

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

1:00 p.m.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, it being Wednesday, November 12, 1997, and it's now 1 o'clock, we'll call this meeting to order. The first order of business is the approval of the agenda which has been circulated. Mr. Coutts moves.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, last year I made a motion that we move the items other than budget to the beginning; in other words, deal with the budget last. Just in case some of the other items have budget implications, just in case there is a need to refer some of those for information back or whatever, it's just nice and tidy to get those out of the way first. They normally don't take very long.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we have a motion by Mr. Coutts for the approval of the agenda, and Mr. Wickman is suggesting, as I understand it, that item 4(a) be dealt with after item 4(k) rather than the order in which it's written. Discussion?

MR. COUTTS: I would agree to that, Mr. Chairman, if that's appropriate.

THE CHAIRMAN: A general agreement on that, that on the agenda we deal with items beginning with 4(b) through (k) and, at the conclusion of 4(k), we then deal with 4(a). General agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there agreement, then, to the revised agenda?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The minutes of April 30, 1997, have been circulated. You've got them all in your books. Is there a motion for approval?

MR. JACQUES: I so move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques. All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; then we've wrapped up 1, 2, and 3, and we'll go with item 4(b), Report of the Auditor General for 1996-97 re the Legislative Assembly. In the document we'd circulated, I'd put it under my name for introduction. So that would be 4(b).

Essentially when the Auditor General put out his report – and there's a discussion briefing note there with you as well – he pointed out two items and two basic recommendations. One is that he basically said that the Legislative Assembly Office should review all travel allowance claims to ensure complete authenticity associated with that. The second item he basically recommended was that the Legislative Assembly Office provide a salary disclosure statement for a number of individuals in addition to the Clerk. Under the legislation that we have, there's no requirement by legislation to disclose salary and benefits, but as the chief administrative officer of the Legislative Assembly it would be my intent to respond to the Auditor General with a disclosure statement in the appropriate form, as per his request, for the 1997-98 fiscal year.

On the first item, dealing with the travel thing, my recommendation to you is that I meet with the Auditor General to further review this matter to ascertain specifically what the

gentleman would like us to do further. I say that simply by way of introduction, but it's up to the committee to provide some thoughts if they so choose.

MR. WICKMAN: I'll move both those proposed actions. I've looked at the documentation, I've looked at the Auditor General's report, and the fear I have is that if we act too hastily, I don't want to get into a situation where we have a real network of bureaucracy, of red tape. What we need is a relatively simple formula that ensures equality right across the board, with the Speaker – yourself, Mr. Chairman – having the opportunity to meet with the Auditor General and iron those bugs out. I think that's the appropriate action. We don't have enough information at this time to deal with it concretely.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there comments? General agreement with that suggestion that's been made by Mr. Wickman?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

The next item, Insurance Coverage of Constituency Office Assets. Again, there is a briefing note in there as well. This matter was brought to my attention as a result of at least one letter from a Member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly. It's included in there, and the note basically has to do with an infrequent occurrence. When I say infrequent, it's in terms of something happening in a constituency office, where the office suffers a loss, and then if a claim is made under the rules that we currently have, there is a deductible. In this case the LAO provides a certain portion of that deductibility, but then it's up to the individual to provide the other half from his constituency office allocation. The way in which this was brought to my attention is that for most constituency offices if there's damage, say perhaps \$5,000 or \$6,000, that particular constituency office may not be in a position to come up with its half.

You see also in the briefing note the number of times that we've had something happen in a constituency office was three times in 1995-96, four times in 1996-97, and in the current fiscal year three constituency offices reported a total loss of 6,500-plus dollars. My suggestion is that this may become very onerous on a particular constituency if they have water damage or fire damage or loss damage or the like. My suggestion is that we include under the MLA administration budget a contingency fund of \$20,000 to cover any deductibles that are payable as a result of losses in a constituency. That would mitigate against an onerous, extraordinary charge for a particular MLA in his or her constituency and allow the process to be dealt with. It's a suggestion for administrative improvement.

Yes, sir.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, I think your briefing note is quite clear, and I would move that

we increase the administration budget by \$20,000 to accommodate just that eventuality.

THE CHAIRMAN: Other comments from the members? Is the committee in agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

Item (d). Again there's a briefing note associated with this as well. My predecessor had been contacted by the previous Provincial Treasurer and had some discussion as to what you do with the extended benefits option for retired members. Now, this is for

retired members. The current system of participation between the Legislative Assembly Office and a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the benefits package, including Blue Cross, Alberta health care, and the participation in group life insurance, is very clear. When a particular MLA leaves, if he or she is less than 60 years of age, then they have an option for five years of an extension under this extended benefits package, and there's no problem because there are group rates applied. Everybody pays their own, and life moves on. However, when you turn 65, you may not have been retired for five years, but the magical age of 65 causes a rather significant adjustment upwards and in fact elimination of these benefits.

