

10:03 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Schumacher]

THE CHAIRMAN: I guess we have a quorum, and it's past 10 o'clock. Have members had a chance to read the minutes of the last meeting? If so, when you're finished, could the chair invite a motion with regard to the minutes? First of all, we should have an approval of the agenda.

MR. STELMACH: I'll so move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stelmach moves. Any discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now the minutes with regard to our meeting of July 4, 1995.

MR. JACQUES: I would move the minutes, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques. Any discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

For business arising from the minutes, the chair would welcome Mr. Derm Whelan, the Chief Electoral Officer, to make some comment with regard to the budget estimates review and approval. Mr. Whelan.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The budget approved by the commission at their September 22 meeting has been circulated. Perhaps I would just go through it very quickly and answer questions if there are questions, if that's appropriate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Uh-huh.

MR. WHELAN: The amount for wages, \$29,750, to which is added the contributions, the benefits that usually are connected with wages, is at the beginning of 511C and 511E. The commission feels that from time to time it may be necessary to acquire the services of additional staff to deal with various projects such as mail-outs or just overwork in situations where the response the commission has received is great.

The second item, travel, is broken into two sections. One is the actual travel of the commission members, and the second is to cover the cost of the *Hansard* team traveling with the commission. Also, the commission has approved the assignment of a person from Elections Canada to assist with their work. So the arrangement is that they continue to pay the salary, but we must pay the expenses. That item is in here as a travel item.

Advertising in the amount of \$185,000: this item is more than appeared on the earlier submission with respect to the budget for the commission, but having investigated this matter and actually gotten involved in the dynamics of the advertising – we're in an expensive advertising market, and this type of advertising, going to each household to give people proper notice of the public hearings, is rather expensive. So the advertising amount, the commission feels, should be \$185,000.

The other items here – freight and postage, rentals, telephone, communications – are administrative items primarily.

Contract services include everything from drawing maps to printing reports and also the compensation to the members of the commission.

Data processing services: there's an amount here because we're using geographical information systems that are electronically driven, so some expertise and some use of this type of facility needs to be in the budget.

Hosting basically is for the working meals for the members of the commission and for the provision of coffee, milk, tea during the commission hearings.

Materials and supplies. If you look at page 5 of the submission, this is really based upon the amount spent by the 1992 commission, with an allowance for unbudgeted expenditures. So we think that this amount of \$51,000 should offset these requirements.

So, in summary, this was reviewed and approved by the commission at their September 22 meeting, and I am of course bringing it forward for your consideration and approval. If there are any questions, Mr. Chairman, I'll try and answer them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Whelan.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to know a little bit more about the wages. How many people will be drawing wages, if I could call it that?

MR. WHELAN: If you look at page 2, note 1, right now the primary support is being provided by the Legislative Assembly Office and the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. The need for other people is very hard to specifically identify at this point. Certainly help was needed I think with the mail-out of some material earlier, and from time to time the commission feels that it may be necessary to hire additional people to deal with the hearings or to assist people with specific tasks. So the allowance is based upon the amount that was required by the last commission. I don't think we have specifically identified the number of people.

Bill, is there anything you would add to that?

It's a very vague way to answer your question, but we just have not identified the number. It's an allowance more than anything else to make sure that the commission will not be impaired or encumbered in any way if it's overwhelmed by the weight of its work.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Yes. So, Mr. Chairman, what I'd like to know is: since it's not based on the number of people, do you not think you might need so many hours in terms of backup services?

MR. SAGE: It's pretty much based on the 1991-92 actual expenditures except that I've reduced it considerably. We didn't pick a specific wage amount of \$11 an hour. It's, as I say, based on '91-92, but has been reduced. Thus far we've had two people working probably at around somewhere less than \$1,000, I would think. The commission has been in place since July 1, and we've used two people to date. The people that we hired in our office were working for \$9 something an hour. Corinne had somebody working for her. Do you remember what that person cost?

