) and (c).

DR. McNEIL: Can I make an observation? The way the budget is structured, Administration, Speaker's Office, (b) to (h) – those are all the items that are within the signing authority of the Legislative Assembly Office proper. So just dealing with Administration and then going into Caucus Budgets – I think it would be better to deal with Caucus Budgets and MLA Administration and then deal with the rest, from our perspective, just in terms of how the budget was developed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, so it will go between (a) and (b).

MRS. MIROSH: So what's (b) then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's administration of the Legislative Assembly Office. It has nothing to do with the caucuses.

MRS. MIROSH: No. I understand that Administration under (b) is the whole Leg. Assembly administration. What you're suggesting is that we move it up between (a) and (b) rather than (b) and (c).

MR. CHAIRMAN: So it'll be overview, then Caucus Budgets, then MLA Administration, and then the Legislative Assembly Office, which really is the rest of it. Is there general agreement to that? I guess there is.

So the chair will call for a vote on the approval of the revised agenda.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm sorry. I don't know how we put it in. Maybe it's New Business or Other Business, but there was business. It was a Bill that appealed to this committee at the tail end of last year, and somehow or another it's got lost. That's the Bill from the *Native Network News*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would say that would be business arising or old business, unless you want us to add it to the agenda.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, it's just that it keeps disappearing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Clerk can maybe help us on this.

DR. McNEIL: This was raised at the last meeting. I believe if you check the transcript, the chairman directed that if the member wanted that item raised, he should so indicate in writing to the chairman so that it was on the agenda. We haven't received any correspondence to that effect from the member respecting that item. That's how I believe the chairman directed that at the last meeting.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I can get it in writing, but does this agenda close off for the next four days? In other words, if I get it in writing to you today – I didn't think it was necessary in writing because it was in writing last year. How many more times do we have to do it in writing? We gave it to the last chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we made the decision, Mr. Taylor, at our December meeting that everything that was pending prior to the election was off the table, that we were starting Monday morning with the December meeting. I gather the transcripts . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, no. You had Confederation Room on there from last – the use there of the press. Remember, Pam Barrett moved that.

9:44

MR. CHAIRMAN: It did not come up as a result of Pam Barrett's motion. The Confederation Room matter came up as a result of the chairman putting it on the agenda as a result of meeting with the press gallery.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I see. This is what I thought, that when the chairman put unfinished business on the agenda, he would have the other one on. Okay. Now, let's get this straight. You get a letter, and then what will happen after you get the letter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the chair will advise the committee that it has received a letter concerning this matter; is the committee prepared to deal with it? That's what the chair will do.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That you'll do immediately the day after you get the letter; is it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, at the beginning of the next meeting after I get the letter. So if I get the letter this afternoon, I'll raise it tomorrow morning.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. Sure. As long as it's clear.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, before you move the approval of the agenda – and I guess you're probably going to tell me I should deal with it under item 3 because it is referred to in the minutes, but it may be too late at that point. At the last meeting I specifically requested that for this agenda coming up an item be included called farm century awards. It was stated at that particular time that, yes, it would be on the next agenda, and it's not here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair has been reminded that the same thing applies to this item as to Mr. Taylor's item: the chair asked that this be put down in writing and given to the chair so that it could be included.

MR. WICKMAN: Maybe when the Member for Redwater sends a letter, then, for his item, he will also include the Farm Sentry Awards.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Sure, I can do both. I thought we were cleaning up everything from last year, but apparently we're going to bring it all back again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair will remind all hon. members at this time that everything on the pending agenda of this committee prior to June 15 disappeared and will not be brought forward automatically, that members will have to advise the chair in writing of things that they wish dealt with.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay; you made that perfectly clear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we have a vote on the motion of Mr. Bruseker that the agenda be accepted. All those in favour?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I have a question again. When you say accepting the agenda, is this accepting it for every day or just for today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is for today. It does not preclude yourself or other hon. members from writing the chair a note saying that they would like to have other matters dealt with. The chair will put those matters before the committee to see whether they feel they can deal with it.

MR. BRUSEKER: That would fall under New Business; would it not, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, or Other Business.

MR. BRASSARD: It is the revised agenda that we're asked to approve; is it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, as has been revised by the motions of Mrs. Mirosh and Mr. Wickman. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Minutes have been circulated. Now, Mr. Brassard has a matter to raise connected to the minutes.

MR. BRASSARD: I can only identify it as page 61.93, Mr. Chairman. There was an issue raised by Mr. Wickman regarding the disappearance, obviously, of some office furniture and equipment and so on and so forth. I think the wording in the minutes doesn't reflect the concern that I had at the time that it was raised. I point out in the actual *Hansard* minutes that Mr. Wickman reported, and I quote, "I had a number of horror stories come to my attention presented by new Members of the Legislative Assembly." That dealt primarily with furniture that was supposed to be there and wasn't there.

In this whole new direction of high decorum and everything that is being proposed by this party, I think it's a very serious allegation, and I don't see the seriousness of it reflected in the minutes. I guess I would like to challenge the hon. member to bring forward reports in fact of those kind of allegations, because I think it reflects on all of us. It's not a good reflection at this time. I would like the minutes to reflect the seriousness of it, first of all. Secondly, I would like some kind of follow-up and accountability for the allegations that have been made because I think those allegations reflect on all of us. I was extremely disappointed with the allegation in the first place. I'm disappointed that the minutes don't reflect that allegation.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, it's not an allegation; it's a fact. There were some constituency offices that when new members went in, furniture and stuff that would normally be expected to be in there was not in there. I said it was gone. It was gone. I didn't imply anyone stole it. I don't think we should get paranoid or upset about this.

I've done some research since. There is a policy that allows members that are departing to make deals with public works to purchase equipment, cars, whatever the case may be, and that's why it was gone. That's why you have some situations: a new MLA will go in a constituency office and there is no furniture in there. There may not even be a cellular phone in there. That cellular phone may have been bought by the individual. I never implied that anyone did anything immoral or illegal. What I implied is that there is a policy that obviously needs some tightening up, that needs some correction, and I wanted to see specifically what the policy was so that if there is a need to change that policy, to prevent that situation, we can prevent it.

MRS. MIROSH: I accept Mr. Wickman's explanation, Mr. Chairman, but the minutes reflect – and I wouldn't mind reading for the record again – that

Mr. Wickman stated that he had received information from several new Members of the Liberal caucus that some office furniture and equipment had been missing, or was unavailable, from their constituency offices after the June 1993 election.

Now, I agree with the hon. member to my right, Mr. Brassard, that it does look like a member has taken this and has either kept it or removed it from the office for reasons other than what the policy stated.

Now, for clarification, Mr. Chairman, I think that the minutes should reflect that there is a policy in place and the minutes should state also exactly what offices these were and exactly the inventory of that furniture and where it was so that members who have left their office are cleared of these allegations. I don't think the minutes reflect that. It almost reflects in the minutes the fact that somebody has in fact stolen it, and I think for the record this should be clarified. We should have a detail of who and where those offices are and exactly what happened with that furniture, where it went and if in fact policy was followed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stelmach.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In listening to Mr. Percy Wickman's explanation, he also mentioned that cars seem to be part of the constituency office furniture. I don't believe anybody found any cars missing because I don't believe cars form part of the constituency allocation.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I'm having difficulty with this whole conversation because what is being said by the hon. member opposite, Mr. Wickman, is not what he said last time. After Dr. McNeil explained that some equipment would be surplus and we could make arrangements, as he pointed out today, the last time his reaction was, and I quote, "So they could walk away with it?" Those were his exact words. If that's not a direct slur or slant or whatever on the members, I don't know what is, and I resent it. I have to state that quite emphatically. He went on further to say that some offices they went in, there was virtually nothing in the office. I mean, my goodness, I think the whole connotation of his comments last time was derogatory and not reflected adequately in the minutes to suit me.

9:54

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I had sent a letter to the Clerk. I have asked specifically for the policy dealing with certain items. At the last meeting it was agreed that there would be a report on this agenda. There is no report. Until that report is there showing specifically what the policy was and showing those instances where items were purchased, whether they be vehicles by outgoing cabinet ministers, whatever the case may be, but any items that were purchased, until that report is there, it puts me in a very difficult position. I know for a fact that there were MLAs who left, and when they left – whatever price they paid, I don't know. In some cases I believe it may have even been marked surplus and there may not have been a price involved. I don't know that. Until we get that report, I can't say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before Mrs. Mirosh and Mr. Stelmach, the chair would observe for information of the members that this item will be coming up under 5(b).

With regards to the minutes, I think Mr. Wickman is saying some things now that were not said in the first place, and the minutes can't reflect what Mr. Wickman didn't say.

MRS. MIROSH: They didn't reflect what he did say, though.

MR. WOLOSZYN: The problem, if I might interrupt, Mr. Chairman, is simply this. Minutes become an official record of this committee. There's no question of that. *Hansard* is a verification of the minutes. If you compare *Hansard* to the minutes, they don't match. How can we accept the minutes that don't reflect *Hansard*?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, then, I think it's incumbent on the members who are unhappy with the minutes to suggest a substitute for what appears. The members should be prepared to say: instead of this, the minutes should say this to be in accordance with the official record of the proceedings in *Hansard*.

Mrs. Mirosch, followed by Mr. Stelmach.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I guess it's easy for someone to sit here and say: some of the members have said. I think really if this has occurred, then it should be reflected by letter exactly what has happened, in what constituency, and by whom. What it says in *Hansard* and what it says in the minutes really offends me as an MLA, because I believe all of us are very honest people, and what it's saying is, "Hey, we've got some crooks amongst us, because they've scoffed off with some office furniture." Now the member is saying: no; furniture has disappeared; we don't know what happened to it. But the minutes in *Hansard* reflect the fact that someone stole the equipment, and for clarification . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. MIROSH: I believe I still have the floor.

For clarification I think the member should be more specific. I do believe there is already a policy in place, and it should reflect whether or not that policy had been adhered to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we won't know that till we get to 5(b) to find out about the policy.

Mr. Wickman, on a point of order.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I resent the implication that I had referred to somebody as a crook. I have not referred to somebody as a crook. There's a policy in place. I want to get my hands on that policy. The Clerk obviously would have it itemized as to what departing MLAs may have purchased, whatever. I want that information. This is simply a question of freedom of information. You're reading something in there to throw a red herring into this whole thing. Just give out the information, and we'll judge from there as to what was purchased, whether it was a reasonable price, whatever. You're speculating on something that you don't have a clue about.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The list the chair has now is: Mr. Stelmach, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Brassard.

Mr. Stelmach.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask Mr. Wickman if he made any allegations in the press quoting that certain MLAs walked away with furniture or missing items out of constituency offices. If that's the allegations that were made in the press, I would suggest that we investigate the matter further and find out exactly what Mr. Wickman has referred to, because it definitely leaves a cloud out there as to who are these individuals or where are these offices that supposedly have furniture that mysteriously disappeared. I think it is quite a serious issue, and we should address that.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, if there's procedure that the member feels I've followed that is incorrect, he has his avenues to him. What do you want, a trial here right now? I don't understand the logic of this type of questioning. It's totally improper.

MRS. MIROSH: You brought it up.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah, but I haven't gotten the information I requested, and I want the information.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Chairman, if a member doesn't have the information, how in the world can he make serious allegations in the press about furniture missing out of offices?

MR. WICKMAN: I asked for the information. It's still not here. This is freedom of information.

MR. STELMACH: But you made those comments before you had the information. How can you make comments like that without information? Do you have evidence?

MR. WICKMAN: When the information comes forward, let's judge on that basis; okay?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, it's usually not my position to try to bring peace to this House, but I'll try. First of all, I think the minutes are okay, but I do agree with the government side that I think you give the impression in the minutes that there might have been some illegal procedures. I think in the order of things that we accept the minutes, but if you would withdraw any imputation you made to anybody, if, you know, you say that if there's any imputation, you're sorry and you withdraw it from *Hansard*, I think that would be all right. Then the report will be out later on, and we can go on from there.

MR. WICKMAN: Let the report come. That's right.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's far more than an imputation.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, what do you want, then, besides a pound of flesh?

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I don't know. Let me just state that I think the comments reflect very unkindly on a group of people who are not here to defend themselves. I'll quote directly from *Hansard* again where the hon. member Mr. Wickman said:

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.

He is obviously stating quite clearly wrongdoing on the part of people that are not here to defend themselves. If it's placing a cloud on anybody, then I think this member is placing that cloud, and I think that has to be removed. Certainly just to say that he didn't mean to impute disrespect is not sufficient. I think he owes these people an apology. If he didn't have his facts, he shouldn't have made those statements. I think that the minutes have to reflect that this member either was making statements out of order or else he retracts them in their entirety.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You'll never get it. It'll go on forever.

MR. BRASSARD: I don't think it needs to go on forever, but I have trouble with minutes that don't reflect what actually happened at the meeting.

MR. WICKMAN: Let's just table the minutes till after the report comes down; how's that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair was going to make that suggestion, that this matter be deferred until we get to 5(b), because this, as the chair sees it, hinges around policy.

MR. WOLOSHYN: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I'd have to disagree with your interpretation. My hon. colleague Mr. Brassard is not the least bit concerned with the report that'll be handed down by the Clerk with whatever policies that might be there. He is concerned that *Hansard*, as he has quoted here, indicates that the hon. Mr. Wickman did in fact indicate that there was wrongdoing by members. It's in black and white: "I think that's wrong." The minutes, sir, do not reflect that. Now, the policy report is a different matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair does not want to get into a discussion with hon. members, particularly the esteemed Whip of the government party. That is an equivocal thing that the hon. Mr. Brassard read out. He says, "That's wrong." That can apply to the policy, or it can apply to the member's actions.

MR. BRASSARD: With all due respect, having just followed the statement prior to it, where he said, "So they could walk away with it?" I think is far more imputing wrongdoing. I think it's a challenge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The reference that Mr. Brassard said mentioned that the person could buy the chair, and he said, "That's wrong." That can apply to policy, or it can apply to the act of the member.

10:04

MR. WICKMAN: It can apply to cars going out by ex cabinet ministers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair is not going to entertain any more discussion on this matter until after we get to 5(b), or else we're not going to get involved with the main purpose of our meeting.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Now that we've started the new year out with such a spirit of co-operation, let's go.

MR. BRASSARD: I will intend to raise that issue again on 5(b).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So the minutes are not approved yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair is going to call for a motion to approve. If the committee doesn't want to approve the minutes, I guess we won't be proceeding with our agenda.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, in all honesty I have a great deal of trouble voting on approval of minutes that don't reflect . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then the chair would make this suggestion: that the committee adjourn for enough time for the hon. member Mr. Brassard to make a suggestion as to how these minutes should be reading.

MR. BRASSARD: Fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If that's the wish of the committee, we'll adjourn for a space of 10 minutes to see if we can come up with a suggestion as to how these minutes should read.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Agreed. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:05 a.m. to 10:22 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're five minutes over our writing break. [interjections] Order. Could the committee come to order, please.

It is now 25 minutes past the hour, and the chair is happy to recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury, Mr. Brassard.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that this has been disruptive, but I feel very strongly about it. In the break I had an opportunity to obtain a copy of a press clipping from December 12, and I'd like to quote from it and put this whole thing in context. The article, as you can see, is in fairly large bold print, and it says, "Where's the furniture?" I'll read just very briefly from it.

A Liberal MLA wants the government to explain what's happened to thousands of dollars in furniture that's apparently gone missing from some taxpayer-funded constituency [offices.]

Mr. Wickman is quoted: "You're talking big bucks here. You're talking cars, computers, furniture."

It goes on to say that

the Edmonton-Rutherford MLA told a legislature committee last week some departing lawmakers stripped their constituency offices when they left. He declined to identify any of the former MLAs.

He goes on to talk about "rural MLAs are also allowed to buy office VCRs and keep them at home." His quote is: "That costs taxpayers. It becomes important what's done with it when that MLA leaves office" and everything else. Imputation, if you want to put it in that category; I think it's a direct allegation that people are absconding with the furniture. Those were the comments that were made in *Hansard* that I quoted, and I don't feel the minutes reflect so. I would like to have the following read into the minutes.

MR. WOLOSHYN: To amend the minutes.

MR. BRASSARD: Amend the minutes to incorporate the following.

There were direct quotations during the discussion of this issue that caused distress among some members. They included the following quotes in the same sequence as they appeared in *Hansard* and are as follows: "Mr. Wickman: I had a number of horror stories come to my attention" concerning the absence of some constituency office furniture. Dr. McNeil then clarified the disposal procedure for obsolete equipment, and Mr. Wickman then stated, "So they could walk away with it?" Following further clarification of the disposal procedure, Mr. Wickman stated, "I think that's wrong."

I think that that has to be in the minutes to truly reflect the allegations that were laid against members who are not here to defend themselves. I rest my case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair accepts that presentation as a motion to amend the minutes. Is there any further discussion on that motion?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just the question, Mr. Chairman, of where they would be inserted in the minutes. That I think has to be clear so that in that particular – and if you could just give us one moment here.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Couldn't we just be amending item 93.118?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: They would be doing that, but I think they should be inserted between either the first and second or the second and third paragraphs, preferably between the second and third paragraphs. I think that that statement of agreement being reached with the Clerk to report has to stay in. Mr. Brassard's amendment would be inserted between the paragraph that starts "The Clerk . . ." and ends with ". . . surplus." and the final paragraph.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I'd like to table the amendment until we have the opportunity to deal with item 5(b).

MR. BRASSARD: Then, in all due respect, we can't proceed with this meeting because we haven't approved the minutes. I'm not going to agree to approve the minutes unless they're amended to reflect what truly happened.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair takes the position that this is a motion to amend the minutes, and it's in order. The general subject will certainly be coming up again under 5(b), so the chair really feels that the committee should make a decision on this motion, because whatever the discussion on 5(b) is, it's not going to alter what was said on December 8.

MR. BRASSARD: That's exactly my point, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, could it be read again? I just want to make sure it accurately reflects what was said.

MR. BRASSARD: The secretary has it.

MRS. DACYSHYN:

There were direct quotations during the discussion of this issue that caused distress among some members. They included the following quotes in the same sequence as they appeared in *Hansard* and are as follows. Mr. Wickman stated, "I had a number of horror stories come to my attention" concerning the absence of some constituency office furniture. Dr. McNeil then clarified the disposal procedure for obsolete equipment. Mr. Wickman then stated, "So they could walk away with it?" Following further clarification of the disposal procedure, Mr. Wickman stated, "I think that's wrong."

This portion I just read would come in between the second and third paragraphs of minute 93.118.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, after the reference where it states that the Clerk said what?

MRS. MIROSH: The Clerk clarified the policy.

MRS. DACYSHYN:

Dr. McNeil then clarified the disposal procedure . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. Keep reading.

MRS. DACYSHYN:

. . . for obsolete equipment. Mr. Wickman then stated, "So they could walk away with it?" Following further clarification of the disposal procedure, Mr. Wickman stated, "I think that's wrong."

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. There's nothing in between there?

MRS. DACYSHYN: No.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I don't have any problems with that being included in the minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of Mr. Brassard's motion, please indicate. Opposed? Carried.

Now, on the motion to approve the minutes as amended. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Item 4, 1994-95 Legislative Assembly Budget Estimates. Pursuant to our previous discussion, the chair is happy to call on Dr. McNeil to present an overview, including a three-year budget forecast of this very important financial matter.

DR. MCNEIL: If you'll look in your budget binder under overview, there are two aspects to it. There's a four-page summary, and then there are two pages at the end reflecting a three-year draft budget. You can take a look at those and follow along.

The 1994-1997 financial plan was developed in the context of our overall purpose, which is stated here. I won't go into that, but it's a very general statement of what this office is here to do. Essentially it's to support the members and the Speaker in the conduct of their duties of office.

In terms of our planning, our objective was to maintain to the maximum extent possible and in some instances to enhance where possible the services that were provided to members, staff, and the general public while achieving and hopefully exceeding the target of a 20 percent reduction over three years. The target was 10 for 1994-95, 5 for '95-96, and 5 for '96-97, as approved by this committee on December 8.

The proposed budget for the elements within the direct expenditure authority of the Legislative Assembly Office projects a 20.3 percent reduction for the 1994-95 fiscal year from the base year of 1992-93 actuals and an overall three-year reduction of 26 percent from that base by March 31, 1997. All salaries and wages will be reduced by 5 percent in the '94-95 fiscal year and maintained at that level throughout the three-year planning period.

10:32

An important point to remember in terms of the development of this budget is that the key element of the success of this plan is predicated on continued maintenance and further development of the Legislative Assembly information system. These certain technological advances that we've made with this system over the past three or four years have saved significant dollars already in terms of reduced printing costs and provision of information from the library, the public information branch, and House services. As well, it eliminated the need for secretarial support for managers in the office.

Further development of these technical advances will enable us to make some of the information we produce now on hard copy, like *Hansard*, the House documents, and so on, available electronically to members and to the public, reducing the cost of printing and also making that information commercially available. So rather than somebody subscribing to *Hansard* and our having to incur postage costs and so on, we'll be able to contract with law firms and so on to sell them *Hansard* and other parliamentary information electronically. So it opens up a number of commercial possibilities as long as we are able to maintain that system. As well we contemplate additional revenue through increased sales of Assembly souvenirs and other related commercial products. Individual managers will get into those issues when they talk about their own 1994-95 budgets.

Just to give you an overview of each of the branches in the office as far as the three-year plan – administration and personnel: right now we're supporting about 500 person-years in terms of the administrative activity that we undertake for the Legislative Assembly Office. If you count all the members, constituency office

staff, caucus staff, sessional staff, and so on, there's a lot more support going on than may at first appear.

As well there's been significant downloading of responsibility from Treasury onto the Legislative Assembly Office in the last number of years – and I gather it's continuing – in terms of personnel and financial responsibilities. For example, a couple of years ago or last year, I guess, we took on the job of inputting all our payroll information, whereas in the past we'd send the documents over to Treasury and they would do that. So Treasury downsized their operation, but we didn't increase ours. We just had to do more with what we had. So that kind of activity is continuing.

Our proposal with respect to administration and personnel is to maintain our existing level of service. In terms of the '92-93 base, we're proposing that in administration we don't reduce there. Reductions there will have a very significant impact on members as far as the support that can be provided. When Cheryl and Scott talk about the '94-95 budget, they can provide more detail there with respect to administration.

The Speaker's office you'll note has proposed a 19.63 percent reduction over three years, and that's primarily relating to savings due to reduced travel, reduced rental costs, and savings related to the closure of the MLA pension plan. Those savings show up across the board in various committee budgets, in the MLA administration budget, and so on. There are significant savings relating to the MLA pension plan.

Legislative committees. The decrease there of 74.47 percent from the 1992-93 base takes into account the five active standing and special standing committees and one select special committee. The '95-96 and '96-97 estimates provide for funding to those committees only, with no provision for the creation of other special select committees. So if other special select committees are created, then the decrease in that level of expenditure would not be as great.

Interns. For information . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Before we move off the legislative committees, that seems to be such a huge drop; doesn't it? I don't quite see, because we still have the same committees and that, how you're accomplishing that.

DR. McNEIL: Well, in 1992 there were a number of special committees that relate to that budget. Louise can give you a much more detailed explanation than I can at this point when we get into discussing the individual budgets.