The briefing note is there, and I'm providing a recommendation to you to allow the extended benefits option guidelines to allow initial participation in the program for a maximum of five years to the extent possible under current benefit plans. It must be recognized that there is no coverage for members over 70 years of age as a result of the existing limits in the group benefit package. This spring there were several members that found they were flipping over the 65 age group, so there was a little concern. My recommendation there is a response to the problem extended to us.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move that the committee accept the recommendation, option 1. I'd like to speak briefly to the motion and also seek some clarification. I think the recommendation is very clear, but I would like a little bit of clarification on any retroactivity that would be involved in this. For example, I understand that there were some retiring members who left the Legislature after the last election, and I think it needs to be very clear who is and is not covered should this recommendation proceed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, from an administrative point of view there are two ways that we can deal with this. We can make it effective the day on which the committee is holding its meeting. If you deal with the motion, today would be the day. I think, in terms of perhaps anticipation, I have no difficulty from an administrative point of view dealing with this retroactive to April 1, 1997.

MS BARRETT: Me neither.

MR. RENNER: Well, that would certainly be my understanding, that that is the way it would be applied. I would have no problem with that, and I just wanted to make sure that that intent would be included in my motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: That it go retroactive to – I said April 1. It can go back to the date of the election, which, as I recall, was March 11.

MR. RENNER: March 11, whichever.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then I would just amend my own recommendation, saying that we do this but go back to March 11, 1997. Comments? Is the committee agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

1:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Revision of the Computer Formula for the LAN, local area network. Now, this matter was brought to my attention and that Ms Barrett would like to speak to this one. You do have in your briefing book the policy statement that we have as a result of a previous Members' Services Committee recommendation dealing with the

allocation of computer workstations for caucus offices.

Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The problem, as I see it, is that the formula is too tight, particularly if you're a small, small but vital caucus with a small staff, each of whom require a workstation, the result of which is I have found myself to be without a computer. I've had to bring my own computer in. I don't mind this; however, all I can use it for is as a word processor. I can't get on the Net. I can't do E-mail to anybody.

For those of you who of course couldn't know, I'm the mighty mouse who had to argue in this committee for a year, between 1986 and 1987, to get us computerized. It turns out one of my old caucus buddies, Gordon Wright, wanted to do it a different way, but the good side won.

Anyway, that battle was a long time ago, and I'm glad I got that through. That's a long time ago; that's 10 years ago. Since then a lot more people have become computer literate. It seems to me that shutting people off the LAN – I mean, I don't know if I can get a switcher so that, you know, if Brian or Anna are on the LAN, then I can switch and bump them off so I can use my personal computer, which I brought from home, at my workstation. I don't know if that's possible, but it seems to me that in this modern day of information at high speed we really should just remove restrictions altogether and make it optional for members or their staff if they want to be on the LAN or not or if they need their own workstation.

I have talked informally, a long time ago though, early in the spring, with a couple of people from what we used to call info systems. I can't remember what it's called now. They thought that was probably pretty reasonable considering, from their knowledge in any event, that if you go to government departments, there is no formulated limitation to the number of either workstations or access to the LAN or the Net.

MS OLSEN: I have some concerns, I guess, in relation to Ms Barrett's comments in that I feel we are inadequately set up for computer equipment. I do note that in the budget there has been some potential allocation to improve that. However, I am concerned as an MLA that, one, if I need access, I have a very antiquated laptop as well. It would cost somewhere near \$700 just to get it set up to be able to be used in the Leg. Assembly. I think there are arguments that would support, at the very least, the Legislative Assembly Office providing the MLAs with access to a computer outside of caucus dollars, outside of the constituency dollars. If we're going to move forward, as this province is, within the knowledge network and we're promoting the industry – you know, we don't even have the equipment to do our job. To take \$3,000 out of my constituency budget to purchase a laptop that's adequate for the Leg. would cause a problem for our office.

I just want to recognize the concerns that Ms Barrett has. I, too, and others in our caucus have those same concerns, so I think somewhere there has to be a balance of what we're doing here. In order for us to do the work we are supposed to do or should be doing, that access should be there whether or not individual MLAs want to take advantage of an opportunity of having a laptop, or they may have their own, whatever. It should be a tool that we have. I guess I really became enlightened to what other departments have, never mind the LAO, when I happened to, prior to coming here in January, investigate a break and enter at Municipal Affairs, and their laptop worth \$8,000 alone was stolen. That was for the director. When I came here, having knowledge of those things and realizing that we the elected representatives don't have access to that kind of equipment, I sort of questioned the priorities within the LAO in that respect.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the priorities within the LAO are the result of the decisions of this Members' Services Committee and what members want to provide in terms of budgets. I know it is 1997, and I know that there is technology out there.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. We've been discussing this particular issue in our caucus for some time since we became aware that Ms Barrett was bringing this up. We certainly haven't done a formal survey, but informal surveys would indicate that this formula that we see in front of us is more than acceptable in our case. We find that we do in fact have the necessary tools for our members. There are a number of our members who have purchased laptop computers through their constituency budgets, and it seems to have worked reasonably well. Frankly, at this point, without having further information, I would suggest that the committee would have a difficult time dealing with the request. I'm not sure: was there a motion made? I didn't hear a motion being made.