MRS. DACYSHYN: I believe it was \$10.86 per hour, something like that.

MR. SAGE: You're talking fairly basic clerical services, so I would suggest something under \$11 an hour.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Van Binsbergen, I'm also advised that Corinne's basic salary when she's working for the commission is paid by the Legislative Assembly Office, but if there is overtime, that has to come out of the commission's budget, not from the Legislative Assembly Office. So that would be charged on this one.

MR. WHELAN: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that's correct. To give a scenario where an additional person may be needed – and I haven't talked to anyone about this in a specific way. I understand at the

moment – and it's just of course probably because this flyer is just now reaching homes in Alberta – calls are coming in, and the questions are related to the civic election: “Where do I vote? What ward am I in?” It's inevitable that people who have inquiries like this that see a number in the paper will call in with those kinds of inquiries, because the elections are coincidental with the beginning of the commission's work. So there's an example where it may indeed be necessary to have a receptionist type of person, properly trained, to answer questions on the telephone. There's one scenario.

I did a quick calculation. If, let's say, \$30,000 were used, it would employ two people for 33.8 weeks at \$11 an hour. So it's not a great amount of money, and \$11 is not a great hourly salary. It's to cover contingencies like that as well as overtime, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman. I think it's a bare bones request, really.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques, followed by Mr. Wickman.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are two items I would like to get clarification on. The advertising budget speaks in here of two to four ads, and it then speaks of the \$185,000 that's been included. The number for '91-92 was \$66,000. The number that was on a strictly preliminary basis at the last meeting was \$95,000. That was based on three ads, and this speaks of two to four ads. There's a substantial difference in the cost, about a hundred thousand more.

10:13

MR. WHELAN: Yes, there is.

MR. JACQUES: I'm trying to get the relationship there.

MR. WHELAN: Well, when the commission met and decided that they would have two rounds of public hearings, it immediately became clear that notice would have to be given with respect to both rounds of hearings. So this, of course, is perhaps the most important fact.

The second is that without the public notice there probably would not be great attendance at the public hearings, so the commission, as I understand their reasoning, felt that they needed to press on with significant advertising.

The cost of advertising in the Alberta market is phenomenal. As a matter of fact, it's very surprising. Compared to the commissions that worked in 1991-92 there has been a significant increase. This particular advertisement here was intended to be a newspaper insert. The first quotation that was received: the cost was \$146,000. Well, obviously that was too much, so we began to work on this. Now, that included inserts in the main papers in Calgary and Edmonton and in all the community newspapers in the province. We went to work on this and managed to reduce it by having it privately printed and in most cases privately distributed in the major cities, Calgary and Edmonton, but in the rural areas the post office is still involved. So we brought the cost down to about \$85,000.

The point I'm making is that we've been very frugal with the advertising, but it is necessary to recognize that this advertising market is just by its nature very, very expensive. In Montreal something like this would cost \$150,000 for one day in one newspaper where there's a larger advertising market.

So what's happened is that as the committee and the commission are looking at this, the dynamics, the practice, the reality is coming to bear on our figures. When we met here before, we gave you an estimate based upon the commission that earlier acted. Now that we're reviewing this and have gotten into the business of advertising, we have some good, realistic figures that identify what it will cost.

This advertisement is about \$80,000. There was a distribution of a little booklet, which I think was somewhere in the vicinity of \$3,000. There will have to be a sort of reminder ad, which will cost approximately \$25,000, setting out the places where the 17 days of hearings are going to be held, but more than that it's a reminder that the commission is coming and they want to see people. So already before we're halfway through the exercise, we're up to \$85,000. The commission in its considerations felt that if there were two to four more advertisements required, the cost would be in the order of an additional hundred thousand dollars. So that's where the figure came from, the \$185,000, and it's a much more realistic figure.

Earlier we were talking academically, in a sense, based upon the experience of the last commission. Now we're talking about the reality of the situation: the type of advertising the commission wishes to do and its cost. That accounts, Mr. Chairman, for the difference.