The legislative intern program. This committee made a decision last year to eliminate the legislative intern program. The proposed budget there reflects that decision with savings of \$84,880 as far as the 1992-93 actual was.

Public information branch. To achieve this objective – and you'll note the projection over the three years for the public information branch is minus 17 percent – one permanent position is eliminated in '94-95. That's a result of the early voluntary retirement program and the decision not to replace that position, to abolish that position and absorb that loss in the budget.

Printing expenditures are being reduced again as a result of going to electronic availability of information for some individuals. The proposal is that the school photograph program be eliminated in 1995-96. Again, I think when we discuss the budgets in more detail in that area, Gary Garrison could discuss that further. Again, it's an area here where we think that we can generate additional revenue related to the interpretive centre and gift shop in setting up a gift shop in this building as well as in the interpretive centre. Other parliaments generate quite significant revenue in their operations through the sale of Assembly related souvenirs, and it's our objective to do that here.

The Legislature Library. We project a 20.13 percent reduction over three years there, a target reduction. To achieve that we've abolished one senior management position, reduced salary and wage costs, and proposed some small reductions in expenditures for books, magazines, microforms, and office supplies.

With respect to the Conference Board of Canada, I think two years ago Alberta Treasury decided to eliminate their subscription on behalf of the government and the Assembly to the Conference Board. That left the Legislature Library in a position where we decided to take up a part of that funding for Conference Board service to provide a certain minimum level of information from the Conference Board to all government users. Other departments have also done that, and it's our initial estimation anyway that as an overall government now, we're spending more on Conference Board publications than we did before when we had one subscription. Our suggestion here is to possibly drop the Conference Board service or, in lieu of that, have some kind of user fee and maintain it. If we can establish a user fee for that kind of service, then we would be able to maintain that subscription to the Conference Board, yet require subscribers, people who want specific information, to pay us a user fee.

As well we've saved significant money in the library, again because of the application of EDP technology. We're implementing an on-line library system, which will be available in the next short period of time, which will enable the members and staff to access the library collection through their computer.

House Services. We'll exceed the target reduction in this area. The committee made significant reductions last year in out-of-country travel and within-country travel.

We're reducing all the grants, the small number of grants we have in this budget, by 20 percent. Right now we're paying \$53,000 for TV coverage and interpretation services for question period coverage. There was a change in the CRTC regulations which allows the cable company to claim coverage of question period as community programming. Once the Assembly becomes the executive producer of that TV coverage – we're working with Videotron to do that, and I think we can do that at essentially no cost to us – we can eliminate that cost of TV coverage.

10:42

MR. BRASSARD: Do you see any liability attached to that aside from the cost?

DR. McNEIL: I don't see any liability.

MR. BRASSARD: So if the TV company produced something that someone took offence at, you wouldn't be held liable.

DR. McNEIL: Well, no. I mean, as the executive producer we can still, in the final analysis, claim privilege in terms of what happens in that Chamber.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We're opening it up in that the questions on it . . .

DR. McNEIL: Just in a broad sense.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If they're an executive producer, then somebody has to, say, cut in and cut out, cut in and cut out. Are you going to have a committee involved in that?

DR. McNEIL: Well, I wouldn't see any different than what's done now.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Is the House leader on the government side going to be the executive producer in the background?

DR. McNEIL: No. I would suggest the director of the public information branch is the executive producer.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The director of the public information branch.

DR. McNEIL: In other words, Dr. Garrison.

MR. N. TAYLOR: He would do it.

DR. McNEIL: He would be, in name anyway.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It would be a lot like *Hansard*.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, exactly.

MR. N. TAYLOR: There wouldn't be an MLA or MLA group or a Speaker.

DR. McNEIL: No, no.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I'm sorry I cut you off.

DR. McNEIL: No problem.

Finally, information systems. We project a 23.5 percent decrease. Most of that was achieved last year in terms of the savings realized as a result of the library system implementation. We've been paying significant funds to the University of Alberta and Alberta public works to support certain systems in the library. As a result of changes that we've made, we're no longer expending those funds.

You can see from the overview that we estimate our savings to this point in terms of the application of EDP technology were about \$700,000 between 1989 and 1992-93. So as you can see, as we've suggested here, we can exceed our overall target of 20 percent in the Legislative Assembly Office with right now a target of approximately a 26 percent reduction over the three-year planning horizon.

The second page of the three-year graph budget. So you're aware, we've got two components there: the caucus budget component and the MLA administration component. You'll note at the bottom that you see an adjustment factor under both the caucus budgets and the MLA administration budgets. In 1992-93 both of those budgets were based on the number of 56 private members when the cabinet was 26 or 27 members. We now have 65 private members. So to provide a valid comparison between the 1992-93 year, the caucus budget was adjusted by the per member allocation at that time, which was \$45,100 per member, and the MLA administration budgets. For those components of the MLA administration budget that relate directly to the number of private members, those components were adjusted by 15 percent in terms of the 1992-93 base year to reflect a more accurate representation of comparing the 1994 budget with the base year of 1992-93.

We have not made any specific proposals with respect to changes of either the caucus budget or the MLA administration budget. That we feel is the prerogative of the members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, followed by Mrs. Mirosh.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, rather than get into a number of questions now, I'll wait until we get into the detail. Just as a general overview, I think the Clerk has to be commended for the way he's

drafted the three-year plan. It appears that we can achieve what was set out to be achieved.

Now, my general question would pertain to all the budgets, generally speaking. When reference was made to a 5 percent reduction, is that a 5 percent reduction across the board, including those that may be paid under \$20,000 a year, including casual, including part-time?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: So it was just 5 percent across the board?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Can I ask, Mr. Chairman: is that a direct policy of government, or was that done for budgeting purposes?

DR. McNEIL: Well, that was part of the guideline that was given by this committee to us in the development of our budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Was there any consideration given to kind of pro rating it in terms of the levels of income and exempting those that are at the lower end of the scale that would have a very difficult time on the limited incomes they have?

DR. McNEIL: We haven't made a final decision as to how that 5 percent will be achieved.

MR. WICKMAN: It could still be done, though?

DR. McNEIL: It could still be done.

MR. WICKMAN: Would it need direction of this committee to do it?

DR. McNEIL: Possibly, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just with regard to the issue of, first of all, your legislative committees, five are by order of the Legislative Assembly. What about those who were outside of that, such as heritage trust fund or Ombudsman?

DR. McNEIL: Those are all part of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's Legislative Offices.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, they are.

DR. McNEIL: Those are the standing – so when you say the Ombudsman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's part of the Legislative Offices Committee, and the heritage savings trust fund committee is a separate thing.

MRS. MIROSH: There are five committees, and that's it? There aren't any outside of that?

DR. McNEIL: And the one special committee, which is the committee on parliamentary reform, which is incorporated as well.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, right.



Each one of those has submitted their own independent budget to you?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MRS. MIROSH: In the past we've had them come before this assembly, I guess, just on a call by the committee. Is that right?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. What we propose with respect to that situation this year in order to save funds is to have the Clerk of Committees, Louise Kamuchik, present those budgets. If there are any particular questions that need to be answered or if the committee feels that as a result of more information required they wish to invite one or more of those committee chairmen, then the committee can do that.

MRS. MIROSH: So if we have any questions to them, we have to give them some notice obviously.

DR. McNEIL: We have some memos from some of the committee chairmen anyway with respect to their budget providing some more detailed explanation. Louise can provide you with more information as well in terms of her discussion with those chairmen.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay. So when we get into them line by line, though, these people know that we could call them in.

DR. McNEIL: They've been so advised. We weren't certain as to the scheduling. They're aware that there's that possibility.

MRS. MIROSH: Another question I have is with regards to the stacking issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Which issue?

MRS. MIROSH: Stacking, or what you call downloading. All government departments are working on the base of the '92-93 budget. You mentioned Treasury and the extra work that you have as a result of their – we call it stacking because as everybody's cutting, it's reflecting on somebody else in another department. So I just wondered – public works operates basically all of our supplies in our constituency offices, which we discussed earlier – if any other department cuts will be reflecting this budget, such as public works.

10:52

DR. McNEIL: At this stage we're not aware of any. In terms of those cuts that were announced yesterday, I don't see any of those cuts directly impacting on our budget. Not knowing what future cuts may or may not be, I can't state anything on that.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, so you haven't received anything. Like, Justice looks after the security in this building.

DR. McNEIL: We haven't received any indication. We'd have to respond once we have that information.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah, because that might affect this budget.

DR. McNEIL: Possibly.

MRS. MIROSH: It may or may not.

One last question, Mr. Chairman, is with regards to the estimates summary. I know we're going to go line by line, but when I see this printed sheet under the first page of estimates summary – you've got

this sheet that indicates the '92 base, and then we go forward. Then you've got this other sheet in here called estimate comparison by summary centre code. You just start at '94-95.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: We haven't really reflected to you yet the budget to be able to dictate the changes. For instance, you know your cuts from 10B to 10O.

DR. McNEIL: Right.

MRS. MIROSH: But 10E to 10C we haven't dealt with yet.

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MRS. MIROSH: The sheet that we should be working from is the base sheet, because that's where we have to determine our reductions, from that '92-93 figure. We don't have that on this sheet. I'm just confused as to which sheet you're going to be working from here.

DR. McNEIL: Well, in terms of the overall reduction, the three-year draft budget, as I say, for MLA administration and the caucuses we have made no adjustments at all. It'll be up to the committee to decide that.

MRS. MIROSH: So our total reduction without even dealing with that is minus 14 percent already.

DR. McNEIL: No. If you look at the net expenditure line, for 1994-95 the overall budget is a 6.24 percent reduction overall. So in order to achieve the target of 10 percent in 1994-95, we need to find another 3.76 percent in the overall budget.

MRS. MIROSH: I mean, everything in this building reflects work because MLAs generate it. You know, every line by line really reflects MLAs, period. I guess what I'm trying to get at is: when we're looking, then, at the line by line, which will be the next item on the agenda, we should be referring, though, to this sheet here so we know the base that we're dealing from.

DR. McNEIL: In terms of the base, for example, for MLA administration, the base you're looking at is the \$13,377,033.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah; we've already taken a 5 percent rollback there.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. For the caucus budgets the 1993 actual adjusted is \$3,587,970. What we can do, I think, is for those budgets make up another sheet and put it in under the caucus in the MLA administration budget so you have that number in front of you.

MRS. MIROSH: I just want to make sure that we have all the proper papers that we're working from and the proper figures, because the confusion will be that we've got the '92-93 base that we're working from, but we've had an election in between there so we no longer have this recognized Official Opposition. We've had a lot of significant changes that have caused expenses to fluctuate.

DR. McNEIL: That's right.

MRS. MIROSH: So will all of that detail be reflected in this overall sheet?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: We have all the accurate numbers I guess is what I'm trying to . . .

DR. McNEIL: Yes. The 1992-93 actuals are there plus the adjustment factor that I indicated we applied to the caucus budgets and the MLA administration budgets.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Dr. McNeil, if I can interject for a moment. You've got '93-94 estimates, and those actuals won't be available for a while.

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Depending upon circumstances during the year, they could be off somewhat. However, for the establishment of the '94-95 budget, which this committee is going to go after, all our decisions are based on the '92-93 actuals. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: All your decisions are based on the 1992-93 actuals in terms of the target reduction of 10 plus 5.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Precisely. So what happened in the interim, unfortunately, unless there is some change of focus – if, for example, the '93-94 actuals are quite high – we could realize a significant saving from '93-94, which might be a lot more difficult to realize from '92-93. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct. There are examples of that fact. Certain costs related to the election were expended in '93-94 that are not in the '92-93 base year.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Are you finished, Dianne?

MRS. MIROSH: No, because I'm still confused about this back sheet here. There are two sheets at the back of this estimates summary. Mr. Chairman, I thought we were doing like a three-year budget. We're doing a three-year budget. You've got these back sheets that confused me. That's all.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Well, you've gone too far, Dianne. He's still back on the first.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah, I know. But this is under overall estimates.

DR. McNEIL: No, those two sheets are under estimates summary. What we've done for the detailed estimates for 1994-95 is, as required by Treasury, make the comparison with 1993-94 estimates. That's the way the estimates are set up.

MRS. MIROSH: I'm going ahead of myself, I know. But it says the estimates summary, so before we go into the line by line – I mean, this is overall. The way I see the sheet, it's written overall. We're going to be working on this specific sheet. I just don't know why this is even in here.

DR. McNEIL: No. We're not going to be working with this. We're going to be working with each section. The purpose of this sheet is to give you an overview of what's being proposed for three years.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, we have to know the big number. We have to know the total.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. When we go section by section, we'll be comparing those '94-95 with, number one, the '93-94 estimate and then, secondly, with the 1992-93 base from which we're trying to achieve the reductions, from which we're measuring the overall target reduction of 20 percent by 1996-97.

MRS. MIROSH: So what you're saying so far in your overall, what you've just given us with your three-year picture, is that the biggest hit's the first year.

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay. I still don't understand these sheets, but maybe when we get to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any others? Yeah. Sorry, Mr. Woloshyn.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I'd like to commend the Clerk for a good job done. However, there is one portion that I didn't hear as much as I would like to have heard. You went through and indicated quite accurately where these moneys are going to come from, but I didn't hear much on impacting on services; for example, security. That would include constituency offices there. At some point when we go through the details, or if you'd like to do it now, I would like to know what that effect is going to be, because when we get at the end with the number there, that's good if you've achieved your goal as outlined by the committee, but tied in with that, we have to know what the impact is going to be on each of these areas.

11:02

DR. McNEIL: I would propose that we deal with those in the context of the specific budget for 1994-95 and the projections for 1995-96 and '96-97. I think the individual managers are better able to deal with those questions than I can.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I'll give you an indication here. You've, for example, indicated that if an across-the-board percentage was applied and it happened to hit your administration, you wouldn't be able to absorb it because of, as you indicated, some stacking or downloading from Treasury. That area is yours, the first concern. You look after that.

DR. McNEIL: Well, no; Scott does.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I thought it was you.

Can you give me some indication in terms of man-years of how much your responsibilities for your department have been altered in the last three years – let's go back to '92-93; that's the base – by the downloading from other areas of government?

DR. McNEIL: Well, we haven't increased our staff for the past couple of years. I can't tell you that as a result of having to do payroll, we've increased our staff. We've just absorbed that and done more with the staff we had. Again we're getting into detail here. In administration, for example, we're roughly 12 person-years to do the work.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I can accept all that, Dr. McNeil. I don't have any difficulty with that. What is really concerning me is that it appears that you have been stretched to the limit now in terms of your staff. I can see that without question. However, in going

through reductions here in the library, public information, Speaker's office, and all over, it appears that when some function of the government or the Leg. can't deliver, it falls back on the eighth floor. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: The eighth and ninth floors, yes. Now, one of the ways we're dealing with that, though, is working smarter. The people in this office work extremely hard, but I think, as I said earlier, the application of technology has helped extensively in terms of being able to absorb some of that extra workload by working smarter. I think our task in the next two or three years is to stand back from what we do and say, "Is there some fundamental restructuring that we can do to accomplish the same objectives but do it in very different ways?" I think the proposed budget for 1994-95 – we can achieve our target of 10 percent, but I think the next two years we would have to spend more time looking at how we do work fundamentally and ask some basic questions as to: "Do we still have to do this? Can some of these activities be privatized?"

I mentioned earlier the whole issue of generating revenue from some of the activities that we do that we don't receive revenue for now. Another example that I haven't mentioned but I wanted to is the whole issue of providing administrative support to other Legislative Assembly functions. For example, we provide legal support now to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Ethics Commissioner. We provide administrative support to the Ethics Commissioner. There's the possibility of another legislative office being created. It's my suggestion that perhaps the Legislative Assembly Office should be the central administrator for the various Legislative Assembly functions and realize cost savings that way, even through possibly charging out for those services to those other offices. Those are the kinds of fundamental issues I think we have to address in the medium term to achieve our targets by 1997. There's no question that the stacking, or downloading if you want to call it, has put more pressure on the office and the staff in the office.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So you're looking at a more global picture, then, at this point: taking and consolidating your service, hopefully, and in some way even getting a revolving account going so that the other departments . . .

DR. McNEIL: It would be inter.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Interdepartmental transfers to more accurately reflect the reality of what you are doing.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I think it's a good idea on the surface. Have you suggested to the other people as they're making budgets that they can in fact impact a saving on their budgets by buying administrative time from you and from your people and by buying legal time or whatever it is that you have – you have the opportunity to go with doubling it. Or is that the plan for another year?

DR. McNEIL: I've had a discussion with the chairman of the Legislative Offices Committee with respect to that approach, but I have not had any discussion with the officers of the Legislature to pursue that further. I would see that as one of the projects that we'd have to work on in the coming year to see its viability and how it could be done.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Now, with respect to constituency support, which you do an awful lot of, can you give me some indication of how that impacts on your budget in terms of man-hours, man-years,

or whatever? How many folks do you have serving the constituencies as such?

DR. McNEIL: We're into it all, but in terms of the people that provide extensive support to the constituency offices, the administration branch provides a lot of support to those offices, the personnel branch does, and the information systems area does. We provide legal support with respect to all the contracts, either the fee-for-service contracts or employment contracts that are entered into for all the staff in those offices. We provide supplies, inventory, and so on. So there's an extensive support. I can't estimate what percentage of the total is devoted to the constituency offices, but it's a fair percentage, I would say. You have 80-something offices and, you know, one or two staff per office and all the supplies and so on, so there's a fairly extensive support provided to those offices.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stelmach, followed by Mr. Brassard.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe Dr. McNeil has answered in part my question whether he could bill for some of the services you're now offering some of the other committees. I believe what it will do, though, is in the end force the accounting of the true costs of the operation of these committees so that it's not hidden in other budgets. Perhaps you could comment on that, Dr. McNeil.

DR. McNEIL: I'm not sure whether your question is related to the committees or to the other legislative offices.

MR. STELMACH: Offices.

DR. McNEIL: Right now most of the other legislative offices have their own administrative personnel and computer support. We support, as I said earlier, 400 or 500 person-years if you add it all up. There are probably economies of scale given the size of our operation to provide additional support to some of the smaller offices, especially in computers, in finance and accounting, and personnel, but I have no idea the extent to which that would save money overall because I'm not that familiar with the budgets of the other offices.

MR. STELMACH: I guess the comment I wanted to make, though, was that even though we provide the service and because of our size more than likely achieve economies of scale – it's just that on the budgets for those legislative offices if we would be able to bill them or force an accounting, we would really know the true cost of operating, because we're actually subsidizing the cost of some of the offices.

DR. McNEIL: Correct. We are. Right now that would only be the Ethics Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Could I supplement, Mr. Chairman?

11:12

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'll just . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Brassard, Mr. Taylor.

MR. BRASSARD: I'd just like to question the Speaker's office, if I may. Under the Speaker's office you relate to the costs related to the provision of vehicles to the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chairman of Committees, as well as the MLA pension plan. It was my understanding that the vehicles were under public works, transportation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're the owners and the administrators of those, but the user's department pays the rent.

MRS. MIROSH: We rent it.

MR. BRASSARD: So the cost of that rental, then, came from you, and so the retirement of that – I'm just confused as to who actually realizes the savings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're talking about the pension plan now?

MR. BRASSARD: Well, no, the vehicles. You've probably answered it, because vehicles are then turned back to public works, and they get rid of them. You no longer have the rental costs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And insurance.

MR. BRASSARD: Insurance and the related costs, yes.

The MLA pension plan I thought came under MLA administration.

DR. McNEIL: The bulk of the cost of the MLA pension plan in terms of the employer contributions came under MLA administration, but for each salary that's paid in other areas or committee fees that were also pensionable income there was a 10 percent charge on those expenditures as well.

MR. BRASSARD: This wasn't the main MLA pension plan but rather the peripheral costs associated with committee work contributed to the pension plan?

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. In MLA administration there's an approximate saving of, I think, half a million dollars as a result of the fact that the employer is no longer contributing 10 percent.

MR. BRASSARD: So this would be significantly less, to say the least.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. That would be 10 percent of the Speaker's salary and the Deputy Chairman's salary and the Deputy Speaker's salary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions or comments on the overview?

Sorry, Mr. Taylor.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I just wanted to support the hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking's statement that we should be billing the other offices, because I think it would, besides impact income, also emphasize to them that they should be cutting, because as long as they can just lump it in here . . . I don't think they actually were set up to be independent. They're supposed to listen to us anyhow, but the only little, tenuous maybe whip we can use is to be able to table what they're billing or what their cost is.

The second one was just an outside thought. Legislative interns I've always felt was a very, very good program. I see it's cut out here. I'm not suggesting you put it back in. The heritage trust fund

puts out a great deal of scholarships. Is there any thought that we could recommend to them scholarships for three or four legislative interns? It's a huge budget anyhow, and it goes someplace. Maybe I can bring it up when the time comes. To pick up four interns would be almost a teaspoon out of their huge – I think you were on the trust fund committee with me too. They have a huge scholarship budget. I think interns are such a positive thing to our society and what we can do. Maybe I'll bring it up later, but I'm just putting it in as an overview.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you might also consider that that probably would be best coming from the heritage savings trust fund committee.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I mean, somehow or another we've got to insert it to the committee. I was going to suggest that we pass a motion that they consider taking on four interns in their budget.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Just as a comment: there are going to be a lot of nice-to-have things that don't fit into the need category that are going to unfortunately come under scrutiny in the way the budget has to come together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I just want to get back in because there were about three things that came to mind, the first one being the information systems. Was this cost related more specifically to the Leg. office here in Edmonton with regards to computers or the constituencies or both?

DR. McNEIL: Both. We have a network of about 250 computers. About 80 of those are constituency office computers. The network allows everybody on the network to communicate with one another. The more information that we can provide electronically, the more costs we save in terms of printing and so on. So the constituency offices will be able to access the information in the library, the library catalogues. They'll be able to access *Hansard*. We hope to put things like the Order Paper and the Votes and Proceedings, those kind of things, on a bulletin board so the constituency offices can dial in and eventually the public can dial in. We would hope to charge for that kind of service. That's the kind of thing that we're working on in order to . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Charge to who?

DR. McNEIL: To the public. To the users.

MS HALEY: To constituency offices?

DR. McNEIL: Well, no, not to the constituency offices. That would be part of sort of a common service that the Assembly provides to members and their staff, and that's what this budget is for: to provide a common service to members and staff. Anybody who wants that service who is not a member or staff we think should pay for it.

MRS. MIROSH: I don't have a problem with that. What I'm concerned about for the next three years is a lot of these computers – and I'm not a computer expert – reach their capacity before their time. Some members use their computers more than others, and a lot of members put in more data than others. So when or if a member wants to upgrade, whether it be here or whether it be in their constituency office, would this budget reflect that upgrade, or

would it have to come perhaps out of the constituency allowance? I mean, this is going to be information that we will need for our next internal stacking.

DR. McNEIL: The fundamental principle on which the previous committee approved an EDP strategic plan about three years ago and updated about a year and a half ago was to provide enough funds in the information systems budget so that maintenance and upgrading could be done on a regular basis, rather than waiting two or three years and not doing anything and then having to spend a million or \$2 million to replace obsolete equipment. Our philosophy has been to provide enough funds in the budget to upgrade as you go so that there's not going to be a great big spike in your expenditures to upgrade your computer system.