MS BARRETT: Oh, good point. Maybe what I should do is segregate the concepts. Should I do that? Mr. Chairman, I'd move that

this committee authorize enhanced access to the LAN by members or staff members of the Leg. Assembly as they desire.

Now, I need to ask Mr. Gano something. I assume that access to the LAN also means access to the Net.

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

MS BARRETT: That the restrictions that currently obtain and have obtained since 1989 with respect to members' and staff members' access to the LAN and therefore to the Net be removed or be eased.

MR. WICKMAN: And replaced with what?

MS BARRETT: I don't know. An as-needed basis?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, okay. We do have a motion now from Ms Barrett, and her first motion said: as members would desire. I'm sure that somebody would want to define that in terms of specific dollars.

When I met with the three caucuses prior to this meeting, there was some discussion with respect to multiple Net stations. I've got a briefing note here for you before we recognize Mr. Doerksen and Mr. Herard. The question was raised to basically attach one workstation to both, I guess, a departmental network and the Legislative Assembly network. We have here a notation of information for you basically pointing out – I think what seems to have evolved into all of this is that this is the Legislative Assembly Office of 83 members who are elected to the Legislative Assembly. Now, there are different kinds of MLAs. Those who are ministers are also MLAs, and they may want to have the required access through the Legislative Assembly network to a department computer, a department network. We have another one that basically fits the category of chairman of special standing committees and the like, that have their own needs. Then you have the other group of people, the private members.

There are some difficulties in terms of dealing with this. Before I ask one of our staff people to assist in the discussion with this, I will recognize Mr. Doerksen and Mr. Herard, because this is for services to the Legislative Assembly Office. This committee wants to expand those services beyond that. It's recognized that it may be done with some hurdles, but they're going to have to deal with the financial side of it as well.

Mr. Doerksen and Mr. Herard.

1:20

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hadn't seen your documentation ahead of time. The conclusion you have reached is probably the same one that I was thinking about, which is: "This requirement should not be addressed until compatibility, responsibility, and process issues are addressed." I agree with that conclusion that you've tabled here today. I guess I would have a question for the New Democratic caucus. I think we were quite generous when we gave special consideration to her request for a leader's allowance, and I think she does have some flexibility in her budget to accommodate some of her needs in that particular area.

Now, the other thing that strikes me: it's not only the hardware that causes the problem, but the biggest problem probably comes with the lines that go into your offices, having separate telephone lines so you can access the Internet. So there's much more to this whole issue, as you've rightly pointed out, than meets the eye, and I think that before we can consider the question today and vote on it, we'll need a much better idea of what the cost is to implement such a proposal.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I note that this briefing is December 21, 1989, and I know that in 1993 I was somewhat frustrated upon going into my office and finding that I didn't have a computer, nor was it contemplated that we would have computers as Members of the Legislative Assembly. So I think we've come a long way since then. We've also seen some things happen in the Assembly itself, where we've got some networking in place. I note that this particular motion only deals with hardware. It really doesn't deal with access to LAN per se; it deals with hardware. So I would say that we've probably progressed to the point where we do need some further advice with respect to this, because this particular guideline says nothing with respect to networking. It only deals with workstations, which I think back in 1989 were probably word processors. Today they're substantially more than that. So I would certainly suggest that the recommendation here, that more work be done on "compatibility, responsibility, and process issues" – I think that this should be referred back to the department that is in charge of looking after these things to report back to us in the future.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, I've provided you with a note sheet. I appreciate that you didn't have a chance to read this before now, but as we are on this subject, if any of you would like to raise a question of Mr. Gano, who is associated with the Legislative Assembly Office, I'd be prepared to allow that to happen for a couple of minutes if you want to seek information with respect to this matter. If not, we'll move on to Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Yes. On the very last page we have "W/S, N/B, Ptr, Staff, Mbr, Alloc." Could you just explain these workstation counts, just exactly what these titles are?

MR. GANO: Yes, sir. "W/S" stands for workstations. "N/B" is notebooks; in other words, laptop computers.

MRS. FORSYTH: Sorry, Bill. It means?

MR. GANO: Notebooks, or laptops. "Ptr" is number of printers.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, Bill, just take that through. Does that mean that under the PC caucus they have 39 workstations, eight notebook machines, and 14 printers for a staff of 30?

MR. GANO: That's correct, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And they have 43 members.

MR. GANO: That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: And the Liberal caucus: 24, four, and five. The ND caucus: four, zero, and two.

MR. GANO: That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: And what does the block graph mean at the bottom?

MR. GANO: It just totals up the workstations across the board.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's self-explanatory.
Mr. Jacques, you had something further?

MR. JACQUES: No. That's fine. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, I'd hate to see the issue lost per se, because some important points, I think, have been raised. We are in an era of technology. We have a new century falling in place. That hasn't been addressed, the implications that are going to be caused by that. I guess my question to Mr. Gano would be: if we were to look at an administrative subcommittee of Mr. Gano and the three chiefs of staff, would it be possible for the four of them to analyze the situation and come forward with some type of recommendation to this committee, not only addressing year one but possibly addressing the year 2000, possibly a five-year plan? I don't think we should just leave the issue in limbo. Technology is changing, and we're not advancing with it. That's the difficulty.