MR. JACQUES: The second question I had was for clarification. In the '90-91 Electoral Boundaries Commission expenditures, which totaled \$655,000, was that the Electoral Boundaries Commission only, or did that include the subsequent – it wasn't called a commission – body or representatives of the Legislature? Was that a separate amount, or was that included in this?

MR. WHELAN: No, this was the commission only.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll pass, Mr. Chairman, thanks.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, I was looking at – now, I'm not sure whether this is under discussion right now – the schedule.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, it's part of this expenditure.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: I see that three times the commission will meet in the evening from 7 to 9 and five times from 7 to 10. Is there any particular reason for that?

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll ask that question, but when that's answered, maybe we should stay with the budget. Maybe Mr. Whelan can answer that question.

MR. WHELAN: I'm sorry; I was a little distracted. Could I have the question again, Mr. Chairman?

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Well, this is not dealing with the budget, but Mr. Chairman gave me special dispensation here. It's the evening meetings of the commission. Three times they meet from 7 to 9 and five times from 7 to 10. Is there any reason for it?

MR. WHELAN: Well, I think it's an attempt by the commission to manage their time in a very efficient way. They've looked at the number of hearing hours required in different places and the number of hearing hours that were involved in these same places, the experience of the last commission. I guess that that determines the time. You're quite right that there are differences. In some places there are two hours; in others there are three. But that's the function of what the commission thinks is the time necessary.

I would hasten to add that the commission has already identified the possibility that this may not be enough time. It has the power to

adjourn its hearings and to continue them and to give more time if it's available. So although these restrictions related to time may seem to be somewhat arbitrary, I think it's fair to say that they've been given some thought, and provision will be made for extensions in the time, if it's required.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any more queries with regard to the proposed budget and the notes attached?

Is the committee ready for a motion?

MR. HENRY: Would a motion be in order to approve the budget?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if there's no further discussion, I guess it would be in order.

MR. HENRY: Then I would move, Mr. Chairman, that the committee approve the Electoral Boundaries Commission budget of \$586,000 in total as submitted by the commission.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion on that motion?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I would hope that that is a very extreme, outside figure, because to my – did this go up from your initial submission?

MR. WHELAN: Yes, it did, by the amount of the increase in the advertising.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I do have, you know, a concern that perhaps we can get after these and trim the figures to some degree, because looking at close to \$600,000 is quite a bit of money.

The other question that I would ask: is there a possibility that after the first set of reviews and depending upon the public input the second set of hearings would not be required or could be reduced? What is the plan there? It appears that currently the commission has set out a timetable that may not be sensitive to the input of the public, and that would be a concern that I would have. Do you have any comments on that?

MR. WHELAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, the commission has discussed this at length, and I think I can say that they're committed to two rounds of public hearings. I would have to admit that if circumstances changed and it was quite clear that the second round was not needed, although I think that's very unlikely, I would not think that the commission would decide to proceed with the second round. For sure that is the commission's plan, and this is set out in the advertisement.

With respect to the total amount asked of this committee in this request, certainly every effort will be made by the commission – and they have already given instructions to this effect – to effect economies whenever it is possible.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The reason for my first question – if I recall, it states on the cover of the thing that it's a review of the electoral boundaries. If the review should state that the boundaries for this upcoming election are acceptable to the public – I mean, this is pre-empting the commission's hearings and what not – would the commission at that point be prepared to recommend no change in the boundaries?

10:23

MR. WHELAN: Well, I have no idea.

MR. WOLOSHYN: If that were the recommendation, then in fact we wouldn't need a second round of hearings.

MR. WHELAN: Well, of course that's a decision that the commission in the fullness of time will have to make on the basis of the presentations made. So it's very hard to answer a question like that.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, if I could follow up on Mr. Woloshyn's questioning. I just want to be clear on the process, whether it be one set of hearings or two. I'm with Mr. Woloshyn on this one. If there's a consensus out there in the public and there's no need to spend more money, then we shouldn't spend it. I just want to be clear. Those decisions in terms of where to have hearings, what hours, in terms of one report and the need for a second one: the legislation establishes those as the commission's responsibilities. Is that right?