We've changed our standard for computers, for example, from a 286 machine when we first implemented the strategic plan to the point where we've almost reached a point where the standard is a 486. We've done that by allocating the same money for upgrades and maintenance every year. What we're proposing here is to continue doing that, and it's our view that we will be able to maintain that situation so that your computer provides you with what you need. I mean, if some individual member wants to go way beyond what we think the standard needs to be and get a piece of software, for example, that there's not a standard need for, then we think that should be up to the member in his or her constituency to purchase.

There's an EDP management committee that has representatives from each caucus and all the areas of the Legislative Assembly Office that meets on almost a monthly basis to sort of plan the longer term strategy for the development of the system. That's where things like the library system have come into place, certain other things: support systems, the constituency offices where there's a common need for a mailing list system and so on. So with the money that's being proposed in the information systems budget, we expect that we can keep doing what we've been doing, keeping up with the technology, not necessarily leading – because I think sometimes if you try to lead with a technology, you make some bad mistakes – but assessing what's out there, what technology can meet our needs, and then making a collective decision with the management committee and if necessary coming to this committee and saying: this is what we want to do in the longer term. So that information systems projection reflects that philosophy.

11:22

MRS. MIROSH: So what happens to the obsolete equipment? I mean, it's obsolete to us, but it might still be used.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Good anchors, but they're not heavy enough.

MRS. MIROSH: Good anchors.

What do we do with the obsolete equipment?

DR. McNEIL: It's sold through surplus sales, public works.

MRS. MIROSH: So if an MLA wants to purchase it, they can?

MR. WICKMAN: For what price?

DR. McNEIL: The price that public works determines is the market price for that particular printer or computer, things like that.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: On that note, if I can interject for a moment. When public works sells it, do they not put it on bid or on a thing where the public has got just as much chance of picking it up as anybody else?

DR. McNEIL: That's my understanding.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: That was my understanding also.

MRS. MIROSH: It goes to public works for surplus?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. We declare it surplus.

MRS. MIROSH: We pay for it. Do they get the revenue, or does the revenue come back into this budget?

DR. McNEIL: No, they get the revenue.

MRS. MIROSH: We pay for it out of your budget, and when we declare it surplus, public works picks it up, and they keep the revenue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hardly seems fair; does it?

MRS. MIROSH: Hardly seems fair now.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, let me put in a plug for public works now. Through the years public works has often donated old equipment to the blind and disabled that they have been eternally grateful for. If you have somebody in your constituency that's disabled and is trying to go on to a higher education, they may have given to them a computer out of the junk side of the workshop, and they're quite appreciative of them. So they're not as cold blooded as you think.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just to follow up on the information systems side, Dr. McNeil, the strategy of keeping up with the technology I think is excellent. You've talked about both hardware and software. What about peopleware; in other words, training? Do you anticipate that you're going to be able to keep up with training of constituency personnel? When I say constituency personnel, I think that should also extend to the MLAs. I think some MLAs do use them more than others, but I think many MLAs would like to be able to use it more effectively. Of course, time is usually the big problem. What about training for the MLAs too?

DR. McNEIL: Part of that budget is an allocation for training.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Have you never had an invitation to go on a course?

MRS. MIROSH: No, we've never been invited.

MR. BRUSEKER: Constituency staff, yes.

DR. McNEIL: It's available to MLAs as well as staff.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I've been on two courses.

DR. McNEIL: The funds are there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You just have to ask, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: And find the time to go on the course.

DR. McNEIL: You know, I must say that with the influx of 49 new members, the general level of computer sophistication and knowledge increased quite markedly. There were increased demands on the information systems staff initially in terms of a guy wanting to get a laptop or "I'd like to find out whether I can get this

software” and so on. So there is an increasing demand just because of an increasing level of sophistication on the part of the members for the use of those services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything further? Mrs. Mirosch.

MRS. MIROSH: I just want to talk about the billing costs in your revenues. When we've charged for *Hansard* and any services that you're now going to be anticipating charging back to whomever uses your services, in your experience over the last two, three years when we started billing these out, has the demand gone down because we've charged it back? Have people quit using the service?

DR. McNEIL: Well, in terms of things like *Hansard* our subscriptions have gone down over time, yes. We haven't had an increase for at least two or three years for *Hansard*. I think there's a different market out there, though, for things like electronic access to information, especially in terms of certain professional groups like lawyers and so on. Depending on the pricing, I think we can generate additional demand.

On the other hand, if we talk about souvenirs and things like that – you know, 85,000 people come through this building every year. When you go to any tourist area – Banff, whatever – and you can see the amount of money that people spend on souvenirs, it seems to me that there's an opportunity unrealized here to a large extent to this point to generate some revenue.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. I notice that most of the other provinces have a gift shop.

DR. McNEIL: Well, we have a gift shop in the interpretive centre, but that's not where most of the people come. So part of our plan is to have an outlet in this building too.

MRS. MIROSH: Just one more question on revenues. With regards to legal people or whoever wants to inquire about ongoing legislation, this is now given to them for free. Any information that they need to acquire from you is all supplied. The service outside this building is supplied to you for nothing. Is that right?

DR. McNEIL: I think generally speaking, yeah.

MRS. MIROSH: And this is a service that you now feel – if I work for a law firm and I want to find out . . .

DR. McNEIL: Well, we don't provide *Hansard* for free, for example, to the law firms. People subscribe to the House document service. We feel that there is more likely to be a need, for example, in the law firm in a specific period of time just to find out what's on the Order Paper, what Bills are going through the House, the Votes and Proceedings in terms of what happened, or electronic access to *Hansard*. With electronic access you have the ability to interrogate and search through the document, and you don't have to leaf through it. So in terms of time saving and so on for some of these organizations I think that would be significant.

MRS. MIROSH: And that's something that you're going to put a price tag on.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. We don't know what that price tag will be. I suspect that what our initial price is may be different than what our longer term price is just in terms of getting into that market, if you will.

MRS. MIROSH: Is that reflected on this? Is that anticipated revenue reflected under revenues?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, it is, but I would say it's a very conservative estimate of the revenues because we really don't have a good sense of the market yet.

MR. BRASSARD: Did I understand you to say that we had touched on visitor services photos that are taken?

MR. CHAIRMAN: School groups?

MR. BRASSARD: Yeah, school groups. I know we pay for them out of our constituency allowance. You're not thinking of doing away with them altogether?

DR. McNEIL: You pay for part of them under your constituency allowance.

MR. BRASSARD: Oh, we only cover part of the cost.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. I think that's something that is better discussed with Gary in terms of the detail, as to whether there are alternatives to that or whether that's something the members don't want to happen.

MR. BRASSARD: I just wanted a clarification. That is on the table, so we'll get into that in depth when we get to that. I have no trouble with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything further before moving to the next?

MRS. MIROSH: Does that come under the Assembly, or does that come under our constituency?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Both.

MRS. MIROSH: Both. So it's in two budgets.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. In terms of the specific budget line, though, it's in the public information branch budget in terms of the funds that the Legislative Assembly Office provides. In your constituency office it's just part of the global dollar figure that you're provided.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, might I suggest we get into the detail in departmental? We're starting now to ask questions that we'll come to as we go through the individual departments and divisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. That concludes our first cut at overview and maybe our last cut.

The next item will then be caucus budgets.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, in light of the time I was just wondering if we could break for lunch now, because the caucus budgets are going to take probably some time and then the agenda will take some time. Would you entertain a motion for a break for lunch and come back around 1 o'clock, 1:15?

11:32

MR. CHAIRMAN: At 1 o'clock instead of 1:30 because we're stopping an hour before we anticipated. The committee is the master of its own hours. There's a proposal that we adjourn now for lunch to return at 1 p.m., an hour and a half from now.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'd sooner wait, but I guess some people haven't had breakfast.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, we also have some other work that has to get done before that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Is there agreement to that proposal?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, it's probably the only time I'll agree with her all day, so yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There appearing to be a general consensus in that area, the committee will now adjourn until 1 p.m.

[The committee adjourned from 11:34 a.m. to 1:04 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The chair sees a quorum. It's four minutes past the hour. We'll call the committee to resume its consideration of the 1994-95 budget, which begins with the caucus budgets. There are two sections to that, the government members and the Official Opposition services. Is the wish to proceed with the first part of that now, the government?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, if we could come and go. When we talk about government members, unless I'm wrong in this, it is the same allocation to opposition members – is that correct? – on a per member basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe so. It's at \$45,100 per head.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So whatever we discuss with respect to the government members would obviously be the same thing with the opposition members, because we couldn't really make two sets of rules. The exception being, however, that the opposition members have something called a reader's lounge or whatever; is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So if the committee is agreeable, we would discuss this in two parts. When we discuss the private members' allowance, that would include all private members, both government and opposition, and then since the other item is a stand-alone item, we'll discuss that one separately.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a third one on the Official Opposition side, and that's the Calgary caucus office. But there is the per capita, which is the same for both caucuses.

MR. BRUSEKER: So you're suggesting that we take out both pages at the same time and look at them side by side.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just the parts, Frank, that deal with the per head allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The private members' allowance.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right.

The very last column on those two pages is the 1993-94 forecast column. Is there a reason why there is no figure in that column? It just says zero.

DR. McNEIL: We don't presume to provide forecasts for moneys that are expended by the caucuses. Based on historical records each caucus spends almost their total allocation each year, so I think you

could predict that that forecast would be very similar to what the estimate is.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right.

DR. McNEIL: Those funds, just for information, are allocated for the operation of the caucuses on a per member basis. That \$45,100 allocation was allocated in 1992-93 at that level and in '93-94.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Correct me if I'm wrong. Then we'd be likely at this point just as far ahead to discuss the \$45,100 allocation as opposed to global numbers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It comes to the same thing. I don't know if the chair has missed anything, but in order to get a target for the whole thing, is the aim to reduce this by 20 percent?

DR. McNEIL: That's up to the committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But in order to get at the global figure, is that going to be required?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I guess after a discussion of this committee, we'll see where it all falls out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But so far there's been no reduction from '92-93.

DR. McNEIL: Just to add to that, if you look at the three-year draft budget that's provided in the first section, the overview, the total '94-95 projected change from the base year actual with that adjustment factor built in to compensate for the fact that there are now nine additional private members, we project a 6.81 percent decrease from that base.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Six point eight per capita?

DR. McNEIL: This is for the total dollar allocations of caucus budgets. Now, it's difficult to relate to the individual caucus budgets because last year's budget had a third-party leader's allowance and third-party members and so on. Globally in terms of the numbers in here for caucus expenditures compared to the 1992-93 actuals, it reflects a 6.81 percent reduction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So in order to get the overall 20, it's going to be 15.2 percent to be bit off.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No, not really. You see, here's something that we have to keep in mind. No matter how we stirred the pot in '92-93, when it came to private members . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was \$45,100.

MR. WOLOSHYN: And the only other variables that would enter into the picture would be the number of private members, which has increased because of the decrease in the size of the cabinet. Also, there has been a rental placed in there. The only other variable that we can look at is the opposition's surcharge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the elimination of the third party.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, yes, but what I'm saying to you is it was the private members who made up that whole thing. They were all the same multiplier. Now, we had in 1992-93 two different

opposition extras, and that was the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRUSEKER: And Whips and House leaders.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's not in this particular section.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, okay. Yes, you're right; you're correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, basically it comes down to the \$45,100. The members feel that they will be able to contribute to financial restraint by reducing \$45,100 to something else.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, that's what's on the table, Mr. Chairman. The \$45,100 applies to each member including cabinet ministers, and then in the opposition you have the leader's allowance.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, not including cabinet ministers.

MRS. MIROSH: I'm sorry. Excluding cabinet ministers, but you've got a leader's allowance here. He is paid the same as a cabinet minister but he's in this budget.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. We agreed for discussion purposes, or at least I suggested, that we talk about numbers. The \$45,100 allocation applies to both parties, and then we discuss the other allowance, the opposition leader's allowance, separately as a stand-alone item. Otherwise we'll start factoring in and get the whole thing convoluted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, except for Mrs. Mirosch's suggestion that perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, receiving a cabinet minister's compensation, should be treated like a cabinet minister and not be included in the number of private members.

MRS. MIROSH: Right.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That is a consideration.

MRS. MIROSH: I don't know what budget he should be included in, but it makes a big difference to the overall picture.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's a \$45,100 item as it stands now.

MRS. MIROSH: Does that \$45,100 include the leader's \$45,000 too?

MR. WOLOSHYN: No.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay.

MS HALEY: Well, yes, it does.

MRS. MIROSH: He gets an additional \$45,100 to his salary, because that's just salary.

DR. McNEIL: No, that's not his salary. That's an allocation from the caucus. That has nothing to do with salary.

MS HALEY: As an MLA his \$45,100 is included in that top line.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No.

MS HALEY: Yes, it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Let's let the Clerk try to explain.

DR. McNEIL: For the government members' budget the private members' allowance is based on the number of private members in the government caucus. For the Official Opposition the number of private members is based on the number of private members in the Official Opposition caucus including the leader.

1:14

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition is included as a private member?

DR. McNEIL: Right.

MR. WOLOSHYN: But this has nothing to do with salaries. It's caucus budgets.

DR. McNEIL: No. It's caucus budgets; nothing to do with salaries.

MRS. MIROSH: I just want to clarify something, though. We're talking about people right here in this building, but in this budget that I'm seeing, you have the private members' allowance, and you've determined how many private members there are that draw these.

MR. WOLOSHYN: We're looking at the opposition.

MRS. MIROSH: We're looking at both, side by side. We've got a leader's allowance in government that is zero. We have a leader's allowance that has a figure.

MR. WOLOSHYN: In opposition.

MRS. MIROSH: Then we have a Calgary caucus office that has a figure, and we have on the government side nothing. Then we look at the '92-93 base, and we're going to bring this down according to the '92-93 base, which in actual fact we can't because there are so many variables that occurred from that base number, as you have explained, Mr. Chairman, because the third party no longer exists. So for this particular section you brought up the number of minus 20 across the board. We can't really look at minus 20 because look at the variances. When you look at these variances, what are we looking at?

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's exactly why I stated in the beginning that we stick with members and the multiplier and deal with the variables, which is the various leaders' allowances, as a separate item. Okay? So when we talk about this, we can go from taking the members' allocation of \$45,100 and go up, down, stay the same, whatever. That's using a multiplier. The question you arrived at that I think should be thrashed out is: in view of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition gets an extra allowance, should he be counted as a part of the multiplier? That's a very, very good point, because if on the one side all the cabinet is excluded and we still have to come up with a budget, then we have in effect on the other side — and I appreciate your bringing it up, Dianne — one extra factor, one \$45,000 top-up.

Now, when we decide those two things, how much that number is going to be, in effect we will have decided the government members' caucus budget in total, because we don't have any extras. After that, there's a long-standing tradition that the opposition has, for whatever reasons, extra moneys that are identified as the leader's allowance. We then determine that number based on the '92-93 for the Official



Opposition, I would suppose, since there is no third party, and then under there, as you identified, the need for or whether there should be the existence of an additional earmarked \$55,000 for rent. That's what we sort of have to sort out when we talk about caucus budget.

So we've got to decide on the number for the caucus, on the number of people qualifying. The government member one is quite clear: if you're not a cabinet minister, you qualify; if you're a cabinet minister, you're out to lunch. On the opposition side, if we're going to apply the same rules, the leader doesn't qualify for the multiplier. Up until this point, as I understand the Clerk telling us, he was in there. I don't know, but his global numbers are all over the place.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I really don't like where this seems to be going. There has been a tradition for a number of reasons. There are various factors in there as to why the leader's allowance is separate and why the leader is considered as part of the private members even though from a salary point of view he gets extra money equivalent to a cabinet minister. Nevertheless, there are the two resources that have always been provided: the leader's allowance very specifically and the research part, which is part of the overall caucus. Now, if you start stripping away the one, you in fact are going to reduce the Liberal opposition caucus budgeting considerably more in relationship to the government caucus budgeting.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, we're just talking about clarification here when we're talking about reduction, because the chairman had made reference that we're looking at a 20 percent across-the-line reduction. On the Liberal caucus budget, when we're talking about a caucus as a whole, we have in the past – that's right – included the Leader of the Opposition. I assume here by the reduction from – well, I see an increase in the leader's allowance, where everybody else took a salary reduction. Is this leader's allowance his salary?

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. Please do not bring in – that's what I've tried to make a point of: there is no salary in here.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay. So this leader's allowance is for what then? This is just for his expense.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. That's the opposition caucus budget to do with as they see fit. That's why their budget is going to be higher than ours. So if we stick on the base, which is \$45,100, and address that, what we agree on there is equal to both sides; correct, Percy? Then the extra allowance is an extra debate.

MRS. MIROSH: And then there's yet another one: a Calgary caucus office, which we've never had.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Dianne, if you could rely on my gray hair a little bit, I'll explain it. It didn't used to be called a leader's allowance. It was a party allowance, whatever it is. When anybody is elected, either in government or in the opposition of course, it was felt some years ago that MLAs should not depend on their caucus leader or their government leader, that they have their independent right to a certain amount of money for research in the system. You may pool it, you may keep it out, and everything else, and that's what the \$45,100 is, whether you pool it all and use it to help your leader or not. Then over and above that, it was felt that the leader of an opposition party – the government party has access to cabinet and the government's resources but the leader of a second or third or fourth or fifth party doesn't, so they should get an allowance to do a little more research, not the leader but the whole party in itself. So

it's not really a leader's allowance. An opposition party allowance would be a better term for it.

That, of course, historically, when we came up with it a number of years ago, has been put together by averaging other jurisdictions, everybody realizing, "Well, we may be leader this time; we may not be next election," and so on and so forth. We tried to average it out. But what it is is the party's research budget and administration budget over and above each individual MLA's. Some MLAs – I'm thinking of the old Independents – used to take their own out, you know, do their own. So that left the leader. The leader, or whoever, his party, has got to have something that corresponds to the cabinet's access, not shown in the budget, to the department's money. So that's why they're two entirely different things.

We're talking about MLAs now. That's the only question I have. They're \$45,100 in '94-95 and \$45,100 in '93-94. How come there's no change there? They seem to be exactly the same.

MRS. MIROSH: Because it's for this table to decide. The Clerk of the Assembly doesn't decide what our caucus budget reduction is. We decide at this table.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No. I mean, I'm just going on estimates.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I understand it, this is just perpetuating what has happened last year and is subject to change this year.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oh, I see. So I think it's a fair amount. We're going to get into these amounts discussions. It depends on what other provinces are doing and so on and so forth. We want to redo that.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, I guess maybe we should just take that out and look at the total picture.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah. Well, I think that's what your House leader is suggesting: let's forget about it; just let's talk about the MLAs' allowances for the time being.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The \$45,100 is the figure that affects the people in this building that you've been speaking about.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. I know that.

MR. N. TAYLOR: More so than anything else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah.

MRS. MIROSH: It's just that in this budget there are some extra things that are in the opposition budget that aren't in the government's.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, that's not quite true either. If you want to start factoring in all of the ministerial allowances, including that for the Premier – I mean, this figure shows zero, but let's face it: there's a lot more to the story than what's on this line.

MRS. MIROSH: No. Our leader gets nothing out of this budget.

MR. BRUSEKER: So you start factoring in ministerial allowances and so on . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, maybe their leader's allowance should be in the cabinet ministers' allowance. I don't know. It's where it is now, but maybe it should be with the cabinet ministers. I don't

know. As the House leader says, let's just do the private members' allowance first.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: We'll get to that discussion later.

1:24

MR. CHAIRMAN: The key figure here is \$45,100.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Is that broken down anywhere?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you look at the thing, it says: private members' allowance at \$45,100. That's what it says under tab 10. It's the first page after tab 10. I think you've got it there: private members' allowance at \$45,100.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. I see that. There's no sense in breaking that down, or is there?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You multiply \$45,100 by the number of members. You get a lump sum of money. In this case based on \$45,100 for the government side it's \$1,488,300. Then that caucus decides how it's going to spend that money.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, isn't it up to us to decide what the caucus gets?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's it.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's what I'm saying. Is there any discussion paper behind the \$45,100?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's hard to come to a discussion paper, Mr. Taylor, when it is a function of the number of members, which is fixed, and \$45,100 or whatever.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I was just thinking what other jurisdictions, what other provinces do for an allowance. I'm just wondering if there is any . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: In other jurisdictions what is the figure? Is it \$45,000? Is it \$50,000? Is it \$35,000? Is it \$25,000? Do we have any idea?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we don't even know their structure, I don't think.

DR. McNEIL: Just a general observation. It's all over the map in terms of how they budget.

MRS. MIROSH: Ours is – what? – 31, and their's is what?

DR. McNEIL: Yours is 33.

MRS. MIROSH: We are 33?

DR. McNEIL: The number of private members is 33, as it says there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You just have to look at the material.

DR. McNEIL: Thirty-two under tab 11.

MRS. MIROSH: So we're almost equal there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Almost the same.

MS HALEY: With respect, as a new member on the committee to clarify the \$45,100, it's not like each member of a caucus gets handed their cheque for \$45,100 and is told to supply something. It includes the Leg. assistants; it includes research. It's all of those things that are being paid for. Correct so far?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MS HALEY: So I guess what we have to decide, then, is: what percentage do we look at this in light of? On a per member basis? It's easier to look at it on a per member basis.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it might be useful if the Clerk could give us a list of things that are paid out of this pool of money, starting I guess with secretaries' salaries, and then we might have a better idea of where it goes.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I think, Mr. Chairman, there's one reason why it's all lumped in together, and that is because that caucus doesn't want us to know their divvying up. Whether they're spending it on copiers or whatever, that's their business, the same as ours. I think the best thing that we can say is that, first of all, an individual member as a member is not entitled to that number. It's not that you've got it in your name. That's a convenient multiplier to assign money to a caucus.

Having said that, whether it be on the opposition side or on this side, every activity that goes on dealing with members away from their constituency office of a nonpersonal nature, which is a different category under MLA administration that is dealt with by the Whip or the House leader or whoever, comes out of that pot. When the pot's dry, we're in trouble. That would include all staff in the building that are here, not in the constituency office, all your supplies. Some in the opposition I would gather would probably go out and hire pollsters. Whatever they want to do, that's their business, and we do ours. In order to be fair, it's allocated on a per member basis because it deals with private members. Is that not the understanding we have here?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, I think that's a good description.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's just used as a method of determining how much the whole caucus gets: 41, 33, 38, 58. So it's \$45,100. I think there should be a cut of some sort from the \$45,100 per member. I'm not sure just how much.

MR. BRUSEKER: What was the allocation last year? Was it still \$45,100 the last fiscal year?

DR. McNEIL: It was \$45,100, and the year before that as well; \$45,100.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: That \$45,100, Frank, works well because we have to do everything and tie it back to '92-93, and \$45,100 was the '92-93 figure, so that makes it just super.

MR. BRASSARD: It's a common denominator.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Yeah. That way no matter what we do with it, we don't have to seasonally adjust it or anything. If we start working with the global numbers, then, heck, we could be all over the place because there were changes in midyear, changes all over. It's a matter that when we decide on that factor, we'll know where we're heading.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could I pursue that just a little bit then? Dr. McNeil, the overall target is a 20 percent reduction. If we were to leave this at \$45,100 as proposed on this page, how does that tie into the overall Legislative Assembly three-year draft budget in achieving the 20 percent cut?

DR. McNEIL: Well, it's easier to talk about it in terms of our targeted 10 percent this year.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Talk about it in those terms then.