THE CHAIRMAN: The suggestion is a valid one.

MS BARRETT: I'd sure agree with it. I mean, we had to go through that process a couple of times before, the result of which was that we got Bill Gano on staff and got a system in place, and if that's what it takes to work, I'm pleased to support that.

THE CHAIRMAN: In essence, the conclusion of this briefing note says: "This requirement should not be addressed until compatibility, responsibility, and process issues are addressed." So we would have Mr. Gano meet with the three – I'm sorry, Mrs. Sloan. You were ahead. I shouldn't be commenting.

MRS. SLOAN: Actually, Mr. Chairman, I was wanting to propose an amendment to that recommendation, if I may.

THE CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead.

MRS. SLOAN: Your briefing, Mr. Chairman, has been helpful, particularly with respect to the equitable distribution of workstations, and on that point I would like to amend the recommendation to read that

this requirement should not be addressed until compatibility, responsibility, process issues, and the principle of equitable and fair distribution amongst all MLAs are addressed.

MR. WICKMAN: I have no problem accepting that as a friendly amendment, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fair game. Well, in essence you're just saying what should be inherent in the views and the minds of this committee: that all members are equal. They're all Members of the Legislative Assembly, all 83.

MRS. SLOAN: If I may respond with respect to rationale. I think in your opening remarks you made the designation that some MLAs are warranted perhaps additional allotments by nature of their committee chairmanship or their status as a minister, and it is on that point that I bring forward this amendment to level the field, so to speak, with respect to the access to information and the access to computer supports.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fair game. You're suggesting something that was not a part of what I said. I at no time ever suggested that because someone had a certain title or position, they warranted more. I make the comment again. This committee is a committee of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. There are 83. They're all equal. There are no differences in the eye of the chair. None.

MRS. SLOAN: Noted.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the purpose of this committee. It's called Members' Services Committee. So fair and equitable distribution is extremely important, in the eyes of the Speaker anyway.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, is it assumed that my initial motion now is dropped?

THE CHAIRMAN: No.

MS BARRETT: No? Because we can.

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, we seem to have a whole bunch of motions.

MS BARRETT: Yes. That's what I'm worried about.

THE CHAIRMAN: What we've got is basically a suggestion that we should have a committee to take a look at this matter and bring back a recommendation. That's really the bottom line. That's what you were saying; wasn't it?

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, if you really want to be formal or pedantic and deal with it as the United Nations would deal with it . . .

MS BARRETT: No. No.

THE CHAIRMAN: In essence we have a motion that's listed, and we add to it "equitable and fair." But the meaning of all of this is that the three caucus officers will meet with Mr. Gano, pursue this matter, and come back with a recommendation to this committee sometime in the future. Everybody's on board with this?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next item: (f) Expansion of Uses For Diner's Club/enRoute Card. Again, all Members of the Legislative Assembly are provided with a Diner's Club/enRoute card that allows them to deal with scheduled air travel within Alberta. Some members use air travel. There are many of course who do not have access to air travel from

where they live, but those who do and all members themselves are just simply saying that from an administrative point of view in terms of dealing with these claims, we would like to add some additional services that could be charged to this card. In the briefing note that you have, which includes a proposed memo that I would send to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, we would say that these expenses can include

airport improvement fees, taxi travel, car rental, long-distance bus transportation, and airport parking. Also, the Member may use the card to pay for authorized travel expenses in attending Commonwealth Parliamentary Association or other interparliamentary meetings or conferences or for travel in relation to any Legislative Assembly committee.

The dark lettering is in there. Again, for efficiency of administration I strongly recommend that the committee endorse that.

Comments from individual members? Is there a need for a motion on this matter?

1:30

MR. JACQUES: I would move that the recommendation before us be adopted.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next item is Committee Space Planning, and on the agenda it says: "Development of a Committee Meeting Room in Legislature Annex with permanent *Hansard* recording equipment." Ms Barrett, you'd brought this matter to my attention and indicated to me that it's something you'd like to speak about. We have no briefing background. The floor is yours.

MS BARRETT: I'm sorry; I just assumed you'd include my memo, you see, where I raised it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry; I had no such memo.

MS BARRETT: Pardon? You should have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Otherwise we would have included it. Maybe it got lost in that machine you don't have.

MS BARRETT: You mean the machine I brought from home.

Well, my apologies. I thought I had put it in writing.

Anyway, now that the Department of Education is no longer in the Annex, it seems to me that it would be quite wise to move into some permanent committee rooms, one or more than one, the reason being that it's a lot of work to set up committee rooms every time we meet. You have to wire the place and get all the microphones and get the *Hansard* equipment in. It seems to me kind of an inefficient way to do things now that we have some additional space. In the past, when we didn't, it was perfectly explicable, but I think it's in the bailiwick of this committee, Mr. Chairman, to make that determination. So I would move that

at least one permanent committee room be established in the Annex according to the agreement of the public works minister on where and what size and that equipment be permanently installed so it doesn't have to be mobile all the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a motion before us, Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Well, I'm not opposed to the suggestion that we explore the possibility. I think it's a little premature to be making a motion to proceed with the project at this point in time. I would like to see some background information, some cost projections, some

plans in place before I would be prepared to support a motion. For that reason I can't support the motion, but I would support that a group get together and have a look at a feasibility study and come back with some concrete proposals.