MR. WHELAN: Very definitely.

MR. HENRY: Okay. Thank you.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mike, you're in agreement with where my thinking's coming from; are you?

MR. HENRY: Listen; if we can find a way to save money and still have democracy, I'm all for it.

MR. WICKMAN: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is the committee ready for the question on Mr. Henry's motion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Thank you very much, Mr. Whelan.

MR. WHELAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next item is an update on the Legislative Assembly accounts payable and payroll system. Mr. Gano is here to bring the committee up to date on that.

MR. GANO: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the committee is aware, at the last meeting the administration was instructed to proceed with the acquisition and implementation of an in-house accounts payable and payroll system. So we felt that it would be appropriate at this time to bring you up to date a little bit on where we're at with that project.

You have a handout in front of you that indicates the progress such that we have already acquired the hardware and software for the system. We have entered into an agreement with Deloitte & Touche to assist us with the implementation of the system. We are in the process now of defining an account code structure and setup, the chart of accounts that will allow us to begin entering data into the system. We have had discussions with the current provider of accounts payable and payroll – they're called Payment Systems Corporation – with a view to linking our system to the existing system. In terms of accounts payable it does not appear to be a problem. The interfaces to allow us to feed our accounts payable information into PSC are fairly reasonable, and we're proceeding with setting up those linkages.

The payroll side, however, does present a problem in that PSC has estimated that it will cost \$20,000 just for them to give us an estimate of how much it would cost to set up the linkages. An informal estimate puts the figure at around \$200,000 to set the linkages. So we took it from a different point of view, saying: well, okay, how much would it cost for them to actually modify the existing system to meet our needs? They placed that figure at around \$250,000. Therefore, in light of those costs, which we do not

feel are terribly cost-effective, the decision has been made that we will proceed with an in-house accounts payable/payroll system and basically take over the entire payroll function, which we had planned to do eventually in two or three years anyway. We're just kind of moving that ahead.

That basically brings us to the point we're at today. Are there any questions?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. Just one question, Bill. This whole system, of course, allows for direct deposits beyond just payroll. My understanding is that it provides for direct deposits, for example, in child maintenance payments. That's one instance, but there are several other instances. Is there exemption for persons that choose not to divulge their bank account number and all that kind of stuff; in other words, to not participate in the direct deposit scheme?

MR. GANO: The short answer to the question is yes. The system will be in-house. It will be under our control. We will be able to set the rules as we see fit, and those kinds of things should not be a problem.

MR. WICKMAN: So a written request to be exempted would exempt that person from direct deposit.

MR. GANO: That's right. They would be able to get a cheque instead of a direct deposit.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Bill, are you sure of that? You're positive that exceptions can be made?

MR. GANO: Under our own system they would be able to, yes. Under the current system, where we're running through the government payroll system, that becomes a problem. We have made exceptions for direct deposits, even under the government payroll system. However, it presents some problems for them.

MR. HENRY: To follow up on the previous questions – and you may not be able to answer this one; I appreciate that – if we have the hybrid system where some members choose not to participate in the direct deposit, is there a quantifiable cost in that, an average cost per member or per cheque issued or whatever? I understand the reason we went to direct deposit was to save dollars. Do we have those kinds of figures, or is it too difficult to separate out?

MR. GANO: No, I certainly don't have the figures. Again, if it's something that's in-house, then it's more under our control, and we could then take a closer look at it and determine the budget impact and have that reflected directly in the Legislative Assembly Office budget. Does that answer somewhat?

MR. HENRY: Sure. I mean, if it is able to be separated, it might be worth informing those members who don't participate what the extra cost to the Leg. Assembly budget is for their decision.

MR. GANO: Sure.