DR. McNEIL: If it was left as it is now, you'd need to get another \$750,000 or so to achieve 10 percent, so that would mean getting that out of MLA administration or any other budget.

MR. BRUSEKER: Can you tie for me these two pages that we're looking at at the back to the three-year draft budget so that I understand? Which line item is it on the three-year draft budget?

DR. McNEIL: Okay. If you look under independent members' services.

MR. BRUSEKER: Under the administration? Is it all under 10B?

DR. McNEIL: No, it's under 10E and 10F. You've got government members, \$1,488,300, and the proposed Official Opposition, \$1,855,200. That total represents a 6.81 percent decrease from the adjusted base year actual, remembering that we put in that adjustment factor to reflect the fact that the '92-93 budget only allowed for 56 members instead of 65. So to make the comparison equivalent . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, would it be okay for me to move that we just adopt what's under the budget here, down 6.8?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess the chair would say to the committee that if a member of the committee wants to make a motion, it can be made, and then the committee will dispose of it.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I just think that the \$45,100 has been reduced to – I can't see what it would be, though. If you factor it in, if we take 10E and 10F with your '94-95 estimate, wouldn't that be a reduction of about 6 percent?

DR. McNEIL: The overall reduction in the caucus budget using those numbers as they sit now from the '92-93 base year with that adjustment that I talked about would be 6.8 percent.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Now, if we reduced the overall caucus budget 6.8, don't we in turn reduce every \$45,100 by 6.8?

DR. McNEIL: No. That's at the \$45,100 level.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's the \$45,100, after the 6.8?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. BRUSEKER: So what you're saying is that if we reduce the \$45,100 by 3.2 percent, we'd achieve the overall 10 percent objective for this year.

DR. McNEIL: Well, no. You'd have to do that to the leader's allowance as well that you're proposing.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, we could do that too. I mean, we've got to start somewhere.

MR. WOLOSHYN: If I can take you back . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Pardon?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just stick with that number.

MR. BRUSEKER: Which number?

MR. WOLOSHYN: The \$45,100. Now, that determines all of our budget and most of your budget. If we stay away from the global kinds of things and decide at this table whether we should be at what number for a reduction, then we don't have to necessarily adopt the motion as such. We can give the Clerk some time to get back and do impacts on us.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What I was going to do was make a motion to reduce it 4.39 percent just the way it is here.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That would then beg the question: are we then prepared to go – if you took that budget and reduced every line by 20 percent over three years, we'd have our 20 percent objective. So if we go 4 percent this year, what do we do next year? Sixteen?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, here it says that next year we do 4.39.

*1:34*

MR. WOLOSHYN: That was a projection that they didn't have any information on. We're comparing '92-93 to now, because our whole tie-in is '92-93. The numbers that we have this year aren't even that helpful. I'd love them to be this year's numbers, if you will, but that's beyond our reach because this whole exercise is gauged around a denominator called 1992-93. The one thing that I'm very pleased with is that by accident or whatever that denominator of \$45,100 has stayed constant for two years. Had it gone up, we would really have been going after numbers on our caucus budgets.

So I guess what I'm trying to suggest to us is that we just focus in this room here on the committee agreeing as to how much of a percentage, then, the caucus budget less the leader's allowance, or whatever you want to call that thing, can realistically take given that it will impact equally on both sides of the House and also given the fact that after we're finished all this for this year, we somehow have to be comfortable that the goal we're going after is achievable down the road. I would like to sit here and say as Whip and responsible for the government members' budget, "Give me an increase," but that's not realistic. Zero would be beautiful too, but that also is not realistic. The struggle that I have, in fairness to all concerned and involved here, is: what is a realistic, livable number for all of us that comes down from \$45,100 as the multiplier, keeping in mind that that's just a multiplier and that's the only way you can see it on an overall budget number, whatever?

MR. BRUSEKER: So going back to that three-year draft budget, it seems that with our restructuring, we will achieve a reduction of 4.17 percent just with the restructuring we've done so far. Is that correct?

DR. McNEIL: No. You're looking in '93-94.

MR. BRUSEKER: That's right. I'm looking at the base year, '92-93 actual, and then two columns over there's the 1993-94 percentage change. The column there says minus 4.17 percent. So with our restructuring we will in effect realize some savings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the elimination primarily of the third party leader's allowance that caused that reduction; isn't it?

MR. BRUSEKER: Nonetheless there is a reduction.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MRS. MIROSH: But there's a projected increase in '95.

DR. McNEIL: But in terms of the 1994-95 change from the base year, the way the numbers are presented right now, there's a 6.8 percent decrease from that base year, based on the \$45,100 per member plus the leader's allowance and the Calgary caucus office allowance proposal that you have in your proposed caucus budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think what we have to do is keep in mind that Members' Services here and what it encompasses is no different than a department like environment, public works, whatever. One attempts to achieve a certain reduction on a global basis overall. From what I understand in the opening comments, in comparison to last year's figures and building in certain factors, if we adopted everything as is, we would achieve a reduction of 26 percent over the three-year period. Now, we look at that as a foundation, and then from there we start going, making our adjustments, not necessarily a 20 percent line-by-line reduction.

Just like any government department we would have to prioritize in here what's most important to us as Members of the Legislative Assembly. For example, the constituency budget is the most important to me because I think that's the most important to the electorate that put us here. That's the contact point for them. Next to that I start looking at the caucus budget, particularly from our point of view, because we are the opposition party that has to do the research to look at what government is doing and so on and so forth. So those resources become vital. I don't necessarily agree with an approach that we just go right across the board. I think what we have to do here now is just determine what reduction in terms of priorities there should be in terms of the individual private members' allowance of \$45,100. I agree with the Member for Stony Plain that we have to look at that in isolation and that we have to say: there has to be some type of reduction. It's a question of what that reduction is, but it should not be 20 percent in my opinion.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I'm having a little difficulty wrapping my head around what kind of proposal we should be making, because the draft budget we see here has two separate pages. On one page I see an overall reduction of 26.04 percent proposed.

DR. McNEIL: That's the first page.

MR. BRUSEKER: That's the first page only, I understand, and then the total gross expenditure for the second page has a reduction of 7.53. Would it be possible to get a third page that amalgamates all of the reductions, so we have some idea of what . . .

DR. McNEIL: It does. That gross amalgamates the first page.

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, this is total gross expenditures. So what you're saying is that what we've got right now is a reduction of 7.53 percent on the whole package under administration.

MR. BRASSARD: Two pages.

MR. BRUSEKER: For the two pages.

DR. McNEIL: So what it means is that – and it's better to look in terms of the net because what we're doing is net budget expenditures. From the base of \$22,743,723 we project in terms of what we've proposed in the first part that I gave an overview of this morning and these other numbers on the second page here that by 1996-97 we'd have a total reduction of 7.7 percent. But as I also said this morning, we did not make any proposals with respect to reductions in either the caucus budgets or the MLA administration budgets.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So if I understand you, Dr. McNeil, minus 26 becomes minus 7 over a three-year period if we leave zeros in what we're talking about now.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly.

MRS. MIROSH: Holy cow. You're telling us that we have to find 15 percent in MLA administration and caucus?

DR. McNEIL: No. There's still the whole budget that has to be reduced by that. It's up to the committee to decide in the final analysis where those reductions should be allocated.

MR. BRUSEKER: So it's the other 12.3.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If you can do 4 or 5 percent per year, then do it.

DR. McNEIL: Those two, the caucus budgets and the MLA administration budget, make up about 60 percent of the overall budget.

MRS. MIROSH: So this committee should decide, I guess, whether we want to do the big hit the first year and then zero, zero or whether we should do 5, 5, 5, or 6, 6, 6, whatever it is each year, but we should be looking at three years like everybody else. So when you presented your overall budget, you presented us with the big hit the first year. That's what you're looking at.

DR. McNEIL: That's what we're looking at. The committee gave us a target of 10 percent that first year as being the big hit, but we've done more than that. The target was 10 percent.

MRS. MIROSH: So it's less painful the next two years.

MS HALEY: Just a question with respect to the numbers that we're seeing here: is there any recognition of the pension plan being removed?

MR. BRASSARD: We haven't got into that yet.

DR. McNEIL: But it's reflected in those numbers in MLA administration. When we go through that in detail, it's a line item.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If we reduce 5 percent on this thing per year plus the fact that the pension plan administration is gone plus the third party is gone and a few others, we do come out with 20 percent.

MR. BRUSEKER: If you went 5, 4, 4 plus the 7.7, you're going to be just over 20 percent.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Where do you get 7.7, Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: The net expenditures figure here.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Yeah, but don't forget that that thing varies depending upon what factor you're applying to what portion, and it's very significant that it drops from 26 to 7 whatever if you take out the part we're responsible for. If you take the simplest kind of arithmetic, if we were going to gun for, say, 25 percent as what happened on the first page, we'd say: in MLA administration, however we arrived at it, and the caucus budgets slot in 26 percent in three years, and everything would stay even. If we go more, they end up looking better on the overall. If we go less and we don't have enough of a cushion when that happens, it's a smaller half.

MR. WICKMAN: See, there's the other factor too, if I could, Mr. Chairman. For example, when you have a reduced cabinet, it means in some budget along the line wherever cabinet ministers have their budgets, in their departments, when you put all those together, it's going to show reductions in that area. That automatically means increases in this area because with less cabinet ministers you have more private members; with more private members you have more items like caucus research money charged against this particular section.

1:44

MR. WOLOSHTYN: That's why I was suggesting from the beginning that we don't go the global figure; we go the factor.

MR. WICKMAN: Exactly. That's right. I agree with you that we should. The first thing we should do is look at this \$45,000 per member and say: what's a sufficient reduction? Our Member for Redwater suggested 4 point . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: I went with 4.3, but I'd round it. Five percent makes it easier. I think that's a reasonable one. It would fit in over the years.

MR. WICKMAN: Otherwise we're going to struggle and struggle and struggle and not be able to put it in relationship to other departments where there are other factors as a result of the restructuring of government.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's not written in stone. If we go with 5 percent now and we come down to the end and we haven't done enough, we can go back and nibble away here and there on the block of cheese again. I'm just saying: let's get started on the debate. Five percent seems to run in line. If we do the 5 percent, factor that in, see what the others look like, at the end I think it'll come out all right.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: So what you're suggesting, Nick, for the sake of terminating this circular discussion, just so I understand you clearly: we'll take for now a tentative, nonmotion 5 percent after \$45,100, work through the rest of the thing, and if it's insufficient, we'll go back and lower it some more. If we've got too much, we'll bring it back up.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, exactly.

MRS. MIROSH: So we're talking about 65 members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: \$42,845.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I don't know the history. I have to be careful. I might ask the Clerk to research the rationale – I don't want to get into the thing and end up making statements that I'm going to have to be withdrawing another day – behind a leader of the opposition party or parties, as it were, because this came up in '82, who both

received treatment as if they were ministers of the Crown on one hand in that their personal pay, which is not in this budget, was adjusted in that they had extra leaders' budgets attached to their offices because they were different, and then for the sake of the multiplier all of a sudden they were private members. There may be a very good reason for that, but I don't know what it is. The difference, the whole significant impact on all this would be that if in fact something were to say, "Oops, we've been making the wrong calculation all these days," then the opposition budget would be in the overall global picture reduced by the multiplier of one times \$45,100 or \$42,000 or whatever we arrive at.

MR. N. TAYLOR: As a point of information, that came about – I was on the committee in those days – when we had one- and two-people oppositions, when we had an opposition that was down to a couple of seats.

MRS. MIROSH: When you were on it, there were even two from the Representative Party.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I like that. Would you keep going, Nick? That sounds interesting.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, as I said, if you get down to an opposition that's only got a couple of people, if you take the leader out of the caucus, then you can run into quite a problem. You don't come anywhere close to having enough money to operate an opposition if it's only got two or three people in it. So that's why the opposition budget at that time, or the leader's budget, if you want to call it that – it wasn't called the leader's. It was just called first party, second party, or third party, because as a matter of fact we didn't even know who was going to be the leader. They talked about splitting the allowance at one time. It was just to compare with other provinces what a leader of an opposition group gets over and above the other MLAs, and that's when we came up with this average. It doesn't say it can't be changed, and maybe for another meeting the Clerk would have a list of what other opposition leaders get across Canada, and we could put in what other opposition leaders get for their own office budgets.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: So actually, if I understand you correctly, Nick – and again I'm just paraphrasing – out of compassion, if that's the right word, or understanding or need the best way to put in a bit of extra money for a very small opposition party was to say: for the purposes of a calculation because you are a small party, we'll give you an extra count of one plus your thing.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, no. You always were counted in as opposition. It goes back to the traditional idea – and I think the Speaker's mentioned it time and again when it comes to question period philosophy – that you're not parties asking questions; you're individual MLAs in the House, and so therefore everyone has a right to ask. Well, that was the same way in this allowance budget. If there did become a fight in a party, not in the government party but in any party, suppose a leader had a two-person opposition and they didn't like each other, well, this was the way you decided. This was the way the Speaker stayed out of the mess: \$45,100 goes to one; \$45,100 goes to the other one, "So don't bother me if you can't get along." So this is the whole idea. It not only is a counter, but it's to allow opposition parties, if they get very small and very fractured, to do that. Who knows? That happened to the Conservatives on the national scene. They would love to have a budget like this.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: That's a good point.

MR. N. TAYLOR: So I think we have some support to try the 5 percent. Let's run it through and then come back to it. Could I also, because it might aid and abet discussion – I know the Clerk did it a few years ago – get some sort of a list of what opposition leaders' allowances are in half a dozen provinces?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we can undertake to try to get whatever we can, with a background on the opposition leader being included.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, could we take a brief break? I think there are all kinds of figures floating around here, and I'd just like to get them clear in my mind. Could we take a five-minute break?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any objection to that?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee will reassemble at 2:05 p.m.

[The committee adjourned from 1:51 p.m. to 2:04 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: This committee will now resume its deliberations on the 1994-95 budget estimates relating to private members. When we adjourned, there was an unofficial suggestion that the \$45,100 figure be reduced by 5 percent. Maybe the Clerk could tell us how that would affect the global budget so far.

DR. McNEIL: Well, just in terms of that particular caucus budget grouping, if that \$45,100 were reduced by 5 percent, that would mean the subtotal there, which now reads 6.81, would read approximately minus 11.

MRS. MIROSH: Percent?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: And that's leaving the leader's allowance as is?

DR. McNEIL: That's leaving the leader's allowance as it's proposed and the Calgary caucus office as it's proposed. That would make this minus 11.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay; leaving the opportunity for the Calgary space in there as well. So taking all those factors into consideration, we . . .

MR. BRASSARD: No, no, no. We're not talking about that at all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those are separate subjects.

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. I'm looking at the 6.8. Does the 6.81 percent reduction as shown here now include the Leader of the Opposition's allowance and the space in Calgary?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, it does? Okay; good. So by deducting 5 percent from the Members' Services the per caucus member allowance of \$45,000, leaving the others as is, we achieve a reduction in that category of minus 11.

MRS. MIROSH: Overall.

MR. WICKMAN: Overall.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Could I ask a question? Remember all our deliberations for percentages, if they have any meaning, have to tie back to the '92-93 actual. If we reduce by that suggested 5 percent, what does it do to '92-93? Is it 11 percent being cut to that?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, we reach that number.

MR. BRASSARD: So it's 11 percent against the '92-93.

DR. McNEIL: Yeah, the base year, as we've adjusted it with that factor to reflect a number of them.

MR. WOLOSHYN: And that base year, you're not suggesting putting members in; right?

DR. McNEIL: That's just the caucus budgets.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Okay.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It gives a good start.

MR. WICKMAN: That's a good start for year one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh had something too.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, I just would like to move on to the MLA administration, because everything we do with one reflects on the other.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you want us to leave this area now and move to MLA administration? Is there agreement there?

MRS. MIROSH: And then we'll come back to it.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. But can we have an understanding that that's what we're targeting?

MRS. MIROSH: We're not taking any motions but just moving along with what Mr. Taylor said, because it's a start. What we do there in the next, MLA administration, reflects what happens with this budget and vice versa.

MR. BRASSARD: You want to go to MLA administration now?

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Sure; okay.

MRS. MIROSH: I think we should just leave the other alone right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Should we get a little overview of this as to what we're dealing with? Could we ask the Clerk to introduce this?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Is this number 1 we're talking about?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's tab 9. Would the committee like an introduction, or would you just like to start in?

MRS. MIROSH: Start right in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I've said it many, many times; I'll say it again. In terms of my priorities, in the global picture of services that are provided to MLAs this probably becomes the most important, particularly from the point of view of the constituency budgets. When we talk in terms of the constituency budget, that is the direct access for the electorate. That is the point of communication between us and the electorate. I think we have to bear in mind that as elected persons that has to be the highest priority to us in fulfilling our role as representatives. Secondly, we have to recognize that in rural Alberta there are some very, very distinct, unique factors such as the need in some cases for two, three, possibly even four constituency offices spread around. When we look at those factors, to me that becomes the most important. If there's anything that we leave untouched or we touch marginally, that to me is the one that we treat with kid gloves.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further comments or questions?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm going to ask one question. You refer to the 5 percent that we've taken already in salary. Is that . . .

MRS. MIROSH: That's on here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is essentially expenses.

MR. BRASSARD: We're not talking remuneration; we're talking constituency.

DR. McNEIL: It's all part of this MLA administration budget. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Order please.

DR. McNEIL: If you want to look specifically at the member services allowance, the constituency budgets, that's on page 17.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Page what?

DR. McNEIL: Page 17 of that section.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the last page of this tab.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, there's a difficulty with just jumping there, with looking at it in isolation. The summary page for Legislative Assembly MLA administration by my tabulation shows – correct me if I'm wrong – a decrease of 18.4 percent.

DR. McNEIL: Over the '93-94 estimate.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. What about from the '92-93?

DR. McNEIL: Minus .01 percent. So, in effect, no decrease from the '92-93 actual.

MR. WICKMAN: But in the '93-94 you're looking at minus 18.4.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. That's for two specific reasons: one, the re-establishment allowance that was paid in '93-94; and, two, there were some ex gratia payments paid to caucus members as severance allowances as well.

MR. WICKMAN: Factoring those in, though, in '93-94 you show minus 18.4. Looking at the '92-93 budget, you only show .01.

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, starting on that page, it seems like we've got another per capita figure of \$39,462, which is the biggest item there. That's multiplied by 83 members. So I guess the question is: what could MLAs live with in relation to \$39,462 per head?

MR. WOLOSHYN: In view of what Mr. Wickman has said, wanting to have some time to reflect on that whole constituency budget thing, perhaps that's one of the items that we could address, depending upon how well we do leading up to it. I gather from what you're reading that you're reluctant to delve into that \$39,462. Am I hearing you correctly?

MR. WICKMAN: I would sooner, if necessary, take further reductions in caucus budget, take further reductions in other areas that may be of support to us that are isolated from the constituency office. To me the most important one is the constituency office itself.

MR. WOLOSHYN: So you would agree to just let it sit and then let's see what we have to do to it?

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah.

MRS. MIROSH: Is that including communication and promotional?

MR. WOLOSHYN: No, no, Dianne. That's just page 17 on its own.

MRS. MIROSH: The whole page?

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's just for constituency. Yeah, the whole page. We'd come back and look at it. That would be everything that's administered under your constituency office. Is that correct, Dr. McNeil?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MRS. MIROSH: You want to put that on hold right now and leave it at zero, hold it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: If I heard you correctly too, Percy, you would say that if in this exercise of the other 16 pages we're falling short, if we were going to have a fallback recovery position, from your point of view or your caucus's at this point you would prefer to go to the caucus budget over here as opposed to the constituency budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Uh huh.

MR. BRUSEKER: Before we leave that page, though, if I may, Mr. Chairman, just a couple of comments. I agree with Percy's sentiments wholeheartedly. Of course, with the whole idea of having constituency offices you're facing a budget item that is to a certain extent out of our control in terms of whatever you lease for office space both from an availability and a market price. So there is a difficulty in there that I think we need to be cautious of.

One thing I must confess – and I guess I want to raise a question – under the communication allowances I see a peculiar formula that I must confess I don't understand: 92 cents times 1.587. I take it that's population of electors. I guess my question is that I'm wondering why communication allowances aren't calculated based on the number of households. It doesn't matter whether there's one person or two persons living in the household, you still have to send a flyer or whatever it is to a household. Do we not have statistics on

the number of households in Alberta? Could we not recalculate that based on the number of households?

2:14

MR. BRASSARD: Well, if you followed that along, if you took your suggestion and then came in with half the households that the 1,587,000 represents, would you then want to double the 92 cents, or would you leave the 92 cents as it is?

MR. BRUSEKER: I don't know the answer to that question off the top of my head. I think what you . . . [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess what I'm saying is that it seems to me to be an easier way to calculate it than to do 92 cents times one and a half million folks, divided by 1.5.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the Clerk has some information.

DR. McNEIL: That's what that 1.5 factor does: convert the electors into households.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, it makes an approximation of it. What I'm saying is that it shouldn't be difficult to find out exactly how many households there are instead of having to divide by 1.5.

DR. McNEIL: In each constituency?

MRS. MIROSH: That's how it's done.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, in each constituency.

MR. BRASSARD: Oh, just a minute. No, it is very difficult.

MRS. MIROSH: No. Not household but people.

MR. BRASSARD: Households. Yeah, it's sure a whole lot easier to come up with electorate than households, because you get into: Mr. Brown and Mrs. Brown; you don't know who's married to whom and who's living with whom.

MR. BRUSEKER: You've got residences; you've got addresses.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yes, Frank, that's a really good one. I and my two brothers represent in the whole area, six, eight, 10, 12 electors, but that same address, RR 2, Box 73, represents three households. So unless you came and phoned us up and said, "How many households at this address?" you'd have no way of knowing.

MR. BRASSARD: Not only that. I have people in my constituency where the son, that I want to keep in touch with for whatever reason, is a member of whatever, but the parents are not.

MR. WOLOSHYN: They're still electors though. We're talking about electors.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, that's why they used a 1.5 calculator. They took the electorate, multiplied it by 1.5, and came out with an average. Is that what you said? It's easier than doing an actual physical count.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. It's easier to administer on that basis, and everybody's treated the same.

MS HALEY: With respect, it's pretty close to accurate in my riding when I worked out the calculations. I had a fairly accurate number of households; it was very close with the multiplier and the divider.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'd say it's probably low in mine.

MS HALEY: Low in yours?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah.

MS HALEY: We have a lot of single-person dwellings.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The thing that's important, Frank, is as long as you use the same one for everybody.

MR. BRUSEKER: I just asked the question for clarity's sake, because it seems to me you could do it more clearly.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, just where Frank's coming from. In the urban areas some of us have very high density apartments. Some don't; some have more single families. So our communication allowance is more expensive because we have a lot of high rises, and certain areas in the city of Calgary have more. Certain constituencies have more high rises than others. I think that for member services in practice we've allowed promotional and communication allowances to balance that out so administration didn't have a nightmare with it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: It seems to work, Frank.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. So it's a wash.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Yeah. I just wanted to echo Percy's sentiments, though. To my way of thinking the constituency office is pretty important, because that's often the first line of contact for a lot of folks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there another area of this subject matter that you want to mention?

DR. McNEIL: In the past we've gone through it on a page-by-page basis and dealt with it that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe we should start at the beginning.