MS BARRETT: I have a question then, Mr. Chairman. To the Clerk: is it relatively easy to cost out how much expenditure is incurred each time we have to set up and dismantle a committee room?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clerk, do you want to respond?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. That's a fairly easy calculation. Some of the costs though, I would say, in terms of convenience and so on are difficult to quantify.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

Secondly – I guess we could do this all in writing later – it's my understanding that we have at least enough equipment for two meetings to be happening concurrently. Do we have even more than that? No? It is two, period. Okay. Well, what do you want me to do? Do you want me to just contact the minister of public works?

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, if I could ask a question on this. Does this belong with public works? If we were to make such a suggestion, would that direction come from this committee for him to examine such a possibility? Do we include that as part of this budget?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, this is, again, the Members' Services Committee, which looks after the Legislative Assembly. So what we're talking about are meeting rooms and facilities for officers of the Legislative Assembly, what they need. If the committee chooses to participate in this, make the recommendation one way or the other, then the next step would be that the Speaker meet with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services to further review this matter and then put all the details together.

MS BARRETT: That would be excellent.

THE CHAIRMAN: But right now you've got a motion that this committee move to create a permanent committee room in the Annex. That's what the motion says.

MS BARRETT: All right. I did think I had something in writing about that.

Well, why don't I just do that: drop the motion and ask the Clerk to get some of those figures together on the costs and other factors when it comes to creating and then dismantling committee rooms on a temporary basis and an itemization of the equipment that we currently have?

THE CHAIRMAN: So, Ms Barrett, you would choose now to withdraw your motion?

MS BARRETT: Sure.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is the committee agreed on Ms Barrett withdrawing her motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: Provided that, as you suggested, the committee agrees that you meet with the minister of public works afterwards.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's only a proposal. The committee may not agree with you on that proposal, depending on the mood of the committee today.

MS BARRETT: Okay. All right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does anybody want to further comment?
Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. I'll move the motion formally that the matter be referred to the Speaker's office for a report that would come back to this committee.

Does it have to come back to this committee? Let me ask that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I would report back to the committee.

MR. WICKMAN: Right. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next item: (h) Former Member Petition. This is almost an annual event. You have within your briefing binder a copy of a letter, a petition to Members of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta. From time to time these will come, and because they do come to the Legislative Assembly, regardless of the form, we deal with the matter. So it's on the agenda.

Essentially, the formative and most creative aspect of it is on the third page, under the title Canker. Essentially what this gentleman, Mr. Aalborg, is saying is that he is a former member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly who also is a former member of Executive Council in the province of Alberta. When he retired, as his age continued to go, he began to receive payments from several pension plans. One was the old age security. The other one was the Canada pension. The third one came out of the MLA and the Executive Council pension plans in the province of Alberta.

He further says that over the years he has noticed that there have been COLA, cost-of-living adjustments, or inflation adjustments provided through the OAS and the CPP, but the same were not provided to him under the MLA or Executive Council pension plans in the province of Alberta at least at the same rate and then for a period of years not the same amount. He's saying: well, because of that, you should give me blank payment to bring me up to par.

Under the Legislative Assembly Act of the province of Alberta this is one of those matters that the act now prescribes to come under the interest of the Members' Services Committee. This is here, and you'll also note that on May 14, 1997, I responded to Mr. Aalborg, thanking him for his "letter and petition regarding the M.L.A. Pension Plan" and said that the "Members' Services Committee will review your petition at one of its meetings in 1997." I have no recommendation other than to provide it to you for information. The committee may choose to discuss it, not discuss it, move on in any way, shape, or form. We have responded to Mr. Aalborg, and we can respond further if nothing comes out of it this afternoon.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding is that the MLA pension plan and any cost of living increases that would be attributed to it would be the responsibility of Executive Council. In fact, in years past it was a determination of Executive Council that would set the amount of any cost-of-living adjustment.

As such, I'm not convinced that this is within the purview of this committee. I think that Mr. Aalborg should be advised of the same.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. Any dealing with compensation of MLAs falls within the purview of the Members' Services Committee under the Legislative Assembly Act of the province of Alberta. You are correct that any adjustments to pensions that currently exist are a result of decisions of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or Executive Council. But the overall subject of pensions falls within this committee. The annual adjustment, if there are adjustments, falls within Executive Council. So we're both right.

So should I respond back to this gentleman by simply saying that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may or may not deal with this matter?

1:40

MRS. SLOAN: Could I clarify, Mr. Chairman, whether or not the decision of Executive Council will be individually applied or collectively applied?