MR. HENRY: That's just a suggestion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill, I'm just trying to tie back into the last meeting. At that time what we approved, as I

understood it, was a one-time cost somewhere in the order of \$50,000 to \$60,000. So an ongoing cost of about \$5,000 and then there were going to be some savings, and that would have about a two-year payback period.

Now, if I understand this, that the payroll part which had been assumed in that report back in July will not occur and that the LAO, as it says here, "will be assuming responsibility for all payroll," et cetera, et cetera, does this mean that the savings that had been identified previously don't exist now because of the impact on the LAO?

MR. GANO: No. The savings still exist. There is not a significant increase in cost for us to bring everything in-house. It's a one-time cost. We buy the system, we set up the interfaces, and from then everything proceeds as it was indicated at the last meeting.

MR. JACQUES: Yeah, which was both payroll and accounts payable. Were there some other items?

MR. GANO: No. It was both accounts payable and payroll at the last meeting.

MR. JACQUES: Right. So you're saying that most of that was all accounts payable?

MR. GANO: That's right, yes.

MR. JACQUES: So there was no impact within the payroll amount?

MR. GANO: No.

MR. JACQUES: So the change in plan really won't affect the workload at all either one way or the other?

MR. GANO: Workload in terms of manpower resources: at this point we're saying we don't anticipate a significant increase in workload. I'm going to reserve that a little bit until we actually get into it a little bit further. It would not be over one man-year. In the last meeting we indicated that there would be a cut of one man-year, and we're kind of holding or reserving that at this point until we get into this a little more because of this change in direction with payroll.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bruseker.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bill, just a question. Would this new system, then, allow you to input all of the data. I think you've answered this once before, but I just want to confirm that instead of having, say, four envelopes going to an individual MLA, four different statements in four separate envelopes, it would all be one statement, one envelope. So conceivably you'd just have one statement for your pay, and then perhaps depending upon when the member submitted it, one statement for the expenses. Or could you even combine the expense claims, like for mileage and housing, on a monthly statement with the pay and do it all in one shot? Is that feasible?

10:33

MR. GANO: As far as the payroll, yes, and that was one of the criteria we looked for when we chose a system: to ensure that we would be able to combine all the different types of pays that members receive into one statement.

Expense claims: Cheryl might be able to address that a little better.

MRS. SCARLETT: We have acquired a Canadian payroll system to do the payroll that addresses the needs of members having four of five different types of remuneration. So it properly calculates all the taxable deductions and pays you one cheque instead of four or five deposits. Presently the other side of it, the expense claims, are accounts paid through the finance system. We haven't looked at it in terms of trying to make a payroll system do a financial kind of function. So as it presently is being approached, you would get one cheque for your remuneration and essentially one cheque – Bill? – for the expense claim side of your functions. I'm not sure that even legally or from Rev. Canada's point of view we are in a position or want to start combining on one cheque remuneration received versus expense claim kinds of processing.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Then I understand, and that's certainly an improvement on the payroll side. But with respect to expense claims, I mean, we each have several different kinds of expense claims. We have a mileage expense claim, there's a housing expense claim, and then there can be something for hosting or who knows what. There can be two or three or four different kinds there. Is there any way to do a similar kind of streamlining on the expense side so that instead of having, you know, one payroll cheque and then several expense claim cheques, maybe you could have one payroll and one expense each once a month sort of thing?

MR. GANO: Sure. Those kinds of things can be set up without too much difficulty. The thing that controls that is when expense claims are submitted and trying to process them as quickly as they come in. If a member was to hold his expense claims and submit them all at once, then we could certainly set it up as one statement.

MRS. SCARLETT: Right now we are using systems that do not at all meet the needs of members and their staff, so in acquiring this system and proceeding with it, we're very interested in trying to meet your needs. I mean, that's the whole intent of going this way. We're working with a system that right now does not meet your needs. So, you know, back to your initial questions in terms of what can it do and may I have direct deposit versus a hard cheque, the system itself that we have acquired gives us that flexibility. Now it's a matter of turning it back in terms of meeting the needs of our clients.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Cheryl.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anything further on this report, Mr. Gano?