MR. WOLOSHYN: How do we reduce page 2, Mr. Chairman?

MRS. MIROSH: That's a good cut: zero.

DR. McNEIL: That's the easiest one.

MR. BRUSEKER: Now, there's no '92-93 actual column on this; is there?

DR. McNEIL: No. You have to tie it back to the three-year draft budget, the MLA administration bottom-line number.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm looking at line 10L; right? Okay. So this one, overall what you're showing is a 2.18 percent increase from the actual to the 1996-97 for that one line?

DR. McNEIL: No. We've got this adjustment. You have to look at the subtotal there, Frank, because of the adjustment factor. As I said, we add an adjustment factor again to reflect the fact that some of these allowances would be impacted by the fact that we now have



65 members instead of 56, which we had in '92-93. So to make a more valid comparison, we added that \$287,145 there. So the subtotal there right now is minus .01 percent from the 1992-93 base.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Now I'm with you. Got you. Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: So we have to go to page 5; eh?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Are we in the MLA administration sector yet?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. Sorry. I was just trying to tie it back to the three-year budget plan, Nick, to what we see on these pages here just so that I have the whole picture.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To make sure that everybody's on the same page, it would be page 5. In the lower left-hand corner of the page is the number of the page.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's got the MLA air travel at the top?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.  
Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, in this particular one here I think we have room for some savings. These are the types of areas where I would prefer to save over the constituency budgets. For example, MLAs at the present time get mileage. I understand that the mileage is less than the employees get, but the benefit we have that the employees don't have is that we also have the fleet card. Has anyone ever done a calculation on if we were to eliminate the fleet cards? In other words, each of us would be responsible to pay for our own gas and oil and that, but then our per mileage would be the same as provincial employees receive. Has anyone done the calculation as to whether that would save us money?

MRS. MIROSH: Can I make a comment here?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: I don't know, Nick, if you were on this committee when we discussed this.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, I was.

MRS. MIROSH: We decided to go to PHH cards, which was one card for one bulk buy. It's my understanding that the government of the day could do a bulk buy a lot cheaper. Plus we're exempt from the GST. It's much easier to take the GST off that one card. Otherwise, you've got a horrendous nightmare of administration of removing GST. It's much cheaper for government to bulk buy. We used to carry around – what? – five different cards, and it was an awful expense, but with this PHH card the government has been able to negotiate a much better deal, less the GST. So it's a savings for us.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Percy's talking about a slightly different system, where we'd get paid more for mileage but pay our own gas and oil. In other words, we won't charge it until we pay our own gas and oil. The big trouble with that, Percy, is that I still don't think it does any saving really, because when you buy your own gas and oil – you know, in downtown Smoky Lake I can hardly arm wrestle with the guys to not pay GST. I've got to pay GST. I try to convince them I don't. So you don't get your GST rebate back. Also, PHH gets a 5 percent reduction. We've got 12 percent that the individual MLA would have to make up. So I think this is the most efficient way of

doing it. I really do. I can see your point, and I'm sure that the press or somebody will always make it out that you're driving, you know, to Vancouver and back on weekends or something and charging the gas.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, you can't use it outside the province.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You can't. But the fact of the matter is that you don't pay GST and you get a wholesale reduction if you charge it all to the government, whereas if you pay your own, that's 12 percent more you've got to pay.

2:24

MRS. MIROSH: It costs more for administrators if they increase the mileage.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, that's the other thing. Then you file a mileage sheet that they argue with all the time.

MR. WOLOSHYN: And you'd be increasing the mileage. So what are your real savings when you take in what you're out of pocket – as you rightly point out, Nick – and then you're taking up the mileage on the other end? So we create a whole bunch of bookkeeping, eliminate a good credit card system, for what?

MR. WICKMAN: Without saving money.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Exactly.

MR. N. TAYLOR: There's one other point, Percy, why we went to it. When you file a mileage, how do you audit the mileage? How does the government audit mileage?

MR. BRUSEKER: I think we're in agreement here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If you just file it, there's no way. I just wanted to mention . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: We're done, Nick. We're all in agreement. Okay. Let's move on.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Okay. Just so I can keep my notes going here. Yes, the PHH card is okay.

What did we do with air travel?

MR. BRUSEKER: We all walk.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No, seriously.

MR. BRUSEKER: You know, there are two categories under here that I'm looking at in particular: MLA former members' travel and MLA spousal/guest travel. Although the numbers are small, I think we could perhaps trim those back.

MS HALEY: Do you think we could eliminate them?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Why don't we just eliminate them and go on?

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Eliminate the spousal/guest travel?

MS HALEY: Yes, and the MLA former members' travel.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, do you want to eliminate it altogether?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yup. We'll get rid of the administration. We get rid of it, and it's gone. It never appears on our books again, and at next year's Members' Services we don't have to discuss it.

MR. BRASSARD: Certainly the former members' has been contentious. There's no question about that. Spousal allowance for the most part happens so infrequently. I don't know how often we use it; I really don't.

MR. BRUSEKER: Other than perhaps for the throne speech or the opening of the House.

MS HALEY: Yeah, but who amongst us couldn't – I brought my sons up, and I didn't claim it.

MR. WICKMAN: Sure. Or else you drive, and they tag along. I agree: strike them both.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay; scrap it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there is general agreement, then I think the chair will ask for a motion from a member relating to each of those.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you want two motions, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Separate motions.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. I will move  
that the MLA former members' travel be eliminated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion? Is the committee ready for the question? All those in favour, please indicate.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I want to ask another question on this page too, and somebody's going to have to respond because . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, could we have the second motion first.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. BRASSARD: I move  
that we eliminate the MLA spousal/guest travel allowance.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Mr. Chairman, just asking a question here because not being a rural member, it's difficult for me to be fully

aware of it. Where we show for bookkeeping purposes – and possibly it's only for bookkeeping purposes – the \$632,000 for 52 return trips from the constituency to the capital: is that figure basically used up, or is that figure there as a maximum if every rural MLA were to go back 52 times?

DR. McNEIL: That's our best estimate as to what the actual expenditure will be. If we added up the potential mileage for 52 return trips and all the constituency mileage, that figure would probably be a million dollars or more.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. I just wanted to be comfortable that that's the actual, not an estimate based on the maximum.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I don't want to cause a problem here, but all the years I've been around – 26 return trips a year to Edmonton seems to me is enough. I don't know who in hell would want to be here more often. Who goes 50? That's one every week to Edmonton. That's a lot of trips. That's automobile coverage.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, let's talk to people from Calgary and other places and see if that's unreasonable.

MRS. MIROSH: If you multiplied 83 members times 52, it'd be a lot higher number, so he's cut it in half.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't know. I mean, it's not being abused anyhow at \$632,000, I guess, but I sort of thought that a trip every two weeks was . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, Nick, that's a good point, but I think if it's not being abused – that's the whole point. I think if it's being abused, then we look at the abuse, but to try to limit the visits to the capital through the mileage thing is not a great way to go. That becomes a different kind of position.

MR. BRUSEKER: On that point, I'd hate to think, for example, that if the chairman of the Members' Services Committee called a meeting in December and I said, "Sorry, Mr. Chairman; I've used up all my mileage; I can't make your meeting," that sort of puts a damper on it.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No, this doesn't have anything to do with the flying. I mean, this is just driving.

MRS. MIROSH: But not everybody can fly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That doesn't go on this budget.

MS HALEY: No, no. But there are people that have no access.

MR. BRUSEKER: So that would be under the committee budgets.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I'll shut up and move on.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, okay. On that same point, though, I have a question. Where is the constituency mileage allocation? Because this is just the return trips Edmonton-Calgary.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's a different budget though.

MR. BRUSEKER: Is that on a different line?

DR. McNEIL: No. Constituency mileage is here as well.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: That's the whole thing, Frank.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That includes that.

DR. McNEIL: That \$632,000 includes the . . .

MRS. MIROSH: So people who live in Edmonton that want to drive to Calgary for whatever reason – Percy, if you came to Calgary you'd get . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Oh, so this is all mileage.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. Okay. You see, I didn't realize that initially.

MRS. MIROSH: It's special trips.

MR. WICKMAN: Now it starts to make sense when you're talking in terms of the constituency.

MR. BRASSARD: Including special trips.

MRS. MIROSH: I put 50,000 kilometres on my car in eight months.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, the administration probably got too much of a hassle there. I didn't realize it was in there. Sorry.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Before we leave that page. I think that when we first started, the airlines wouldn't pool points for airline travel, but shouldn't the points that accrue to travel due to a ticket paid for by the taxpayer accrue to the taxpayers' pool? They used not to have it, but now Air Canada and Canadian will set up a pool so that if you're using the ticket, you can move to that pool.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Are you saying that air miles tickets that are bought by the government should go into the government's name? Air miles? That's what you're talking about?

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's right.

MRS. MIROSH: No, they won't allow it.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The government can do with it as they wish.

MRS. MIROSH: The air miles are kept in your name, and you can't transfer it anywhere.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, you can now.

MRS. MIROSH: Are you sure? I don't think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'd better find out about that. Does the Clerk have any . . .

DR. McNEIL: My understanding is that you cannot pool bonus points collectively; you can collect them on an individual basis and administer them that way. We try to encourage that. There's one possible way to do that, and that's through the use of the enRoute card to book all travel. Using the enRoute card, we could get a report back from enRoute that tells us how many points each member has and can use. As well there's a bonus, I think, attached to using enRoute as far as air miles is concerned with both Canadian and Air Canada. So there's a potential savings, and it's very difficult

to estimate what that savings might be by having everyone pay for their air travel with their enRoute card, which you already have.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, in that light – I get the tickets from your people, which you buy. I hope . . .

DR. McNEIL: We buy in bulk.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do you get a discount? We used to get a substantial discount.

DR. McNEIL: We used to get a substantial discount, but we don't since – and Scott can talk to that more specifically than I can.

MR. BRUSEKER: We no longer get a discount; do we?

DR. McNEIL: No.

MR. BRASSARD: For bulk purchases?

MR. BRUSEKER: For air tickets, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For the quick tickets.

MR. BRASSARD: You do not get any discount on that?

DR. McNEIL: No.

MR. ELLIS: Previously it was a 15 percent discount on bulk tickets, but that was abolished by the airlines. We get a 5 percent discount, but that's through a travel agent who is basically reducing their commissions on those tickets to give us that 5 percent.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, it's got me. I just talked to Air Canada here about a month ago, because this is going all across Canada. Other provinces are doing it. They're allowing you to – we all have to use a number. You can cite that as your number, but those are the government's points, and then the government can use them to travel. Will you check that? They move fairly fast, you know. These people keep changing all the time, but I think it's worth checking. I think it's one of those things. I don't think it amounts to a row of damns, but somehow or another a lot of the public has the idea that if you build up enough points, you can go to Hawaii. I'd like it to just be separated from the points entirely.

MS HALEY: Nobody has time anyway.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's true. If the points could go right back to the government to use as they see fit – Air Canada said it can be used to reduce the ticket purchase.

MR. ELLIS: My understanding is that they accumulate points on an individual basis, that they won't allow you to pool them, but the access . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: No, they won't allow me with my wife or the House leader or anything like that, but they will allow governments, the Alberta government. So you might check that. I understand Saskatchewan is doing it.

DR. McNEIL: In the latest information it appears they won't do that, but as you say, the market changes quickly.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You're quite right. I know that three years ago they wouldn't do it, for sure.

MR. BRUSEKER: I don't think there's any percentage in debating it further here.

2:34

MR. BRASSARD: There are no costs involved, and there are no savings involved at this point, so I think we need to deal with the budget and come back with the philosophical questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think before leaving this page – we've eliminated the last two items. Is there general agreement that the MLA automobile mileage reimbursement program is satisfactory?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the MLA taxi, parking, and car rental?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BRUSEKER: I don't know how you could change it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. What about the first item, MLA air travel?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I don't have a position on this, but I think if we're looking at potentials for a reduction – I see there five special trips. That's the one that you get anywhere in the province. In view of the mileage and whatnot, should we be looking at bringing that down to three or two, or is the committee comfortable with the current five?

MR. BRUSEKER: I would not want to see any reduction in it personally. I think the House leaders earlier talked in fact about increasing that from five to eight.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, the House leaders' deals – I haven't seen anything come on paper, but what we're looking at here is bringing down a budget from '92-93 actual. We have a page here that totals up to \$1,327,000, and I agree with every decision made to this point. We have taken \$50,000 out of that total item. The only question that I ask is these five special trips: should they be the same, lower? Because we're looking at less.

MR. BRASSARD: Just for clarification, can I just ask if these are special trips anywhere in Alberta for anything?

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're anywhere in Alberta for any reason.

MR. BRASSARD: For any reason.

MR. BRUSEKER: On MLA business.

MR. WICKMAN: Again, a similar question to the Clerk. Is this based on the assumption that everybody takes five trips, or it's the best guess?

DR. McNEIL: Best guess.

MR. WICKMAN: Unfortunately, the Member for Stony Plain has had to leave.

MS HALEY: He'll be right back.

MR. WICKMAN: When you're talking from that point of view, it could very well average three right now. I'm not sure if the Clerk can answer that.

DR. McNEIL: I believe we can.

MR. BRASSARD: Can I ask one further point of clarification? Are these assigned to the individual?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. BRASSARD: So I have five trips, period.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, as strange as this may sound, being a Calgary MLA, I'm going to speak on behalf of the Edmonton MLAs, because I think a reduction in this would most profoundly affect the Edmonton MLAs. If I as a Calgary MLA, for example, choose to drive to Edmonton from my home constituency in Calgary, which we are certainly allowed to do, I can in effect cover a lot of constituencies. If I need to stop in Olds to talk to somebody at the Olds College about something, I can stop in en route. It's very easy for me to cover in a sense a greater chunk of the province in my responsibility as critic for different areas and so on. The Edmonton MLAs, however, don't have that flexibility, and to reduce the MLA travel for those, whether by air or by driving, I think would have a significant impact particularly on the Edmonton MLAs, because all they then have is their constituency mileage allowances. So I would particularly like to see this preserved for the Edmonton MLAs. It's easier for non-Edmonton MLAs to cover a greater portion of the province. So I would have some concerns about this.

DR. McNEIL: Somebody asked the question: what's the actual? In 1992-93 there was a total of 73 and a half trips, if you will, among 83 members.

MR. WICKMAN: So we average less than one per member. Stan, that's why you can't reduce it.

DR. McNEIL: The majority were zero, but there were some that had four and five.

MS HALEY: Some individual members had four or five.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. The predominance in that is Edmonton MLAs.

MR. WICKMAN: Edmonton MLAs are going to take a lot more because we don't have the 52 trips back and forth to our constituencies.

MR. BRASSARD: But the 52 trips only get somebody from Calgary to here. It would appear to me that this basically is designed to enable me to represent my constituency better. I don't know how many trips outside of going to the capital it would take to do that. My representation is either in the constituency or up here. I think the utilization of the 73 trips in total for the year is indicative of that, and I wouldn't have any trouble cutting that back to three or whatever. I don't know. I don't use it, as I say. I'm not in Edmonton.

MR. WICKMAN: But you're not opposition, Roy.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, obviously. There are only 73. The opposition aren't using them either. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Because of the conversation at the other end of the table, I'm sure it got missed, but in the Clerk's report he said that it was used predominantly by opposition members. They looked on that as their . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: If I had the floor, that's what I wanted to . . . [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Taylor. [interjections] Order please.

MR. N. TAYLOR: This is why I wanted to speak to you. I was on the committee when we put this in. The old ruling was no traveling at all. The cabinet minister literally nailed down the feet of every MLA so that you didn't go out there and start fires against the government. This is definitely an opposition thing, and anything to curtail this is nothing more than an effort by the government to try to keep an opposition MLA from going out and speaking at different functions. If you ever end up in the opposition – and, pray God, it might happen – one of you will get asked as agricultural critic or as telecommunications critic to give a speech in Peace River or to give a speech in Wainwright or something else. Or in Drumheller: who knows? It won't be as ably represented by then when you retire. This is to allow you five per year.

Actually, in the national jurisdiction you're allowed an infinite number, so I think five is already going a long way to muzzling the right to an MLA to go out to meetings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nick, I guess you'd have to say it was progress from zero.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah. It went from zero to five, five years ago, so let's not go backwards, and it's not being misused obviously. It's not being misused.

MR. BRASSARD: I can appreciate the sensitivity and the objectivity that you're trying to portray, but if none of the government members used this at all, you're still only using two per person. But anyway, I've no problem. If you'd interpret that as me trying to muzzle the opposition, I withdraw any objection to it, because that wasn't my intention.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you. Let's roll on. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Order please. The Clerk would like to . . .

DR. McNEIL: The only other factor in this number is the opposition leader's travel as well.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, just a minute now. A point of clarification, please. We now have a caucus budget, a leader's allowance, and an opposition leader's travel allowance that doesn't appear in the opposition leader's budget.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No. The opposition leader travels five times in there, you mean?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, he gets unlimited time.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just like a cabinet minister. That's not in the budget either. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Leader of the Opposition is a special case. He's not included in any of these.

If members are ready to progress and move on to the next page, before doing so, could the chair invite a motion to accept this page as amended by the changes to the last two items? Mr. Taylor.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'll so move.

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

Page 6.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. On page 6 – Mr. Chairman, because we've got a lot of pages, let's maybe try and get some motions.

MS HALEY: Speed this up a little, eh?

MR. WICKMAN: Speed it up a bit; exactly.

If we were to eliminate the additional features here and just have standard directory listings, how much would it cost us?

MR. BRASSARD: Well, these are standard directory listings.

MR. WICKMAN: It includes listings and features in addition to the standard directory listing. If we had only the standard directory listing, how much would we save?

MR. ELLIS: You would save the full amount: \$17,050.

MR. WICKMAN: So we could zap this budget to zero.

DR. McNEIL: Let's understand, though, what this means. Correct me if I'm wrong, Scott. This means that rather than just listing the constituency name, the member's name is listed here. That's what we're paying the \$17,000 for: the member's name will be listed with the constituency. To take this \$17,000 out would mean just the listing of the constituency and not the member's name. Is that correct, Scott?

2:44

MR. WICKMAN: What about vice versa? Could I just have my name and not the constituency? Couldn't I just have one line – Percy Wickman, Edmonton-Rutherford – and one number?

MR. ELLIS: I believe you can. It's just one line.

MR. WICKMAN: So that would save us 17 grand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley?

MS HALEY: I have a question with regard to this, because I think it's really important that we understand exactly what it is. My concern is that it's not just this two-line split here between name and constituency but that in fact in rural ridings it encompasses where the MLA is listed in a telephone book outside the actual town that MLA lives in. In Roy's case, living in Olds, he would be listed in Carstairs or Didsbury or . . .

MR. BRASSARD: Crossfield, Sundre, Cremona.

MS HALEY: . . . Crossfield and down the line. My constituency goes up into Torrington and Wimborne and Trochu, et cetera, et cetera. I actually live in Airdrie. So for those people to locate the MLA, if there's no indication of an MLA office, even if

it's an Airdrie telephone number, that means they don't know where I am or how to find me.

Now, which one's right? Is it just the two-line breakdown, or is this in fact a listing in other phone books?

MR. ELLIS: For the listing in other phone books, there's a standard that would be provided that is not paid out of this budget; okay? This would address holding an extra feature, extra lines if you will, in the directory listing in those directories. So you would still be entitled to a listing in another directory in a satellite constituency area. However, it would not be bold, and there would be no extra features associated with it.

MS HALEY: Well, that's fine. I just want to make sure we know where we're going.

MR. BRASSARD: Just so I understand then. If you listed my name in all of the towns that I represent – there are six or seven – and you said on one line, Roy Brassard, MLA, with the telephone number, we could eliminate all this and still put our name in every town? As was pointed out, the people in Cremona sometimes really aren't sure if I live in Olds or Didsbury or where I live. So my listing would have to be in their towns, but if we did that in one line, you could eliminate this budget?

MR. BRUSEKER: Would it also show the constituency or just Roy Brassard, MLA?

MR. BRASSARD: MLA, because I would only be listed as MLA in their town.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And you would have the choice of “Olds-Didsbury constituency office” or “Roy Brassard, MLA” in every exchange.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Can I make a comment on this? Seventeen thousand dollars for a telephone listing on the surface sounds high. However, you think of those people who live in Redwater and Olds who are used to going through the book and finding bold print that says “MLA”: they don't know if it's Roy Brassard or Nick Taylor or Stan Woloshyn or the man in the moon. If we take from this mere pittance, we may be saving Members' Services that – and it would apply to the Edmonton MLAs or any MLAs for that matter. We have educated a province of 3 million people that when they want to find an MLA, to look in the book till they see the bold print more or less and go for the number. The imposition that we would put on the public by trying to hide you in that small print isn't worth the saving. We're looking at a \$22 million budget, and this one impacts. When you talk, Percy, about – I would suggest to you that fairly quickly you'd be asking for bold print through your constituency allowance because you would soon get people saying: “I can't find you. I don't know. Why did you hide your number? You MLAs don't want to be found” – all of the things that go with it. The worst thing that concerns me is that the person from the public who was using the phone book to find us from a different town or city or even in the same place – all of a sudden we've made them read the fine print line after line.

Having said that, whatever you guys decide is a good one, but I don't think it's worth hanging our hat on. I don't think it will help us at all.

MR. BRASSARD: It's certainly not the time to be hiding our name; that's for sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you. From my point of view it's not about hiding.

A question. You said that the \$17,000 includes two lines and bolding and various other things. If we went one line in bold, how much would we save?

MR. ELLIS: I don't have those figures here.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Does this include yellow pages advertising?

MR. BRUSEKER: No.

MR. ELLIS: As part of the standard listing you do get white and yellow page coverage.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. In Calgary we're listed in the yellow pages as well as the white pages.

MR. BRASSARD: I guess that's standard.

MR. WICKMAN: I can appreciate the arguments, but I think that people would have no trouble finding us. If they want us bad enough, they'll find us. We are listed in the yellow pages; we are listed in the white pages. We're listed there for free. Really all we're getting for this extra money is having it bold.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stelmach.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think as a committee we should be focusing on the constituent, because that is the person, the customer that comes first. It's a small ticket item that's progressed further. If we need that \$17,000, we'll come back. The only other thing is that it's very easy to say to put everything in one line, but with the long names of some of these constituencies you can't put them on one line. So you're discriminating. You know, it's impossible. I would suggest we move ahead.

MS HALEY: I personally have no problem eliminating this at all, none.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You've got two opinions. Would someone make a motion that this item be either accepted or rejected? The chair is inviting a motion either way.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I move that it stay in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Taylor has moved that this item be continued. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Page 7.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Mr. Chairman, let me try this one here on page 7. I'm going to move that we eliminate the Christmas card postage. Speaking to it, it's 26 grand. It's also very, very symbolic in terms of frills. If there is a feeling that MLAs want to send out a Christmas card or a calendar, as I do instead of a Christmas card, so be it for me to find it in my normal postage allocation. I don't think we should be encouraging the use of postage by sending out what I term to be something so frivolous as Christmas cards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley, on the motion.