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no idea how Executive Council will deal with that. That's the cabinet. I'm not a member of it, and neither is any member at this table.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm just wondering. For purposes of clarity for this agenda, is this something where if we receive a second letter of this nature, we will be deferring again, or will the decision made on this one apply? Could we make a directive in that regard?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, we cannot. There's no authority for this particular committee to deal with that unless it wants to look at the bigger picture, and that's a whole compensation package. The issue here is simply COLA adjustments.

You'll note in the briefing note that there is a history of the adjustments that were provided to the MLA pension plan. In 1992 there was a major review of all the pension programs in the province of Alberta, whether it was the management pension plan or the local authorities pension plan or the universities pension plan or the special forces pension plan, and decisions were made at that time that all pension plans would fall under an actuarially sound repayment program over a certain period of time. Contributions were increased, and then the government responded by saying that it would provide in law a 60 percent COLA adjustment on an annual basis depending on the cost-of-living index in Canada.

There are two indexes, the Canadian one and the Alberta one. Every late December these adjustments are made. The one that was exempted from that was the MLA pension plan, and that's why you see that the numbers from 1993 on are zero. It was not done. All others do, though, get a COLA adjustment on an annual basis.

Okay. I'll respond back to the gentleman with that action.

MLA Health Benefit Plan, item (i). A number of members have come to the chairman of the committee in the last several months and said: "What exactly do we have? Are we being kept up to date, and are there any changes going on out there in the industry per se?" Well, I brought everybody up to date on this. My suggestion is in here that perhaps you would want a briefing note back at some time showing exactly what the whole health benefit plan is and perhaps comparing it with one or two others to see where you're at. It's simply here for information with some more to come back if you want it. If not, it's okay with me.

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Chairman, I agree with your number one alternative in regards to finding out what's in the industry and if we're up to snuff on everything.

MR. WICKMAN: Just a question. This is now the third item. We had the one dealing with the revision of the computer formula being referred. We've had the space matter being referred. We've had this referred. Mr. Chairman, would it be your intent to have a meeting of this committee scheduled before the final budget for the fiscal period is drafted, prior to it going to the spring session? There is a possibility that some of these items could be included if the reports come back early enough for consideration for the 1997-98 budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the intent would be to have as much of this done as quickly as possible in terms of the agenda that we have. With these pending items my hope would be that we in fact have some determination made with respect to the budget by the conclusion of the third meeting, but there's no requirement that it be done that way. I mean, we can deal with this budget right into the spring session of the Legislature, until the estimates are tabled. They can be tabled at any time. They're not government estimates; they're Legislative Assembly estimates.

MR. WICKMAN: The reason I asked the question, Mr. Chairman, is that in the last couple of years the committee basically has only been meeting once a year, which is a disadvantage to committee members.

THE CHAIRMAN: It would be my intent, at the worst, to suggest to you that we would have a meeting no later than the last week of January or the first week of February, before whenever a new session might originate. If it starts in the second week of January, then we'd have this meeting in the first week of January. If it started in the third week of February, we'd have it in the second week. At least it would be my suggestion.

MR. WICKMAN: Good. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed on that?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Item (j) is an interesting one that should be of concern to all members. It has to deal with the people that they have working for them in their constituency offices. The procedure we've always taken is that we've allowed the maximum amount of flexibility for an individual MLA to deal with his or her constituency office allocation in the way best suited for the circumstances and conditions in that particular constituency. So in some areas an MLA may not have a constituency office, may have a number of people who work for them as advisers. In another place they will have an office plus a part-time person, in some places it's a full-time person, and in some places MLAs share, and we've always said that it's perfectly fine to do that.

There is a liability, though, in terms of vacation pay, and at the end of every March 31 if every employee of every MLA constituency office has taken his or her holidays, there is no liability. The bottom line is zero. If the employee has been there for 12 months, has taken his or her holidays, you start the next fiscal year in good shape. However, if on March 31 at midnight that employee has been there for 12 months and decides to terminate, then you – you, because you are the MLAs, the employer – must cough up some dollars for the vacation pay. But if you've run your constituency office allocation to zero at midnight on March 31 of that particular year, how then do you pay for the vacation pay? We had several circumstances this year, when March 31 ended and April 1 started, because there was an election in March and a number of MLAs were going and some new ones were coming, where some

people forgot that they had a liability. So the Speaker had to send them a letter saying, "You owe; you owe," and they had to write personal cheques.

So all I'm suggesting here is, number one, that we highlight this thing for all members. Because this is a multiparty committee, I would expect that the representatives from each of the three caucuses would then inform their other caucus members that this circumstance does occur. I've said that there are a number of things we can do. At this point in time my suggestion is that we just deal with recommendation 2, that we provide this as an information item on the monthly reports that go to MLA offices and we don't start moving to a new system of having an account that would cover these kinds of exigencies. If everybody did what is normal – that is, you deal with your holidays during the 12-month time frame – there is no unfunded liability at the end of March 31, and life will go on very, very well. But, first of all, people have to be aware of that. All I wanted to do today is just alert all members about that, ask all caucus representatives to alert their other members of caucus about this, and then we deal with it just as an information item on the monthly report, saying: okay; if somebody's been there with you for 10 months and they haven't taken any holidays yet, there is a liability there; have you budgeted for it?