MR. GANO: No. That's it for me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Bill. And you're going to be ready to go on April 1 of 1996?

MR. GANO: We've got our fingers crossed. We're working hard toward it.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's your intent?

MR. GANO: That's our goal, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you feel it's achievable?

MR. GANO: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any other business that any member would like to bring forward?

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, if you review the minutes of our last meeting, you will recall that there was an action item where I was to investigate our caucus in terms of the Government Organization Act. There was a memo that I believe was sent to yourself as chairman – I don't know that all the members have it – from Mr. Dickson, the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, respecting the Government Organization Act.

THE CHAIRMAN: Approximately what date was that?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, the fax was sent to you yesterday, notwithstanding my eager attempt to get a quicker response. However, I can just report back that having reviewed it, I thought I would report back to the committee that apparently now there is consensus that the amendment that was originally proposed would in fact be an improvement, and we are suggesting that some Bill be introduced in the spring session. So I will make copies of that amendment – I apologize that I hadn't had that done ahead of time – for yourself and members of the committee as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Bruseker.

MR. BRUSEKER: I thought that I'd just report back and let you know I hadn't forgotten you.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Until yesterday.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, no. I had remembered. I just couldn't get a response until yesterday. Anyway, that was the response.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it your impression that this would be agreeable under a miscellaneous statutes amendment Act process?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. In fact, the earlier proposal was under miscellaneous statutes. As you recall, in that process it's kind of a shopping list of a variety of things, and this was one of the ones that had been deleted. If a similar Bill was proposed near or at the end of the spring session and this were one of the amendments that were included, I think that would be quite acceptable.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes. Under miscellaneous, Mr. Chairman, I have two items. Has there been any consideration given yet in terms of defining a time line for the budget process?

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think so.

MR. WICKMAN: So we'd probably be looking at January?

THE CHAIRMAN: As far as I know, we will be.
Would the vice-chairman have any information on that?

MR. WOLOSHYN: With respect to our LAO?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, I believe we'd be looking at likely December or January.

THE CHAIRMAN: December?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Yes. We do have to have our submissions in with sufficient time to get them printed.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay.

Secondly, the Peat Marwick report: is that to come on the agenda of the next regular meeting of Members' Services?

THE CHAIRMAN: It seemed to me that that process, the update, was initiated by the Premier's office, not by this committee.

MR. WICKMAN: No, but it came here, Mr. Chairman. It was tabled here.

THE CHAIRMAN: It came here as a matter of information, I think.

MR. WICKMAN: No. It was tabled here to allow each of the respective members to go back to their caucus, to get input from their caucus, to then report back to this particular body.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, unfortunately I'm not too familiar with it. I haven't heard from either caucus as to whether either one has discussed it and wishes it to proceed. The Chair is certainly in the hands of the committee to focus this. I suppose this could be done, if there's going to be any decision, on the date of our next meeting. That might be a time line for the caucuses to . . .

MR. WICKMAN: It possibly should be on the agenda for the next meeting, because we've had ample opportunity to discuss it within our caucus.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then, that's a matter for the committee to decide about the next agenda.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Percy, if I might ask – I mean, I don't have difficulty with it being on or off the agenda. You know, we can discuss it whenever. But it was a report commissioned by the Premier's office or the Treasurer, whomever, and I guess what I would suggest is if your caucus has got specific recommendations that you want to bring forward with respect to that report, that would probably be a more fruitful way of doing it. You could bring those forward, circulate them in advance or whatever, and we could discuss the proposals from your caucus on whatever topic you want, whether it came out of the report or elsewhere. The report, as the Chairman has pointed out, was received for information. It was widely circulated. I guess the question I am posing to you is: if we're bringing it back to this committee, what are we going to do with it?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not one that likes to leave unfinished business on the table. There has been a motion on the table for a number of years that called for the establishment of a task force to review the remuneration and pay and perks and so on and so forth. That has been dangling on and on, and it's constantly gotten tabled. It got tabled last time because of the report that the Premier had commissioned. At the last meeting, if I recall correctly, I was allowed to lift that particular motion from the table. So it was back on the table, and then it was adjourned at that point to allow each of us to go back to our respective caucus to discuss it. When something is on an agenda and it's been brought back onto the table, I just assume it's automatically part of the agenda.