MS HALEY: I guess I have a larger concern than Christmas cards in that in each of our constituency budgets, which so far we've really

left untapped here, we have a communication allowance. I use postage out of my constituency to handle my mail. So my question is: other than the MLA freight, which is the courier that goes back and forth, do we in fact need anything other than the \$5,000? So I would ask for people to discuss removing \$260,178 from this budget.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I certainly appreciate the intent behind the motion, but I disagree with it vehemently. The communication budget is indeed for communication, but I find that with mailings out to different individuals in the constituency, we tend to use a good chunk of that \$1,200. The communication allowance I find I use for newsletters and items of that sort that are distributed in the constituency, advertisements for town hall meetings and so on. I find the communication budget gets used up significantly. So I can accept that we perhaps need to lower the cap or reduce the cap somewhat, but to eliminate it altogether would be equally muzzling, I think is the word that Nick Taylor used with respect to the travel. I certainly think that to eliminate the figure of \$260,000 would be absolutely in error.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just to keep the thing in order, we do have a motion relating to Christmas card postage. Perhaps you could deal with that item, if there's no further discussion, and move on to . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Would you repeat the motion, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the motion is  
that the Christmas card postage provision of \$26,000 be eliminated.  
Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Ready.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I have a question before you go on. This is just a technical thing. I'm not sure. If right now you get Christmas cards, put them in a bundle, and call them Christmas cards, you get an allowance, but if you put out Christmas cards, and you don't call them Christmas cards, what's it do: come in with the general mailing or what? In other words, how's this administered?

2:54

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll ask the administrators how that could be controlled.

MR. N. TAYLOR: He's going to be out there holding them up to the light to see if they have Santa Claus and his reindeer on them.

MR. ELLIS: Well, we've extended, I guess, the definition of Christmas cards to include season's greetings letters and the postage related to that.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What I'm getting at is unless somebody comes in and tells you that it's a Christmas greeting, you don't even . . .

MR. ELLIS: We ask that the members submit copies of their greetings to our office prior to sending them out.

MR. BRUSEKER: My understanding, Nick, was that this was an uncapped thing in the past too. For example, we had MLAs who would send a Christmas card to every household in their constituency, so in a particular constituency it might conceivably be a \$3,000 or \$4,000 item.

MR. BRASSARD: It came out of your constituency allowance, though, the communication allowance.

MR. BRUSEKER: No.

MR. BRASSARD: Mine did.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was under this item, Roy.

MR. BRUSEKER: It was an extra allowance floating over here in the ether. So if you wanted to send it to 10,000 households, you could send it to 10,000 households at 43 cents per and get a separate cheque to cover that off.

MR. WOLOSHYN: What Mr. Taylor raises I would have to then agree with. My colleague over here has stated quite clearly that this postage thing, if it's going to happen through this building, can be abused. Is that what you're saying, Nick? So I would suggest that we just go along and take that whole business out, keeping in mind anything in there that the Leg. Assembly Office would need to do their function.

To this point, at any rate, we've only considered just a minuscule look at the caucus budgets. I would say that in order to make the operation cleaner and in effect – we heard from the administration when they were doing their budgeting proposal that they are getting stacked on by other departments. If we took the function of this whole mail out, it would have the hidden savings and would not impact really on that many individual MLAs. Yes, there will be some MLAs on both sides of the House who have gotten used to using this mailing system who may have to adjust their practices. I'm willing to forgo, for example, this whole thing with the idea that we will bring in efficiencies and that we will perhaps look at putting overall caucus operations into caucus operations, because in this one we're sort of mixing the two.

I liked Nick's point: you can have a Christmas card in a letter envelope; throw a whole bucket in every day. We eliminate the Christmas cards as a stand-alone item, and the honest guys don't have Christmas cards. The same thing happens with other mail-outs. So if we have everything just taken right out of there, and they come back to us with what they need, what they use, because we shouldn't be impacting our budget onto theirs – so, very specifically, that there's total control to communicate with members – I'd be willing to make that kind of a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we do have a motion regarding Christmas card postage specifically.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Then I'll withdraw that one and try to do the whole thing together with Percy.

MR. WICKMAN: The Christmas card one I understood had passed already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it didn't, because before we had the vote, Mr. Taylor asked a question.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I would ask that the question be called on the vote.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. All those in favour of Mr. Wickman's motion to delete Christmas card postage, please indicate. Those opposed? Carried.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. My second motion on this one, Mr. Chairman, if I could. I was going to move a reduction in the other postage of 25 percent, and the reason why I do that, rather than what's being proposed by two members of eliminating it totally, is that the constituency postage of \$1,207 per constituency does have a natural cap. So in effect we'd be reducing the cap. The caucus postage has a cap. It was only the Christmas postage that had absolutely no cap. Now we've eliminated that. By reducing the rest of the postage 25 percent, I think we could still exist. To make that vast adjustment in one year would be very, very difficult. We have to realize that we're looking at a 5 percent reduction in the caucus budget or a total of actually 11 percent using the '92-93 figure. In effect the \$108,000 here would have to be made up in the other two caucuses, because we've got to communicate with our constituents. We have to communicate. So it's not like you can cut this off and say you don't have to do any more mailings. What it means is we have to go to other budgets to find that mailing. In my constituency office, for example, instead of \$1,200 a year I would make do with \$900 for postage, but to eliminate it totally would cause me real problems.

MR. BRASSARD: In all fairness, Mr. Chairman, we do have a communication allowance. We are called on to do more with less. I think that surely we can absorb some of this stuff with our communication allowance, whether it's Christmas cards or whatever. That's what the communication allowance is there for. It's based on keeping in touch with our constituents. I don't see why this can't be absorbed by our communication allowance myself. I would support the motion that we eliminate this, and at least then we'd all be the same.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, maybe the chair didn't hear Ms Haley.

MR. BRASSARD: Was it a motion?

MS HALEY: No, I just said that I wanted to discuss it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She would be prepared to support that.

But we do have a motion, first, before we can accept another motion. The motion is

that the first two items on page 7, general constituency postage caps and caucus postage caps, each be reduced by 25 percent.

That is the motion made by Mr. Wickman.

MR. BRASSARD: Then I amend that motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Amend it to what?

MR. BRASSARD: To read that the entire three items, constituency postage, caucus postage, and mailings to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just a minute. I think we'd better hear how the Legislative Assembly Office spends that \$25,000 or \$26,000 before you delete that.

MR. WOLOSHYN: He covered the first two items. So just amend it to zero for the first two.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I would amend that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I would suggest that's a negating . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: Negating motion. It's out of order. So we vote his down and make our own. Okay.

MR. WICKMAN: You can reduce it by 99 percent but not by 100 percent.

MR. WOLOSHYN: We can eliminate the motion totally.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. The motion before the committee is to reduce the first two items by 25 percent each. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion fails.

Mr. Brassard wished to make another motion.

MR. BRASSARD: Before I make my motion, can you clarify that last item?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Do it for these two, Roy, and then we'll go over this one next.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, okay; I can do it that way then. I would move

that we eliminate the general constituency postage and the caucus postage completely.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, in discussion on that I would speak against that motion, Mr. Chairman. If you look at the communication allowance on the last page there, 17, it allows you on a per individual or per household basis about a dollar and a quarter to communicate with every household in your constituency. That basically allows you one letter per household per year. It says nothing about newsletters. It says nothing about advertising for town hall meetings. I mean, these things all require money as well, and if we eliminate the postage allowance and have to take postage out of communication as well entirely, as is suggested by Mr. Brassard's motion, it's going to be extremely difficult for us to communicate with our constituents. If this business isn't about communication, then what the heck is it about? The whole purpose of being an MLA is to be able to communicate with your constituents, and it becomes very difficult when you can't mail a letter to him.

MR. WICKMAN: My motion was unwisely defeated.

MR. BRASSARD: But it was defeated. Move on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did you wish to speak to this motion? The chair thought he saw your hand up at the same time Mr. Bruseker's was.

MR. WICKMAN: I was just waving because I was getting excited at the intent of the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I see. All right.

Mr. Woloshyn.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, I think we have to, when we look at these things, keep in context what we are doing. We have hardly addressed the caucus budget. Five percent, guys – and I'm going to go along – is minuscule. Okay? We have turned around and on Mr. Wickman's urging set aside the constituency budget, which is less than minuscule, and on the arguments that I heard – I won't argue with you.

Now, we've got an item here that is accessible on very inequitable terms, not between parties but between individual MLAs, because there is no cap. You don't run out, Frank, at \$1,200. You can run to



\$6,000, I run nothing, and it doesn't matter. So all of a sudden what we're doing by leaving this item in here is saying that the MLA who wants to actively pursue this postage thing can actually top up their constituency budgets by \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000, \$8,000, \$10,000.

3:04

MR. BRUSEKER: No, no.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yes, that's exactly what can happen in this budget, and when I'm finished, the Clerk will tell me if my comments are not accurate. My comment is simply this: that that \$1,200 in there is a method of calculation; it is not a limit.

DR. McNEIL: No. It's a limit on a constituency, but it's not a limit in the caucus.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Okay. So now what we have is each constituency that didn't get that will have zero, and the others will have to find \$1,200 and still be equally as comfortable.

The other one was certainly not limited between caucuses or members, because that's just thrown in the pot; right?

DR. McNEIL: There's a caucus allocation but not a per member allocation.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I'm seeing here \$200,000 that can be very, very easily taken out of the budget, that helps us reach our percentage. The activity that's involved around there can be kept on by whichever caucus, if it's a caucus activity, by some little creativity.

So what I'm saying, guys, is that up to this point if you go back through the pages – whether we zip the phone for \$17,000 or not is quite immaterial. We have been going along and rightly so, and we have only come to one significant item. I would suggest on this that we go ahead and bite the bullet. If for some reason we find that this year it becomes insurmountable, then there's always a mechanism for bringing it back in through Members' Services or whatever if there is in fact a mistake being made. I would prefer we go that way because we have to show some responsibility here, and that means that we can't go through this whole budget and not have any kinds of impacts anywhere if we're going to reduce it. This is one that I think is very, very fair. It doesn't single out any individual members. It doesn't single out individual parties. It does, in fact, remove administrative work on the Clerk's office. Is that correct or not? Does that mailing cost you money to do – it's a hidden cost in there – timewise or otherwise?

DR. McNEIL: Definitely a cost involved in controlling it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Okay. So then we've got in terms of your labour force – would we be through a nonnumber item in fact helping out your labour force?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, my point has been partly made, Mr. Chairman. We've gone through two or three pages now. We've accomplished the reduction of \$76,000. I mean, if we can't absorb in our constituencies something around the \$2,800 mark for postage – we're going to have to make concessions. Everybody is making concessions, and I think it's a small enough concession for us to make. Either that or we're just going to put all these things off and come back to the initial things that we talked about, and that's our

constituency allowance and other things that we seem to feel are most sacred. We have got to start making some cutbacks here. Otherwise this whole exercise is for nothing.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I think we're possibly being a little draconian and actually maybe got the two different things lumped together. I'll try to answer everything at once. I did do some homework and go through this. We haven't got to the big items. Admittedly we're nibbling on the edge of the cheese, but we haven't gone after the big cheese yet. There are Members' Services allowances, temporary residences, big items that we go through that we haven't even looked at. This is just playing with it to see how we could come up with a 20 percent reduction.

One thing that bothers me – I have nothing against a cap, although I think getting rid of the whole cap altogether maybe is going a little too far. Nevertheless, if it happens, it happens. It's not discriminatory. Maybe somebody can inform me: I think a caucus postage cap is discriminatory because the government puts out what they want to do on their ministers' budgets. That comes out of the ministers' offices.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's not true.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, it sure must.

MR. BRASSARD: If I mail anything out, it comes out of my budget.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, let's take something like this education thing, without arguing about it pro or con. The Minister of Education and the government will be putting in the newspapers and everything else what they want to do in education. I mean, the only way the opposition counters that is by putting out posted letters. I think the first item is not discriminatory, if you knock that out, but you come back again to muzzling the opposition. If the opposition is not allowed to have postage to mail out, that means that we've given the government an unholy – unless we restrict cabinet too. I don't know if one of these days you'll be in opposition, but the government puts out things, not government members. I mean, I'm not talking about restricting yourselves. The government puts out an announcement maybe to reduce the Crow benefit, but if the opposition wants to argue against that, they've got to put stamps on the thing, and that costs us money. So we have to have an allowance from somewhere to mail the opposition viewpoint to the electorate. I agree to get rid of this providing everything else. So how do you answer that unless you cut the cabinet ministers? You're cutting the opposition, and that's not fair.

MR. WOLOSHYN: First of all, a critic is not a cabinet minister. You know that; I know that. So that's comparing apples and oranges up front.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It's like comparing apples and big apples.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Apples and bigger apples, whatever.

Going to that particular item, I appreciate your going along with item 1. You said that you agree with the . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't think it's a good idea, but at least it's even.

MR. WOLOSHYN: At least it's even.

The next item you say: how do I even it out? Well, we have 65 private members there: 32 are yours, 33 are ours.

MR. N. TAYLOR: But we take ours and pool it into the caucus.

MR. WOLOSHYN: You have also got only 16 critic areas now.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's right; 16 cabinet, 16 critic.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Sixteen cabinet, 16 critic areas. You have got it, if you will, about perhaps . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, about \$8,000 each.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I know. But at \$25,000 worth of postage, if each one of your critics uses that for their critic area: 16 critic areas, \$1,600 per area, about 25,000 bucks thereabouts.

You've got a leader's allowance that is currently at \$295,000. That leader's allowance I don't think was meant to just flutter away. That was to do with giving the opposition opportunities to do other things. If this particular item that was supposed to be used by private members was pooled to be used by the critic areas of the opposition, it gives me some difficulty if that's in fact happened. I will assume it did not happen that way, because that wasn't the intent of the item. But let's assume that in fact you're correct, that that was used inappropriately to do critic area mailings as opposed to individual members'. That doesn't matter. The bottom line is simply all that you would have to make up, if that were in fact the case, to keep your critic areas intact at that rate is \$25,000 out of what is currently sitting at \$295,000, I believe, for leader's allowance. I don't think that is an unreasonable thing, if in fact you went that far.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, that's the point I wanted to make. If there's a change in the Department of Education, and I mail those changes out to my constituents for whatever reason, then I pay for it out of my constituency allowance, my postage allowance. If the opposition is using that postage to mail to individuals, as Mr. Taylor is indicating, then I think it's a misuse of that allowance. I think that's what the leader's allowance is for, as was pointed out. If you divided the \$295,000 up into the 32 members, you'd be at \$11,000 or something each that you could use for postage or whatever. I think that's a very generous, liberal amount, if I can coin that phrase. I just feel that if we don't start making some concessions here and some cuts here, we're going to be all day here arguing about a status quo, and that's not the point of this exercise. I think we're going to have to make cuts. Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to all be impacted by this. There is no question about it. That's what it's all about. So I call for the question on my motion.

3:14

MR. N. TAYLOR: Can I ask a point of information? What was the use of this budget by the members in the past year? Caucus postage caps: was it used? You don't have any figures on that?

MR. ELLIS: To the extent of \$108,000. The amounts allocated to the caucuses have not been utilized fully.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, but who used that? The government and opposition caucuses?

MR. ELLIS: Who uses it?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. ELLIS: The caucuses basically.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I know, but do you have a split between the government and the opposition caucus?

MR. ELLIS: Previous to the per member allocation it was allocated \$48,000 to government members, \$20,000 to the Liberals, and \$40,000 to the NDs. In all of those cases none of the caucuses used the postage to the maximum amount. They were all below their maximum.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We were getting letters saying that we were going over our limit.

MR. BRASSARD: Maybe you used our share.

MR. N. TAYLOR: In closing, then, I definitely think it's not up to the government to tell the opposition how to use the money. I think that certainly when something comes out on education, nobody expects you to put out a letter. The Department of Education buys an ad in all the papers and puts it out, sometimes it puts it in the mail and sometimes it doesn't, but the opposition's only counter that's economical is the postage route, the mailing route, to the areas that interest them.

I certainly look at anything that cuts the caucus postage caps out of there as once again being a lackey for the administrative side of government, of the cabinet to give them a maximum amount of manoeuvrability. If they're not being cut in their communications budget to the public, why should the opposition be? General stamps I can see, because we all use that, and if you want to take it out, fine. I don't think you're right, but go ahead, take it out. It's not discriminatory. But when you say caucus postage stamps, I think it's discriminating against the opposition caucus because we don't have a cabinet to spread the propaganda or the information or whatever you want to call it to the public.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you. With respect, I feel that I need to say something. Executive Council is Executive Council. We're all private members, so what the cabinet minister does or doesn't do, I still have a constituency; I still have people that rely on me to communicate with them. I don't have the Minister of Health mailing a million things to my riding. It just doesn't happen. It's not a matter of us telling you how to spend your money. We're talking about taxpayers' dollars all the way around here. There's money in your constituency allowance. There's money in your leader's allowance. This is a place to begin to try and get closer to the 20 percent. I think, having said that, everybody's expressed their opinions repeatedly around the table.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We got 20 percent. We got \$100,000 at the top and \$26,000. We got \$126,000 out of this budget, which is nearly 40 percent, without taking that thing out of there. This is just bloody-mindedness to try to get it to 60 percent.

MS HALEY: I don't think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bruseker.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. On this point here, I understand Ms Haley's point. The fact of the matter is, though, that we in the opposition have an additional role to play that, with respect, government private members don't have to play, which is as critics for certain areas. That is an accepted and traditional responsibility of opposition members, and I think to eliminate in particular the

caucus postage cap or to reduce it to zero, I guess, is fundamentally flawed.

I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that perhaps on a point of order we should be splitting this motion into two separate motions, as we have done with others in the past; i.e., page 5. The two numbers there had individual motions. Perhaps if we split it into two motions, there might be some consensus that could be reached if we were to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Brassard, would you be prepared to split your motion?

MR. BRASSARD: No, I wouldn't, Mr. Chairman. The more I think about this, the more determined I become on this issue. I think the leadership allowance that has been established was established for a reason, and for a valid reason perhaps; I don't know. Certainly there's room for the entire opposition caucus members' postage – I think it would come to \$53,152 – in that \$250,000 allotment or whatever it is. No, I wouldn't. I just feel that we have got to start making some headway on this budget. It's going to affect us, and I think the amount that we're going to be affected by in our constituency by eliminating that postage is not significant.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's the point we're trying to make: it isn't significant for you, but it is significant for us.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, then maybe we should be discussing it under a different topic altogether.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, you're not being even about it, Roy. You're trying to balance it on our backs. Why are you scared to split the motion? You don't have the courage to stand behind the motion that you put.

MR. BRASSARD: I'm standing behind the motion that I made. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. This conversation is not on point. This is instead asking for motives and everything else.

Is the committee ready to express its opinion on the motion?

MR. BRASSARD: Question.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Didn't we have a point of order to split the motion up?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. There was a request that the mover consider doing it. He said that he did not want to do it, and he has the right to say no.

MR. N. TAYLOR: He's afraid to stand up for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. All those in favour if the motion . . .

MR. BRASSARD: I resent that, Nick.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Order.

MR. BRASSARD: You're sitting there calling me a coward. I resent it, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's right. If you're afraid to split the motion you're . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Mr. Taylor, that is out of order.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't see why he won't split the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you should withdraw those remarks.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I said that I don't see why . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't care whether you can't see it or not. That's an improper remark.

MR. BRASSARD: The remarks that I'm a coward I do take offence to.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay. I'll withdraw the "coward" part, but not that it's not improper to withdraw in order to split the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would all those in favour of the motion proposed by Mr. Brassard please indicate. Those opposed? The motion carries.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Can I ask that it be recorded?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you may.

[For the motion: Mr. Brassard, Ms Haley, Mr. Stelmach, Mr. Woloshyn]

[Against the motion: Mr. Bruseker, Mr. N. Taylor, Mr. Wickman]

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, can I ask that we move along at a quicker speed? Otherwise we won't finish before the end of the fiscal period.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, and that all depends on the actions of all the members of this committee.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, could I now . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before that – a question arose as to what the third item is: mailings to members by the Legislative Assembly Office. I would call on Mr. Ellis to explain that to the committee, to see whether any adjustments could be made there.

MR. ELLIS: They relate to mailings to and on behalf of members done by the Legislative Assembly Office and the branches within that area for personnel, general administration, Parliamentary Counsel. For example, in the administration area it would be to mail out cheques to suppliers, to vendors through funds that are provided and administered by our office. For personnel it would relate to mailings from our office to employees at constituency offices, caucus offices, those kinds of mail-outs.

MR. BRASSARD: I just want to comment that I don't see how we can reduce that. Those are a very necessary part of being in business.

MR. BRUSEKER: We could balance our budget very quickly if the administration office simply refused to mail the cheques; couldn't we?

MR. BRASSARD: I move that we accept to leave it as is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of that motion?

MR. BRUSEKER: Does this represent an actual expenditure, then, in the past, this figure of \$25,978?

MR. ELLIS: As near as we can estimate, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is anybody opposed to the motion? The motion carries. Therefore, this page has one item that's been approved, and that is the mailings to members by the Legislative Assembly Office. Is that agreed?

MR. BRUSEKER: MLA freight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the freight.

3:24

MR. N. TAYLOR: Will the MLA postage stay as it is?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

MR. BRASSARD: That's the subtotal.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, the subtotal. I see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So in total this item will be \$30,978. Agreed?

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, \$30,978. Agreed.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, that's right.

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's right. There's a revised total for that page. Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have a motion that this page be agreed to as amended?

MR. WOLOSHYN: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In favour? Opposed?

MR. WICKMAN: Three to 2. It loses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair will cast the . . .

MR. WICKMAN: It's 3-3.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Ed, wake up.

MR. STELMACH: I voted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the record show that it's 4 to 3.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Stan. It's 4-3 on our side; right?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Did you vote with us, Stan?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I didn't.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Shame on you, Stan. Are you recording this, too, by the way?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, for the record, I made a remark to my colleague at the end of the table: are you awake? If that went

in *Hansard* I want it out, because he was. So if you picked that up, delete it, please.

Sorry, Ed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the next page is page 8, MLA photocopyers, constituency offices.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move the \$72,100.

MR. CHAIRMAN: \$72,100?

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's staying.

MR. WICKMAN: That stays. Mr. Chairman, I don't think there's a need to start speaking to every one of these, but, you know, if we're going to start nicking here at the postage, which takes 2 percent from the constituency budget – we took this away and that away – we'd be better off to go to the constituency budget and just . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: I agree with you, Percy. Enough is enough.

MR. WICKMAN: Good. Okay. Question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. BRUSEKER: Do we rent all of our photocopiers, or are they purchased?

DR. McNEIL: It's a mixture.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oh, a mixture? Is that right?

MR. WICKMAN: That's on the next page.

MR. BRUSEKER: It's on the next page? Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So is there a motion? It's Mr. Wickman's motion.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. I moved it, and then I called the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.  
Page 9.

MR. BRUSEKER: On the first line it says "MLA equipment rental constituency office and residential." Could you give us some background as to what that is? Is that the various telephone sets? Is that all we're talking about?

MR. WOLOSHYN: There's an increase of 40 percent. That's interesting.

MR. ELLIS: Typically, it's the Norstar equipment that would be in your constituency offices that would have two or three lines on it including the Rite line. The rental of the lines as well as the actual equipment is included in that area. The reason for the increase is that increasingly we're being asked to provide telephone service in satellite constituency offices, and that's one of the underlying forces driving the costs up.

[Mr. Woloshyn in the Chair]

MR. BRUSEKER: Quick. Let's call a vote on something.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's still a hung jury.