MR. HERARD: I wonder how many people this really affects. You know, when I looked at this – certainly I had not specifically dealt with holiday pay in the last four years in my constituency office – I thought: wow, this could have an impact. But I understand that hourly workers are paid vacation pay on every paycheque so that this is in fact taken care of. Is this correct?

THE CHAIRMAN: First of all, remember that there are 83 different circumstances, so there is no one that cuts across the whole thing. All I know is the practical side said that there were a number of people who had a problem last April. In terms of the hourly wages, Cheryl . . .

MRS. SCARLETT: There are a number of employees that are paid hourly, and you are correct. In the case of an hourly employee they're paid every two weeks and their holiday pay is on that cheque. There's a greater number of employees that are paid on a monthly basis, where the contract allows them to accrue vacation entitlement, and those would be the employees where this situation arises.

MR. HERARD: The reason I brought it up is because there are those differences. Just having an information item on your budget may not necessarily be all that clear to everyone concerned, so I think there ought to be some explanation as to what the ramifications are of all the different methods of payment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and that's the purpose for putting it on this agenda and raising it with the representatives of the caucuses.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm wondering whether or not, on this point, there has been any discussion within human resources about incorporating a clause within a contract which requires employees to take vacation within the year it is accrued and thereby eliminating the chance that a member would be caught in that circumstance.

1:50

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the norm, but once again, we are dealing with 83 MLAs dealing with the maximum amount of flexibility, and there's always a circumstance somewhere. Sure, we can require it, but something's liable to happen that doesn't have to. Is that what you're saying?

MRS. SLOAN: And it could be, if that became a standard requirement in the contract, that if a member wanted more flexibility for the employees, they could choose to strike it, as we do in other cases, but it seems that the protection would be there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Good idea.

Mr. Renner and Mr. Jacques.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I don't think we really need a whole lot more done other than to create an awareness for the members. I'm not so sure that it needs to be reinforced monthly. In fact, that may cause a significant amount of work in calculating those monthly figures and accruing each month how much the liability has increased. I would suggest that if we had an annual calculation on about January 31 of the year – “There are two months left in this fiscal year, and you have an employee working for you to whom you have accrued a liability. You should be aware of it, and you have two months to do something about it.” That would be a sufficient amount of notification in addition to the fact that as respective caucuses we are now aware of the situation and will be sure that we are reinforcing that concept with our members.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. JACQUES: My thoughts were similar, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a motion that

the calculation of the vacation pay liability occur on an annual basis as of December 31 and that each MLA be advised of that calculation by the end of January.

The rationale is similar to Mr. Renner's, and that is that this thing is a moving target every month, depending upon what the contract says with the individual, plus keeping track of what vacation they have taken and what they have accrued. I would suggest that can just as easily be done on a yearly basis as opposed to doing it each month.

MR. WICKMAN: Just a question, Mr. Chairman. I don't have a problem with what the member is proposing. December of what year? Are you saying the end of this year? Beginning when?

MR. JACQUES: December 31 of each year, commencing with 1997.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, the difficulty I have with that: if you're talking in terms of an actual liability, are you talking in terms of a paper liability or a withdrawal from the constituency budget to cover that liability? See; if you're talking about a withdrawal from the constituency budget – I know the situation with my two staff is that they each work three days a week. There is a liability there. I'm not sure to what extent it is now, but if that was to be withdrawn from my constituency budget or what remains of it at the end of this year, I would be probably zapped right off the bat. Now, if I have another summer where I have a STEP student and I can get all that squared away . . .

MR. JACQUES: The motion is such that the calculation would be made, and that's all that would happen. It would be a calculation of the liability, which would be forwarded to the member for his or her information.

MR. WICKMAN: That's fine. That answers my question. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have a motion for the committee proposed by Mr. Jacques. Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next item has to do with a bill that according to the current script would come into force on June 18, 1998, a private members' bill that the Legislative Assembly passed in 1997, the Protection from Second-hand Smoke in Public Buildings Act. I simply draw your attention to clause 2(7), which has been highlighted in your book. It says:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Special Select Standing Committee of the Assembly on Members' Services may designate rooms for smoking in those portions of the Legislature Building or its precincts under the authority of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly Office.

I now leave it for the purview of the committee.

MR. WICKMAN: If everybody quit smoking, we wouldn't have this problem; would we, Mr. Chairman?

MR. JACQUES: Is that a motion, Mr. Chairman?

MR. WICKMAN: You want me to commit suicide; do you? I think Pam would be the first one to strike out at me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. At the risk of sounding repetitive and referring something back, I think this particular item really needs to be referred back to staff. [The chairman lit a cigarette] [interjections] I'll just carry on with what I was saying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Please do.