10:43

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Did I hear you correctly, Mr. Wickman, that you are proposing for the next agenda – and I don't have a difficulty with it; I just wanted clarification – your original motion of having

another independent commission struck to look at MLA remuneration? Is that the topic you want on the next Members' Services agenda?

MR. WICKMAN: It should be brought forward for discussion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there agreement in the committee that when the committee next meets, that will be an agenda item?

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, that would include, then, also a discussion on the disposition of the Peat Marwick report or whatever is going to happen to it. Would that not be implicit?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if perchance there was a recommendation from this committee that the whole subject of members' remuneration be referred to an independent body for recommendations to the Legislature, that would involve everything. Is the committee ready for the question on that?

MR. JACQUES: Well, I'm not sure I understand the question. There seems to be two issues here. One was the reference to the Peat Marwick report, as I understand it, and then there was reference made to a previous motion that Mr. Wickman had on the table. I want to make sure I understand what the angle of his motion is.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Wayne, at one point way back Mr. Wickman had a motion to take the MLA remuneration issue and get an independent body of whatever description struck. In the interim the Premier through the Treasurer got Peat Marwick to do an update on it. At the time that report was going to be brought forward, Mr. Wickman pulled his motion or tabled it or reserved it for a later date based on what came out of the Peat Marwick report. So essentially what we would be looking at is the Peat Marwick report and whatever direction you want to take and also the old issue of whether or not this committee wants to strike some sort of independent committee to again look at members' remuneration. Is that correct, then, Percy?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, Stan is correct. The motion that an independent commission be established was never passed by this committee. The motion was simply introduced, and then that would be debated, and this committee would decide as to whether that was the basis on which to go. On the other hand, they may look at the Peat Marwick report and say that there's enough in the Peat Marwick report to make a determination that there's no longer any need to go any further than that. To have my motion come back onto the table without having access to the Peat Marwick report quite frankly would not make sense, because there is no sense in going back to the drawing board and doing it all over again when this report that was commissioned by the Premier's office is there and it gives ample opportunity for good, healthy discussion.

MR. BRUSEKER: Mr. Chairman, if we look at the minutes of our last meeting from July 4, 1995, page 29.95, in fact it addresses the exact issue that Mr. Wickman is raising. It shows his motion in the middle of paragraph (b) on that page, or subsection (b), or whatever you want to call it, which was then tabled because we had the Peat Marwick report introduced at that time.

What I hear Mr. Wickman saying is that we have had the report tabled. We've had a chance to look at it for a couple of months, a little over a couple of months. Now that we have the report, I guess the next step is: what action are we going to take? What I hear Mr. Wickman saying, perhaps, is that now what we need to do is create this commission who will look at that report and come forward with some concrete proposals as to what the next step is with respect to

the issue of MLA remuneration. In other words, we now have some information that has been gathered by the Peat Marwick study. The understanding I had was that we would come back actually at this particular meeting to discuss that, but apparently now we will hold that off until another meeting. The minutes reflect that the discussion would take place at our next committee meeting.

Now, I recognize that this is kind of an emergent committee meeting with respect to the issue of the Electoral Boundaries Commission budget, so perhaps and indeed it should be on the next agenda, an item as to how do we strike a commission, who's on the commission, if we should strike a commission: all of those kinds of issues.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, refreshing the chair's memory: did we have a motion?