MR. WICKMAN: Ed might vote for us; who knows?

MR. BRUSEKER: Does that reflect the reason for the nearly 40 percent increase in this?

MR. ELLIS: Predominantly, yes.

MR. BRUSEKER: How many MLAs have more than one constituency office? I know they'd all be rural, but how many of them are there?

MR. ELLIS: I believe the number is 35.

MR. BRUSEKER: The next line then: equipment installation. I guess I'd have to wonder why it's continuing on. I would think that once you get the stuff installed, there wouldn't be any ongoing cost. Is there?

MR. ELLIS: This would relate to moves. The constituency office moved. So we would have to reinstall in a new location, and the telephone company charges us to do that.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's how it would be a one time only, I guess. This won't likely to be coming up again other years, eh?

MR. BRASSARD: Is this then some kind of an average or, as Mr. Taylor says – it's sort of an ongoing thing?

MR. ELLIS: It's our best estimate of what the costs typically are in any given year. This last year was an exceptional year because of the election and the number of changes that we had, and the actual costs were higher than this.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I don't know if anybody's done any other research. That \$300,000 is a big item. I'm probably as guilty as most who use them, but is there any way you can reduce MLA tolls? Small to rural is hard, because everything we use is long-distance practically. Is the advent of Rogers and some of these others coming to town going to be able to do a competitive bid or something?

MR. ELLIS: AGT has announced some reductions in their toll costs. I think what's driving the costs in this area is the increased use of cellular communication as opposed to regular DDD calls being made on the telephone.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's for sure. Okay. I'll move the approval of a sheet, Mr. Chairman. Hey, may I say "Wake up" now?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Mr. Taylor moves acceptance of page 9, a sum total of \$516,691. All in favour? Any opposed?

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Vice-chairman.

Next is page 10. Maintenance: typewriter contract, dictaphones and transcribers . . .

MR. BRASSARD: I'd move that we accept it as is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Page 11. They named it professional, technical, and labour. Business cards, "compliments of" cards, letterhead, envelopes, formal writing sheets and envelopes overprinting . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: Could I have an explanation of what that really is?

MR. ELLIS: What's included in that area are the costs associated with providing envelopes, letterhead overprinting. Now, this is being provided to not only the constituencies but also the caucus offices. An approximate breakdown of that \$50,000 to provide those envelopes and letterhead would be \$40,000 related to constituency expenditures and \$10,000 related to caucus expenditures.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to move that we reduce this by 15 percent, that being in the philosophy of cutting. I don't know just where, but I think we can all get by with fewer business cards and fewer "compliments of" cards.

MS HALEY: Well, we can't mail them anyway, so do we need them?

MR. N. TAYLOR: And it doesn't discriminate.

MS HALEY: Great. So if we can't mail anything, I don't think we need letterhead anymore.

MRS. MIROSH: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman, before we exercise a motion. What's the difference between this and page 14, where you've got: stationery purchased for use by MLAs and staff in constituency . . . Is it duplication there?

MR. ELLIS: No, it's not. "Stationery" refers to the more practical items, I guess, in terms of staplers, pens, pencils, erasers, those kinds of things, as opposed to paper goods.

MR. BRASSARD: Do you mean we spend three times as much on staplers and pens and stuff as we do on stationery – paper and stuff? That doesn't make sense.

3:34

MS HALEY: Is this a part of the constituency budgets, the \$39,000?

MR. BRASSARD: No, it's not.

MR. ELLIS: I should clarify that the professional, technical, and labour costs, which is the information on page 11, relate to us sending out for these various services; for example, the overprinting and business cards. The information on page 14 refers to the actual stationery component.

MR. BRASSARD: You're talking about the letterhead, not just pens and stuff?

MR. ELLIS: Yeah. Right.

MRS. MIROSH: But is this on page 11 – it's for both here and our constituency as well as 14?

MR. ELLIS: That's right; caucus and constituency offices as well.

MR. BRASSARD: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I'm still confused. Do the envelopes, the letterhead – that kind of stationery and everything else for my constituency and for my office – come under page 14?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, it's a combination. The paper and the raw envelopes are purchased on page 14. Then they have to be treated, under page 11, to put on your name and other things.

MR. BRASSARD: So just the bare piece of paper is supplied on page 14? You put the crest and everything at the top?

MR. ELLIS: Yes.

MR. BRASSARD: Just the crest?

MR. CHAIRMAN: And then there's the embossing that says, "Legislative Assembly." That's embossed; the crest is just printed.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, but I guess what I'm getting at is that with computers today I can put my constituency address, my Leg. address – everything else comes out with the printing of the letter. So I don't need any of that additional printing on my letterheads. All I need is a bare piece of paper with the crest and "Legislative Assembly" on the top. Is that what costs me 50 grand? That crest and the "Leg. Assembly?"

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. BRASSARD: The paper itself comes out of page 14.

DR. McNEIL: The cost of printing business cards, too, for members and their staff.

MR. BRASSARD: I understand that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This also includes the statutes. It's not a big item; it's a thousand dollars.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I moved that 15 percent cut there on page 11.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's the motion before the committee. Is the committee ready for the question on the motion?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I would like to know how much difference this 15 percent cut would make. I don't think we need that item, quite frankly.

DR. McNEIL: Nine thousand dollars.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I know; \$9,000. But what would you do to collect that \$9,000? The question that I would ask: if Mr. Taylor lifted his 15 percent to 60 percent, would we still get our paper with just Leg. Assembly written on it and no business cards, which we could pick up on our own? How much would it cost you to print Leg. Assembly only and the crest on that – that's what I'm getting at – if we came down to that point. I think we should leave that on there. All this other stuff, as Mr. Brassard is pointing out, we can laser print anyhow, and individuals who want business cards could find it somewhere. I don't think that would be a big impact on individual people.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The only argument I have, Stan, against the hon. Member for Stony Plain is that we keep saying, "Well, we'll cut this to the constituency," and the first thing we know we're going to be

up to the constituency allowances, and we won't be cutting. Then because we're transferring everything over, the headlines will read: "MLAs don't cut constituency allowances." I think we're better to cut 15, 20 percent from everything we see that we don't like than we are to say, "Push it all around for the MLAs," because we're suddenly going to end up with an MLA's allowance.

MRS. MIROSH: Well, it's the stacking effect, Mr. Chairman, because once you take out the postage and once you take out stationery, then your constituency will need those dollars to remain in there for that. So in effect it's a cut.

MR. BRASSARD: So it should be. I think we're going to have to learn to do more with less like we're expecting everybody else in this province to do. The 15 percent that has been proposed would eliminate everything except that formal writing sheet and envelope overprinting. In effect, 15 percent would bring it to – what did we say? – \$9,000. If you eliminated all of the items under the \$50,000 from there down, it would be \$9,640. So the 15 percent, in essence, would wipe out everything except the formal writing sheets. If the hon. member would accept that motion, I would amend the motion to move it to the \$9,640 figure: eliminate all those items and be done with it, and just have the formal writing sheet and envelope overprinting remaining.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm sorry; I don't really understand you, Roy.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, you said 15 percent off that sheet.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Off the \$60,000, yeah.

MR. BRASSARD: It comes to \$9,640.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, that's right.

MR. BRASSARD: Or \$9,000, you said.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. BRASSARD: If we add up all of those items, Nick, it comes to \$9,640.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oh, the extra items. Yeah, but that's not going to allow them the room – they may want to take it out of the \$50,000 too. Tell them to leave the \$9,000, and where they take it, we don't care.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. I withdraw that amendment then, Mr. Chairman. I have no problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Taylor has a motion before the committee. Is the committee ready for the question?

MRS. MIROSH: Just before we go to the question, can we do it in conjunction with 14?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. We're dealing with these one page at a time.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You just missed a small ride. I was trying to get on the smooth roads here.

MR. BRASSARD: Can I just ask one further question? Is this a per member allowance? Is this set up in any way, shape, or form as a general thing?

MR. ELLIS: No. It's a pool as it exists right now.

DR. McNEIL: As a per member thing.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. We might have to come back to it. Are we voting without coming back to it? Is this it, if we have to come back again?

MR. BRUSEKER: We can come back to anything.

MRS. MIROSH: We can come back to anything. Okay. I'll go along with that motion.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Ready for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question? All those in favour of Mr. Taylor's motion, please indicate. Four. Those opposed? Two. The motion carries.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Now we come to the free beer, eh? Fifty-five hundred dollars.

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah. I saw the juice. That's why we're down to Perrier water, and now we're going to be drinking Edmonton water.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Complete with bacteria.

MR. BRUSEKER: It's okay in the wintertime. You just don't want to drink it in the spring.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have a motion approving page 11 as amended?

MR. BRUSEKER: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bruseker. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.  
Page 12.

MR. BRASSARD: I move that we accept this as is.

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

MR. N. TAYLOR: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Just a minute.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What are we going to do, have everybody bring their own water bottle in?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, I just want to know if that's a realistic number, if that's the number it's at, or if it's really 35 or six or whatever.

DR. McNEIL: This amount is very close to what's actually spent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.  
Page 13.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Ah, there's one we like.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing there. That's gone.  
Page 14. Now, here's a big pile of paper.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The question there: if we did cut that out, would we ration it? Stationery purchased for use by MLAs in constituency and caucus offices: do you keep track of it at all now as per MLA? Could you ration? In other words, if we cut this one by 20 percent, how would it be administered? Would I still be able to use up what Brassard cut and nobody notice, or what?

3:44

MR. ELLIS: We do keep track of that now on a per constituency basis as well as caucus versus constituency.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Is there a limit, or do you just keep track?

MR. ELLIS: There's no limit; we just keep track.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, then, I think that in the interests of fairness we should come up with some limits.

MR. N. TAYLOR: The trouble with that is that everybody then uses his limit.

MS HALEY: Can I ask a question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MS HALEY: I'm wondering about this particular number. Is it an actual number that goes on year after year, or was it in fact higher in this past year because of the new constituency offices that opened up?

MR. ELLIS: The actual costs this year were higher because there were numerous offices that didn't have any stationery supplies and we had to supply them with them. However, over the course of time we've found that typically there's this kind of volume associated with the stationery costs in the constituency offices and caucus offices.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Certainly I'd like to move a cut, but there's no sense in moving something that isn't practical. If you put a limit on it, that doesn't accomplish things because everybody then goes and buys the bloody limit or comes close to it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Let's say we cut that thing by a hundred thousand.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, wait a minute.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, let's not wait a minute. Say we cut it by a hundred thousand and split it between two caucuses. We've got roughly the same number of private members; we've got one more. I can see that as impartial, and then we take what's left right out of there and have it as an add-on to our caucus money. We administer ours, you administer yours, and the case is closed. The accusation of unfairness and all that is gone. Whack off a hundred thousand bucks; that's a significant saving. Pump what's left into the caucus, and then we'll know where it's being used. Again I stress: if we find some of these reductions have negative impacts, we're going to revisit this whole thing next year anyway. That would be my suggestion. We've got a number here. They are out of the picture,

because they'll add that money to our caucus budgets. Is that correct, gentlemen?

MR. ELLIS: Cut it to the caucus and the constituency?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: We'll worry about that within our own caucus of how the constituency goes. The cabinet ministers and associate ministers all of a sudden will find out that they're not in the caucus anymore.

MS HALEY: Could I raise just a small, tiny point on this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Wickman has his hand up.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll let her raise her point if I don't lose my next spot.

MS HALEY: I appreciate what you're saying about reducing it by 50 percent or by a hundred thousand or whatever the number is. This might just be mechanics, but can you tell me what happens when my constituency assistant requires something? Is she then to come to PC caucus, or is she still supposed to go . . .

MRS. MIROSH: She goes to the Liberal caucus.

MS HALEY: Well, she could do that, too, because they probably have more stationery than we do.

I'm curious to know what happens then mechanically. Does it still work?

DR. McNEIL: There's a fundamental principle we have to be aware of here. The purpose of a constituency office and the funds allocated to a constituency is to carry on nonpartisan communications with constituents.

MS HALEY: Right.

DR. McNEIL: Having the constituency having to go to the caucus for materials and supplies I think would be politicizing the constituency office. So there's a danger there in terms of the whole structure of the Assembly of that being compromised, so you have to be careful there as to where resources come from and for what purpose.

MRS. MIROSH: We're not supposed to use public funds for any political . . .

MR. BRASSARD: That's how the whole system works.

MR. N. TAYLOR: How would you police it though?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I can appreciate where the Member for — is it Stony Plain or Spruce Grove?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Stony Plain.

MRS. MIROSH: We're going by names. The chair calls us by name.

MR. WICKMAN: I can understand where Stan is coming from, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BRUSEKER: Don't know where; still you understand it.

MR. WICKMAN: I understand it. The concept of reducing some of these items that are kind of loose-ended, eliminating them in some cases, whatever, to try and keep the caucus budget as intact as possible, keep the constituency budgets as intact as possible gives us each more control as to our activities in the constituency office and activities in the caucus office. Going through this exercise that we're going through I think is good, as long as when we get down to the caucus budget and the constituency budgets, we recognize that these things we've chopped are real chops and that it isn't perceived that we haven't done anything to our constituency budgets or we haven't done anything to our caucus budgets, because that would not be reality. Something like this, yes, in our caucus we could control it. We could control it in the constituency office. We could decide as a caucus to cap it. I could be entitled to, you know, a maximum of \$500 for stationary, whatever. If I burn that up, then I have to go into my communication budget. I prefer this approach to blanket type chops.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You prefer what kind of approach? I know you're on my side, but I couldn't figure out what the hell you were saying.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: On that note, could I move a 10-minute adjournment?

MR. BRASSARD: I think he wants to join our party.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been moved that the committee adjourn for 10 minutes. We'll reassemble at 5 past 4.

[The committee adjourned from 3:51 p.m. to 4:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. When we recessed, there still had not been any motion.

MRS. MIROSH: I thought there was a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there was a suggested motion, but it wasn't a motion.

As a result of the recess, has the committee been able to formulate a motion?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, just before a motion is made, could I ask that we conclude the MLA administration and caucus budgets and then adjourn until tomorrow? Can we try to do it, strive to do that?

MRS. MIROSH: Pardon? Run that by again.

MR. WICKMAN: Finish the MLA administration budget and finish the caucus budget and then adjourn until tomorrow.

MRS. MIROSH: We only have half a day tomorrow, and we still have this whole book to go through.

MR. WICKMAN: But if we can get through these two today, we're doing good.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Just give us a bit of time, Percy, then see where we go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee does not seem to be disposed to decide when it will adjourn.

With regard to page 14, is there a motion?



MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that page 14 be reduced by \$90,595 and that the remaining . . . Oh, I'm sorry. I have to ask for clarification before I go that far. Miscellaneous services and supplies for constituency offices: that's an ongoing item?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Then to be consistent I would take \$88,595 from the item that says stationery purchased for use by MLAs and staff in constituency and caucus offices. That would be reduced by \$88,595. That would be \$90,000 there, and the amount remaining would then be placed under the direction of the two caucuses on a 50-50 basis, \$45,000 to each caucus for administration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you're dealing with the first item only?

MR. WOLOSHYN: The first item only, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.  
Mr. Taylor.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, speaking against the cuts, I'm just wondering if the members over there have thought it through. Maybe they have. What I see is a dangerous precedent of moving control of what MLAs do in their constituencies to our caucus. I don't want to sound like that big of a rebel, but I still think that the basic democratic process works on each MLA, not on the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party or the ND Party. Transferring this – we've seen some of that evidence already – taking cuts like this, which should only I think be 15 or 20 percent, which would be reasonable, and making it as draconian as this and saying, "Well, it's up to the caucus to administer," puts every MLA under the thumb of their caucus. Now, that may be a good idea one year, maybe not, but I'd rather see it flow the other way. I'd rather see the MLAs working together to give the money to the caucus to split when they feel like it rather than the money going to the caucus and the caucus saying, "Well, this MLA gets this; that MLA gets that," or "We're going to ration it out and look after it." I think it's a dangerous precedent we're setting here about having caucuses take over the allotting of stationery, supplies, and stuff like that.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Okay. I'm going to respond to that, Mr. Taylor. I'll withdraw the motion, and I will substitute: that \$1,000 be allocated per MLA to be accessed from their constituency office.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's \$83,000.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Eighty-three thousand dollars. You can set it up somehow, and that makes it total control. Then if the caucus wants to pool it, throw it in the pot, whatever, I don't have any difficulty with that. That would meet your concern with the caucus dominating the MLA, and it would reverse it to the MLA dominating the caucus.

Would that create a problem, Dr. McNeil?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I was just going to recognize Dr. McNeil.

DR. McNEIL: No, I don't think that would create a problem. It just means that we would have a thousand dollar allocation per constituency office for that privilege.

Now, just a piece of information. Last year the allocation of those funds between caucus and constituency was: caucus, about \$61,000; constituency, \$118,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further comments on Mr. Woloshyn's motion that \$1,000 be allocated to each member?

MR. N. TAYLOR: I was speaking on balance, because it's too draconian. I think it's too hard. I think that to jump from \$178,000 to \$83,000, cut it in half, sounds like a lot. You're cutting it by 50 percent. I guess I can't amend the motion to make it 25, eh?

MR. WICKMAN: Sure you can.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I don't know if that's against . . .

MR. WICKMAN: No. That's allowed. Mr. Chairman, I'll amend the \$1,000 figure to \$1,500 per MLA. That gives \$124,500.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Would you settle for \$1,250?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, what are you going to give me under constituency budget?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, we talked privately, Percy, and I'm a man of my word. If I get there, we're good. So \$1,250, and it's allocated to each constituency office for distribution. Do we all understand one another? That's \$1,250 per individual MLA.

MR. BRUSEKER: Can we use it for postage?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I don't care what you use it for.

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question before the committee would then be that this item be amended to provide \$1,250 per MLA, or \$103,750, for stationery, plus the second item of \$12,000 for miscellaneous services.

MR. WOLOSHYN: No. The \$12,000, Mr. Chairman, please leave that separate. We'll deal with that when we get there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh; all right. We'll deal with this first item.  
That the first item gets changed to \$103,750, to be paid \$1,250 per member.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Yeah, and that's allocated to each constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I then would move  
that the \$12,000 in item 2 be left unchanged,  
because I guess it's an impressed account and we'll only draw upon it as needed: if they need a sign or if they need a lock changed. That would be standard, a purview of the Leg. offices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now the remaining question is item 2, which is to stand as is.

MR. WOLOSHYN: As is under the administration of the Leg. Assembly, whatever it is now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.  
Can we have a motion to accept page 14 as amended?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I'll so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. In favour? Opposed? Carried.  
Page 15, which is a big page.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, under 15, the very last item, possibly we could include a little in there. We're optimistic we may lose some from the government side.

MS HALEY: Dream on.

4:15

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, seriously, the item dealing with former MLAs having the right to come to Edmonton – what is it: two or three times a year?

MR. BRUSEKER: That's been deleted.

MR. WICKMAN: That's been deleted. Now, there's another item that I'm sure would fall in this one, and that's the one that allows MLAs to continue getting health benefits and all that with the premiums paid by government even after they depart office for about five years, I understand. Am I right, David?

DR. McNEIL: That's correct.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. So that one is \$46,000, eh?

DR. McNEIL: That's the '93-94 estimate. The '94-95 estimate is higher.

MR. WICKMAN: Because of the number that left after this last go-around, it becomes \$75,000. So if we zapped that, we would save \$75,000. Is there any legal obligation to those that have departed – I mean left the building?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The existing order, as I understand it, provides that members who have departed are on the thing for five years.

MR. WICKMAN: Are we in a legal position to change that? Mr. Chairman, the reason I raise it – there are a number of factors. One is that we are trying to save money. Secondly, almost every one of the MLAs that has gone – and I'm not singling out one particular party on that – has left in a lot of cases with very healthy pensions. They're well looked after. They don't need the taxpayer to pay their benefits for the next five years for health care. That's unheard of in the private sector. So we make this like the private sector: when you leave here, you're on your own.

MR. N. TAYLOR: What item are you talking about, Percy? The second last one?

MR. WICKMAN: I'm talking about the extended benefits plan funding: 75 grand.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, can I make a suggestion? I don't know if you made a motion. Wait a minute. You're right. Sorry. I don't know what I was thinking about. Right now we pay 100 percent of the premium; don't we?

DR. McNEIL: No. Cheryl can describe the situation.

MRS. SCARLETT: Right now the former members are paying based on the same arrangement that the current members pay for premiums. So it's 50 percent cost shared for Alberta health care, then, on that. Blue Cross is 50 percent cost shared. Group life

insurance, if they continue that, is on a one-third, two-thirds. So whatever arrangement is in place for the present benefit coverage is the same thing: they're responsible for paying their portion of the premium and the Legislative Assembly as the employer pays the other portion.

MR. WICKMAN: Let me ask a question about staff. When the staff leave, do they have this benefit for five years, where the past employer picks up 50 percent?

DR. McNEIL: My understanding was that there was a program related to the early retirement incentive program, where people who took that program were provided the same benefit. In fact, my understanding is that that was the basis on which this was implemented for former members.

MRS. SCARLETT: To clarify, that was a one-time option that was provided. I believe that program was something like five years ago, and it was for five years. So that is coming to a conclusion.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, that wasn't standard policy. It's like my neighbour who after 27 years with AGT or Telus got the hit. When he left, he was allowed to participate in the plan, but he had to pay 100 percent of the costs of the premiums. The past employer didn't subsidize the employee's share of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair wants to say something on this area. Looking down the road, reference has been made about the pensions that people who left last year have now. That's not going to apply to a great number of MLAs who are now here without any pension plan. I don't know whether any members have any concerns about the future in that regard.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'd like to make a suggestion, if I may – and I think it accomplishes what Percy wants too; it would cut the budget to zero – that those that do retire from here be allowed those extended benefits as long as they picked up the government's share too. In other words, stay in the plan but instead of paying half and half, the MLA can continue to pay the whole cost. At least then you've got the protection of the carry forward of a plan. It hasn't cost the taxpayer anything, yet it's preserved the right for those retired. It's quite right; if you do away with pensions and everything else and then knock off any chance of getting it, quite often you can't get health insurance if you have something wrong or something else. This way it extends the eligibility, but you pay for it.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, that was the intent of my motion. When I made the reference to my neighbour from AGT, he was allowed to continue in the plan, but he had to pay the employer's share himself.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Sure. As long as we're doing that, I think that reduces our costs to zero and at the same time protects the person retiring.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Brassard, followed by Mrs. Mirosh.

MR. BRASSARD: Mr. Chairman, we have a contractual agreement with people who have been in this Legislature to honour this five-year agreement. I don't think it's an onerous thing at all, to be very honest. When I look back on the ramifications of the pension elimination and the 5 percent reduction in salary, I think that to honour a commitment that has been made to these people to share their health benefits – there are a lot of people that retire from politics at whatever age and can't get into a group life insurance

plan, for instance. I think that the implications of retiring from politics are significant. We've addressed a very major portion of that with the elimination of the pension. I would be very, very reluctant to alter this extended benefits plan for retired members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, what about Mr. Taylor's comments about those who maybe go past the five years and being eligible so long as they pay the total cost?

MR. BRASSARD: Well, that's two different things. If you want to extend the five-year period and then I take on the total cost myself, that's one thing. I'm talking about that five-year period where we've agreed with all of those who have retired from politics to share and in some cases enable them to get life insurance and other benefits. I really do feel that we need to leave that one alone, to be honest.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move to table this item until we understand the legalities and our legal obligations with regard to contracts. This government has been consistent about fulfilling ongoing contracts that we have committed to as well as no retroactive legislation or changes. Before we make a decision on this – and I think it's a good motion about paying the full amount when you're out of here – before we vote on it, I really would like to table this until we find out what our legal obligations are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A motion to defer this matter until the legal obligations can be explained.

MR. BRASSARD: Till when? Tomorrow?

MRS. MIROSH: Tomorrow. Before we finish, of course; it's a budget item.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Are there any other matters on page 15 that the committee's willing to review?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I have one. I don't know. It's small, but just looking through there at the question of the members' allowances for sessional residence. Right now when the session meets I think we allow 30 days at a hundred dollars a day. It seems to me to be reasonable to pull the weekends out; in other words, now that we're taking Fridays off to boot too, we should only be billing the taxpayer a maximum of five days a week rather than seven days a week. I think that makes a fair difference. I was playing with the figures.

MR. BRUSEKER: That's a 28 percent reduction in that category.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah. That's \$170,000. It's hard to defend being paid on weekends when the House isn't sitting.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I have found with this compressed work week that I'm busier than ever up here. A lot of times during the week I simply don't have time to do a lot of the things I need to do while I'm up here, so there are occasions when I'm here on the weekend. It's seldom, and I'm generally not more than a day, but on occasion I've had to stay on the Friday or even come back on a Saturday. I've found I get more done if I come up on a weekend sometimes than I do during the week. So I wouldn't have any trouble with the motion, providing that it recognized the days that you are here and not just automatically exclude, say, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday but, rather, reflect the days that you are here.

MR. N. TAYLOR: A five-day week . . .

MR. BRASSARD: Not necessarily a five-day week but, rather, just reflect truly the days that I am in Edmonton and require that sessional amount. So if he will allow me to amend it just to accommodate days that I have to be here that are indeed on the weekend, then I would have no problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think there's been a motion.

MRS. MIROSH: There's no motion; it's just discussion. Mr. Chairman, if I may?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: Hon. member Nick Taylor, you were on this Members' Services Committee when we were discussing this before. A lot of members who come here live in hotels during session, a large number of members. A lot of hotels you just can't move out of because you're going home for three days. Some have made arrangements; others cannot, depending on where you live. Now, when I lived in Edmonton House, I had to move out or else pay for those days if I didn't move out. So I was obligated because my things were in that room to pay for those days. That's why we made those changes. But we did put a max on what you could charge for off-session days, so it was pretty well equaled out. There were expenses incurred, and it's a cost of doing business. When people that we hire, from Calgary for instance, as consultants come to government to do business, they charge for the days they're using their hotels. So whether you're in it or not, those expenses are there. That was the reason, when we were sitting on Members' Services together, that we did that.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I can follow the logic of what you're saying. But when the House sits now, a hundred dollars a day for 30 days is \$3,000 a month. Now, that's a hell of a lot of money to be paying for accommodation, even if you have to pay it over the weekend. By taking the weekends out, it comes then down to around . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: You take 10 days out.

MR. N. TAYLOR: It comes out to around \$2,200 a month. Well, I think that's sufficient for MLAs to cover their apartment or their hotel or whatever it is. I think \$2,200 a month is sufficient for an out-of-town MLA. That's \$800 a month we would save if we took out the weekend. I would go along with a motion: anytime you have to be here on the weekend for business, put it in; I mean, an honour system. So what? The Monday or so that you're not here it nets out. I thought that maybe a \$2,200 a month cap would be better.

MRS. MIROSH: Each month of the year.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, during session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was just sessional.

MR. BRASSARD: There are times when I'm not here, Mr. Chairman, during session as well. I think I would have no trouble not claiming for the days that I'm not here. In fact, I think it's the responsible thing to do.

When I reflect back on this Peat Marwick report that we had done at whatever expense, \$150,000 or whatever, their interpretation of the living allowances is reasonable. I think they recommended the

range between \$95 and \$115 a day, so I see us in the low scale of that. So rather than cap the sessional allowance at so much money, I think during the session, if the member would allow members to charge as needed or at least the days that they are here during session – most of us are not here on the weekends, and we're here plenty during the week. As I said, there are occasions when we have to be here. So I think that members should be able to charge for the days that they are here.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'd accept that as a friendly amendment.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. For the sessional allowance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion before the committee – we don't have one.

MRS. DACYSHYN: You're just in general discussion. Nobody's put a motion forward.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, then, seeing that there hasn't been a motion, maybe Mr. Taylor could craft a motion.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Okay.

That the per diem during session not be paid on weekends unless specifically asked for.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And weekends are Saturdays and Sundays?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. BRASSARD: You were talking about Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; were you?

MR. N. TAYLOR: No. I was just doing Saturday and Sunday. You've already got Friday.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the sessional allowance.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You see, that saves us a little simoleon.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, we should consider out of session as well on the same basis.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We're already covered there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's paid by the month, not by the day.

MRS. MIROSH: But there are people who are here more than 10 days. If they're here 15, they can still only claim for 10.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, that's a new thing.

MRS. MIROSH: No, that's true. That is the policy.

MR. N. TAYLOR: No; I just say that's a new ball of wax.

MRS. MIROSH: So to be fair and to be consistent, when you're here out of session for more than 10 days, you should be able to claim as well.

MR. WICKMAN: That puts money back into the budget, not take out.

MRS. MIROSH: To be consistent, Mr. Chairman, in all honesty, I mean, that's one of the reasons we put that in the way we did. We really feel that there are members who – if we're going to be consistent about charging when you're here, then let's be consistent. So if you're here more than 10 days – some are and some aren't – you should be able to charge back the days that you're here out of session as well.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my calculations show me that roughly – what? – about \$8,000, and then if you weren't here weekends at all, about \$16,000 or \$17,000 a year, maybe \$18,000 under this scheme now that an out-of-town MLA would be able to claim. That's got to be sufficient. MLAs have the luxury of making their own arrangements, and it's not being questioned as to whether they buy a condo or they rent an apartment. We can't cover every possibility. I think enough is enough, and that's enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Taylor, followed by Dr. McNeil.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I was just on a point of information. I think the reason we limited it to 10 days is that it was always realized – and I'm back again to when I was on a committee; I don't want to give my age away – that some people might spend 15, 20, and if they have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, they might even spend 30 days here. But the whole idea was that you should at least spend 20 days in the constituency. We went at it the opposite way. We weren't talking about how much time you'd spend in Edmonton. Certainly somebody can move here if you're representing – I could move to town, I suppose, and claim for 30 days, but I don't think that it is fair to other MLAs and to the taxpayer. I think 10 days is a maximum when the House is not sitting that somebody's out of town. If you need more time in town than that, that's part of the cost.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I think I'd like to table this item for further discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before that, the Clerk has something to add.

DR. McNEIL: There are two ways that a member can claim a nonsessional residence allowance. One is the capital residence allowance for those individuals who are renting or leasing property. So they can claim \$1,000 a month for every month when not in session. The alternative is to claim 30 days in any three-month period. So you can claim 10 days a month, or if in one month you're up here for 15 days, you can claim 15, the next month five, and the next month 10 to make your 30. The way the order is written, you can claim 30 days in any three-month period. So you're not limited to 10 days a month, but you are limited to 30 days in three months.

MR. N. TAYLOR: If you have an apartment, you're not limited at all.

DR. McNEIL: If you have an apartment, then you claim \$1,000.

MRS. MIROSH: It's the same thing really. It equals out.

4:35

MR. WICKMAN: Members of Parliament get \$6,000 a year, and they got a great deal of flak for that. I say take the dollars and run instead of asking.

MS HALEY: The Senators were asking for another \$6,000 a year; that's what they got the flak for.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, they weren't getting anything.

MR. WICKMAN: They weren't getting anything. Listen to the chairman. He used to be one of them: not a Senator, a Member of Parliament.

MS HALEY: It was the Senators that got in trouble.

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move that we table this one too.

MR. BRASSARD: What, table the nonsessional one?

MRS. MIROSH: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; is the committee agreeable to letting this matter go?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Is this tabling the whole thing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. This is the nonsessional.

MR. N. TAYLOR: We've agreed that the weekends are out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the nonsessional. Is the committee agreeable to that? Agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I'm still having trouble, Mr. Chairman. It's part of what we were voting on, I guess. Right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We voted on the sessional residence, and that's been disposed of.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah, but there's no item down here for a nonsessional.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is. It follows sessional, but there's no dollar figure.

MR. N. TAYLOR: There isn't a dollar sign.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's included with the five days, the \$663,000.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oh, it's included with the five trips; is it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Oh, I'm sorry. That's what I was having trouble trying to figure. So therefore we've tabled that whole thing; right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I see.

DR. McNEIL: Your committee has not made any adjustment to that \$620,000.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, we have from that standpoint taken out weekends. That's a 28 percent reduction.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, that's on the \$620,000 but not the \$663,000. I gather that's the one you're referring to.

MR. BRUSEKER: Right. That's the one we're debating right now.

MR. N. TAYLOR: This is where I'm not positive, Mr. Chairman, that we voted the \$620,000.

DR. McNEIL: Are you asking us what that number should be now given that you've changed that policy?

MRS. MIROSH: We're talking about nonsessional allowances, the part that I tabled, because we're talking about days we're out and then five trips.

MR. BRASSARD: The sessional has been reduced to eliminate weekends unless you're here for a reason.

MR. BRUSEKER: With the provision for extraordinary circumstances.

MR. STELMACH: So what number?

MR. BRUSEKER: What number do you put in instead of \$620,000?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, I was playing with it. I think you could reduce it by \$173,000, or you can just do it timewise: 28 percent.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I calculated that two-sevenths is 28 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There could be people here on weekends. That might foul it up. So there has to be some sort of estimate.

MR. BRUSEKER: So there'd be some extraordinary. Why don't we opt to reduce it, then, by 25 percent? That allows for some extraordinary circumstances like Roy is talking about.

MRS. MIROSH: What are we talking about now?

MR. BRUSEKER: We're talking about sessional residence.

MR. N. TAYLOR: He wants to know a dollar value to put in there.

MR. BRUSEKER: He wants to know what number to put in. So 25 percent of that is \$155,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would be reduced.

MR. BRUSEKER: It would be reduced by \$155,000.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I was trying to get it up to \$173,000 to make us get to our quota faster.

DR. McNEIL: So that would be \$465,000: 75 percent of that number. I think we need a motion on that.

MR. BRASSARD: You must be able to figure it out if you took Saturday and Sunday out of there.

MR. BRUSEKER: Two-sevenths is 28 percent, and then you have to allow for some extraordinary things, like you said, so I said if you reduced by 25 percent . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the committee agree that the motion previously passed with regard to sessional residence allowance be capped at \$465,000?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BRASSARD: Will that reflect what Mr. Taylor just said?

MRS. MIROSH: Yes.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay; fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any disagreement? Carried.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Now, Mr. Chairman, if we don't table the nonsessional, are we going to accept all of page 15 with the exception of that extended benefit plan? Would that be what would happen next?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I don't know. We've sort of been starting from the bottom up.

MR. WICKMAN: Sounds good to me, Stan.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Could we take a five-minute break, and we can get our heads together? This whole discussion took off in a direction that we weren't really anticipating. We can be back in five minutes. Come on, guys.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee is recessed for five minutes.

[The committee adjourned from 4:39 p.m. to 4:52 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Is the committee ready to come to order? If so, is there any change in our status from when we rose?

MR. BRASSARD: What is our status?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had just tabled a couple of . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: We tabled one motion. We tabled the extended benefit plan. Is that my understanding?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That had been earlier, yes.

MRS. MIROSH: I moved to table, but we didn't vote on it.

MR. BRUSEKER: I thought we did.

MRS. MIROSH: Did we? Okay.

MS HALEY: No.

MR. WICKMAN: No, we didn't. I didn't get a chance to vote.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chair thought we had voted on it.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I didn't think we had. That's why I called the recess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think it had gone through before.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay. Mr. Chairman, I'll withdraw the motion to table then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement with that request?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.  
We're back with the nonsessional allowance.

MR. STELMACH: I'll make the motion  
that we accept page 15 with the amendments less extended benefits plan  
funding  
and wait until tomorrow for the Clerk to get back and give us the  
legal and perhaps more information on the extended benefits, the  
\$75,000 figure, because these are members that have just retired.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the only thing outstanding on page 15 is the  
extended benefits plan funding?

MR. STELMACH: Correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everything else is accepted?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As amended?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Sir, is that recorded as unanimous?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move page 16 as is.

MR. BRASSARD: Page 15?

MR. WICKMAN: Page 16. Page 15 is part of the other one.

MR. BRASSARD: Oh, I see. Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Page 16 as is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion?

MS HALEY: Wait a second.

MRS. MIROSH: What is page 16? I don't have a 16.

MS HALEY: Could you let us catch up to what you're doing?

MR. WICKMAN: The next page. Turn it over one more. Right  
there.

MRS. MIROSH: I don't have a page 16.

MR. WICKMAN: Sure you do.

MR. BRUSEKER: Turn the page. One more.

MR. BRASSARD: Your 17 is out of order.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh. Sixteen comes after 17.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. You didn't know that?

MR. BRUSEKER: That's new math.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We're on page 16. It has dictation equipment, answering machines, replacement of existing photocopiers. Did someone move that page?

MR. WICKMAN: I moved it; yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.  
Page 17.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, on page 17 I'm going to move it as is. I'm not going to speak to it a great deal because I've spoken to it before. I've emphasized the importance not only to the Members of the Legislative Assembly but to the electorate that we are ultimately responsible for providing a reasonable level of service to. The nipping here, the nipping there of postage, stationery – having frozen this budget in past years for a period of time, I think, speaking for my constituency in any case, we're at rock bottom. I've got two people that work in there. They get paid about 16 grand a year. I can't go to them and ask them to take 5 percent less, no more than I would go to any government employee and ask him to take 5 percent less. So I'm moving the budget as is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion before the committee: to accept page 17 as is. Is the committee ready for the question on that motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of the motion moved by Mr. Wickman, please indicate. Opposed? Carried.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Is that another unanimous one, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That appears to be unanimous.

MR. WOLOSHYN: It must be getting late in the afternoon.

MR. WICKMAN: My last motion, Mr. Chairman. Can I make it that we reduce the caucus budgets? No, Nick Taylor had made the motion to reduce the caucus budgets by 5 percent. I'll leave it to him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's tabs 10 and 11. Mr. Taylor wishes to move  
that government members' and Official Opposition budgets be reduced . . .

MR. N. TAYLOR: By 5 percent per member.

DR. McNEIL: The per member allocation be reduced by 5 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh. That \$45,100 be reduced by . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Let's not get carried away.

MR. BRUSEKER: Can we make the motion: to reduce the \$45,100 by 5 percent?

MR. CHAIRMAN: In both cases.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I would like to move an amendment:  
to 7 and a half percent.

The reason for that is that we've been going through this, and I don't know if we've really – I guess maybe if we could have a bit of a recess to see where we really are.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Wait a minute. I don't want to sound like I'm butting in too much, but remember that the 5 percent was moved with the idea that we might roll it back again.

MR. WOLOSHYN: You're right.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You're going to have a lot of chances to look at it again, so I think we just take the 5 percent.

MR. WOLOSHYN: We want to tie this whole thing up. If we make a motion now, Nick, we'll end up – I want it to be ended now; okay? If we have 5 or 7 percent, I don't care. I had in my mind that we'd be looking at 5, maybe 10 percent on the constituency budgets. In all fairness, with the discussion that went on here, I got swayed to support no cut on constituency claims. So I'm perhaps worried more in the global perspective. That is a pretty hefty item. We should perhaps – although I would have, like I say, indicated this earlier; being the Whip, I'd appreciate no reduction – get a few numbers out here to see where we're at.

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's what I thought we were going to do with the 5 percent in it, see, and then if it looks like we've got to chop some more, this is the place to chop. I think it's easier to go back and chop again than it is to go back and say: hey, we've cut too much.

MS HALEY: May I speak?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman had his hand up first.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, just a question to Stan, if I could, Mr. Chairman. In his amendment that now would pertain to the \$45,100, what is the member's intent with the leader's allowance in the Calgary caucus office?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, we're not debating that right now.

MR. WICKMAN: I know, but I'm just asking if there's an intention there, because I want to try to get an idea of the entire picture.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, on the overall then we'd be looking at, you know, in all fairness, the same 5 or 7 percent based on the '92-'93. Then we have to, I guess, have a discussion because in '92-'93 we don't have that Calgary caucus stipend. I don't believe so.

MR. WICKMAN: Stan, all that concerns me is the earlier discussion where somebody felt that it wasn't appropriate for the leader to be included as a private member, whereas he should be. If

he's not, then that's a loss of another \$45,000. Taking out the Calgary caucus office is a loss of another \$55,000.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: We had that discussion, Percy, and quite frankly I'm not going to try and two-bit you guys by saying that we're going to pull the leader out and make that an extra \$45,000 through the back door. If you want it on the record, for the purposes of calculation of the two caucuses we have 33 private members. That's the number we used today. You have 32, which includes your leader. For the purposes of this 5 or 7 and a half percent debate we'll give you those numbers; okay? Does that relax your concerns there, Percy?

We want to be fair, but we have a global problem here, and that's called a budget reduction. That's what my concern is. When we've made, I think, remarkably good progress to this point, I'd like to come out of here very comfortable, knowing that all of us members here – we've had some debate on some items – have in true conscience made a sincere effort to bring our budget as low as we can yet maintain the services that we have to maintain both in this building and to our constituents. I have to commend you, Percy, on your continued promotion of the constituency offices. Certainly the comments you made on the other items leading there – postage, for one, and whatnot – you were quite gracious in accepting it. However, when we add the picture up there, there's one fairly large item we've left intact, as perhaps well we should. But maybe now is the time to give some reflection on whether it should be 5 or 7 and a half percent or whatever. I would like to know how far these numbers that we've done today have gone.

MR. BRASSARD: We should discuss this tomorrow maybe.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: If that means waiting till tomorrow, I'm comfortable with that too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms Haley.

MS HALEY: Thank you. My concern about voting on a motion that's 5 percent or 7 percent is that in fact we don't actually know what the number needs to be. I would like an opportunity to see what administration comes back with so that we have a better idea. I mean, what's the point of accepting 5 percent tonight or a random 7 percent if in fact it has to be 8 percent or it could be only 3 percent. Like, let's get the numbers and see what we have to do with it.

MR. BRUSEKER: Could we ask administration, then, to calculate two numbers based on the motion that Mr. Taylor made – what impact would 5 percent have on the total budget, and what would 7 and a half percent have on the total budget? – and bring this back tomorrow, since we meet tomorrow?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, might I point out that with the caucus budget, I guess depending on what type of bookkeeping you want to use, but in terms of the hard numbers, based on factors that did happen, previous to any reduction to the caucus budget we already had a reduction of 6.81 percent. With the 5 percent we're looking at nearly a 12 percent reduction; are we not, Dave?

5:02

DR. McNEIL: No. In terms of the numbers we have so far and if you include that 5 percent caucus reduction, for the overall budget we're about 9.2 percent right now, I think.

MR. WICKMAN: But that's not including the 5 percent reduction?

DR. McNEIL: Yes. We're actually about 9.9 percent.

MR. WICKMAN: Nine point nine? You see, Mr. Chairman, my feeling is that if . . .

DR. McNEIL: Sorry; 9.1 percent.

MR. WICKMAN: That's including the 5 percent reduction in the caucus budget.

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: See, my feeling is that if we're looking at a three-year plan of 20 percent and in the first year we achieve 10 percent, I think we've done really good. I really do. I don't think we want, any more than the government is asking the departments, to swallow everything in one shot. It's supposedly even from the government's point of view a three-year plan, so I would be quite satisfied to see which is the cheapest: 9.9 or this 10 percent reduction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's 9.1.

MR. BRASSARD: As was pointed out earlier and in all fairness, that doesn't calculate the savings in the pension plan and the 5 percent rollback for salaries because that's already taken place. So that impacts over and above this.

MR. WICKMAN: That's right. That's already calculated in there.

MR. BRASSARD: If we could factor the whole thing in together, I think we're making some good progress.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I would be comfortable with leaving that item for calculation, as someone suggested, till tomorrow, because we're in basic agreement on it. We're not in any great philosophical debate here. We know we're headed on the same . . .

MR. WICKMAN: I agree with you, Stan.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: At the same time, if we can have motions, if the chairman is willing – we went through considerable presentations with the Speaker's office, Leg. committees, and so on. If the Clerk could lead us through and we could give you motions, it would take perhaps 10 minutes, and then we would have all these commitments made. I don't think there's any controversy on that, unless somebody has any great problems. Then we could walk out of here having made motions that would cover close to whatever number of millions of dollars, 10 percent or whatever, and having made good progress, with only two items left for tomorrow, as I understand it: one being the legalities of addressing the benefits and the other being establishing a figure along with the leader's allowance.

MRS. MIROSH: That's tomorrow?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Yeah. If we do these today, then we do this tomorrow and we're all finished this business.

MRS. MIROSH: What? Do this whole thing tonight yet?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: No, no, no.

MR. WICKMAN: He's just talking about the MLA administration and the caucus budget.



MR. WOLOSHTYN: So if you'd want to, David, lead us through the Speaker's office pages and whatever you want to go through. Do you want those now, or do you want to adjourn until tomorrow?

DR. McNEIL: Well, I thought the managers who are responsible for those areas could probably give better answers than I could in detail.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I'm quite willing to accept your numbers of savings for this purpose now if you've got this information from the managers. As long as you are comfortable with those figures given to you and as long as they are meeting our overall target, I'm quite willing to accept those numbers based on the integrity of your managers and your ability to supervise them without going through a whole discussion process of how many filmstrips and who has been in the library. That's all I'm getting at.

MR. BRUSEKER: I certainly have no problem respecting the professionalism of the managers, but I'd like to take some time to go through them. I'm a little loathe to do that carte blanche kind of motion at this time of day. I'd sooner take some time tomorrow.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Haven't done your reading yet, Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: No.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, if I could. When I look at the three-year draft budget, let's say, for example, the Speaker's office, the reduction of 14.55 percent. Now that figure is based on a reduction from which previous figure?

MR. CHAIRMAN: From '92-93.

MR. WICKMAN: From '92-93. So in real terms that's a reduction of almost 15 percent.

MR. N. TAYLOR: You know, I think we're jumping all over. Why don't we just let the staff have it overnight and we look at what we've done tomorrow and adjust. We're jumping all over the place here now.

DR. McNEIL: What I'd suggest we do is that for those motions that were passed today we will adjust the MLA administration budget and the caucus budgets by 5 percent in terms of the two-member allocations and show you what the bottom line is here on this three-year forecast. Then you'll have an overall perspective as to where we're at in terms of the target.

MS HALEY: See how much further we have to go.

MR. N. TAYLOR: I agree with the Member for Three Hills-Airdrie's sentiments. Take our time.

MR. STELMACH: I move that we adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning or whatever it is.

MS HALEY: It's 9:30; isn't it?

MR. N. TAYLOR: Could we go to Pacific standard time? I hate getting up that early.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are scheduled to meet tomorrow between 9:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. The committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 5:08 p.m.]