MRS. DACYSHYN: I didn't really think that we did.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Quoting again where Frank was, page 29 – what was it, Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Page 29.95.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I believe the motion was there. It said:
Moved by Mr. Wickman that the Committee recommend to the Legislative Assembly the establishment of an independent commission to review pay, benefits and allowances of Members of the Legislative Assembly.

He would like that motion brought back. Subsequent to that, I then wondered whether the report could be received as information . . . to give all Members an opportunity to discuss [this] in their own caucuses.

That's happened. Now Mr. Wickman wants to bring his motion back, the one that was tabled, and I think, quite frankly, that it's in order to do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: So the motion of this meeting would be that Mr. Wickman's motion be revived at our next meeting?

MR. BRUSEKER: Correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement to that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

Before we adjourn, just to clarify the matter of meetings of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, Parliamentary Counsel has brought to the attention of the chair section 7(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which says:

The Commission must hold public hearings, both

- a) before its report is submitted to the Speaker, and
- b) after its report has been made public.

So the Act requires two rounds of meetings.

Is there any other business?

MR. WICKMAN: I move we adjourn.

MR. HENRY: The date of the next meeting, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Does the committee have any suggestions for the date of our next meeting, or do we leave it to the normal . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Leave it to the chair.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I would suggest, if I could, Mr. Chairman, that we leave it to your discretion but that we have it as soon as possible after the session adjourns because we'll be in this time squeeze if we end up in December with the session. We should get some of these items off the table hopefully before Christmas. I'd look forward to having a meeting preferably before January, time permitting.

MR. HENRY: Mr. Chairman, I've had to miss a couple of the meetings because of advanced scheduling. I appreciate the difficulty in scheduling. If we can agree with Mr. Woloshyn and suggest perhaps two weeks after the session ends, that gives us, assuming it's before Christmas . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The chair has received an indication from Mr. Woloshyn that he would suggest within one week of the end of the session.

MR. HENRY: Okay. That would be agreeable.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I'd prefer that, and then we'd get it over.

MR. HENRY: I'll make sure I'm here more often.

THE CHAIRMAN: The chair will bear those comments in mind.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Mr. Chairman, do these meetings usually occur on a Tuesday or a Thursday?

THE CHAIRMAN: There's no usual.

MR. HENRY: That's one thing you can guarantee in these meetings.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Well, I put in a plea, then, Mr. Chairman, for that to happen.

THE CHAIRMAN: That it be a Tuesday or a Thursday?

MR. HENRY: Doesn't government caucus meet on Thursdays? Let's do it on a Thursday.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Fine. I don't have any problem canceling the caucus meeting just for you, Mike.

MR. HENRY: I've never been so accommodated, Stan.

THE CHAIRMAN: The chair wishes to thank all members for their attendance today and for the expeditious way the business has been conducted. I wish you all well in the next couple of weeks. The chair will not be present for the first two days of the resumed session but knows that you will all do very well in those two days.

MR. WICKMAN: Why do you say that with such a smile on your face?

MR. HENRY: I think he's trying to tell us to behave while he's gone. When the teacher is gone, we'll have to behave.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Save your fun and games till he gets back.

THE CHAIRMAN: So we'll see you all on the 16th of October.

MR. BRUSEKER: The 17th.

THE CHAIRMAN: The 16th is a Monday; isn't it?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: You're right. We decided to kill the House.

MR. BRUSEKER: We won't be sitting on the 16th because it's municipal election day, but in fact we will resume on Tuesday the 17th.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: What happened, Mr. Chairman, is I had my office check on advance polling times, and across the province it's all over the map. So in order to accommodate the members who travel quite a way and to be fair about it, we felt we'd just take Monday the 16th and have it an off-day for the House so they could get back to vote.

THE CHAIRMAN: That certainly helps me. That's great. Very good news. Thank you very much.

MR. BRUSEKER: Are we adjourned?

THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of adjourning this meeting, please indicate. Opposed? Carried. The meeting stands adjourned. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 10:53 a.m.]