MR. RENNER: Mr. Chairman, it's not clear to me exactly what this committee can and cannot do. When it says the committee “may designate rooms,” does that mean that if the committee chooses to designate – because it does say it: “may designate” – does it need to designate specific rooms, or could it designate groups of rooms, or could we say that MLA offices may be designated at the discretion of the member? There are a number of questions that I have, and I would like to have some options outlined from the point of view of the amount of leverage or room that we have as a committee to acknowledge the reality that there are a number of our members who smoke. I don't think anyone has any objection to dealing with smoking in public areas. In fact, I voted in favour of this bill when it passed in the Legislature. Now that we have to deal with it, though, I need to have some comfort in my own mind that we're dealing with it in a fair and equitable way. Frankly, I don't know that we have that information in front of us now. I would ask that the committee deal with this at a later time, at a future meeting, with some direction in front of us and some proposals on how we might propose to deal with it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth, then Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm following along what Mr. Renner said. I was one of the people that supported this bill, but I also believe that we have to get some clarification. The bill talks about a designated smoking room with the right . . .

MRS. SLOAN: Ventilation.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Linda.

. . . ventilation, et cetera. I think that's something that public works will have to look at when we're looking at the cost to have these specific rooms ventilated; for example, if we decide to make

this room a smoking room, the cost to have it ventilated, et cetera, other than opening the windows when it's 30 below. So I think this needs some work still.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the Speaker has led by example this afternoon, and I would like to make a motion that we designate the Speaker's chambers and offices as the smoking rooms for the Legislative Assembly. Second?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we do have a motion.

MS BARRETT: And to think I snuck out to have my cigarette. If only I had known what was going to happen in my absence.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, Mrs. Sloan, what was your motion again? You do have a motion.

MRS. SLOAN: I did. I made a motion that the Speaker's chambers and offices be designated as the smoking areas for the Legislature Building for all members, and I will withdraw that.

2:00

MR. RENNER: Well, I was just going to speak against the motion. I think everyone seems to be pretty much in agreement that we do need some more information, so if I could, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that

this item be tabled until an upcoming meeting when further information is available to the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: A tabling motion is nondebateable. All members in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Tabled. It's over.

MRS. SLOAN: Is it tabled or is it deferred indefinitely?

THE CHAIRMAN: Tabled.

MR. RENNER: I said: tabled until a future meeting when more information is available.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. May I just ask for clarification, Mr. Speaker? Who will be acting upon this issue?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you've got this very interesting piece of legislation, and in this case the legislation says: "the Special Select Standing Committee of the Assembly on Members' Services." That's what the legislation designates: this committee.

MRS. SLOAN: We need to designate someone then.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, it's this committee. That's what the legislation says. You cannot interpret the legislation. The legislation says: "the Special Select Standing Committee of the Assembly on Members' Services may designate." It's very clear.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm not disagreeing with that. I guess what I'm trying to facilitate is how we are going to move along to doing any work if it's this committee that's supposed to undertake the work and we've tabled it. It seems to me that we need to designate two or three people to lead up the research required.

THE CHAIRMAN: That would be a fine suggestion. Perhaps one member from each caucus then. It's a valid point.

MRS. SLOAN: I would be prepared to make a motion that each caucus designate an appointee to conduct the investigation required and bring that information back to the committee's next meeting.

MS BARRETT: I don't know Mr. Chairman; I'm going to be in trouble on this one. We don't have any smokers on staff. Who's going to represent me?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: You. You.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a motion. Is there any further discussion or debate on this? Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Perhaps, then, in the future someone would advise me who those three individuals are, and we'll just let everybody else know.

At this point we've now gone through (b) to (k), and Mr. Wickman's motion said we should deal with 4(a) at this point. In the documents you do have, you have the LAO budget estimates. It's the second booklet that you have.

I took the liberty of meeting with the three caucuses just as an overview of both the agenda and the Legislative Assembly estimates. There were a number of questions that did come out, and I'd just like to provide the members with this little overview right at the outset.

MS BARRETT: This little overview?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, there's some background there as well.

There are three documents, essentially the briefing notes, which we'll come back to in a minute or two. Perhaps I'll just give you a brief overview and then come back to these three as we go through this. In terms of the budget overview, if you look at the beginning of your book, there is a submission overview that basically points out that there are two aspects in this that are being looked at and highlighted. One is the human resources portion of the budget and the operational funds thus inherent to develop several new initiatives and to respond to the volume increases in terms of the work that I've been advised we're now proceeding with.

Again, the budget is developed on the basis of the Assembly sitting up to 85 days. The Assembly has sat as high as 90 days and as low as 61 days in the last seven or eight years of the 1990s. You'll see that some additional resources are being requested in the information systems, library, human resources, and financial services branches.

There are a number of new responsibilities that we are currently handling under the LAO that were handled by Alberta Treasury. We've just assumed those responsibilities. We have no way of knowing of course whether or not Alberta Treasury has decreased its staff to deal with this delegation of authority elsewhere. Overall it makes good sense from an administrative point to deal with these things dealing with some financial management and accounting systems.

As an example, we're now dealing with payments that go to all Members of the Legislative Assembly including the ministerial or semiministerial and government committee remuneration. In the past various individual departments used to deal with that. That's now being co-ordinated under the LAO. Again, from an

administrative point of view and a service point of view to Members of the Legislative Assembly it does make sense to do that. However, it does cause additional workloads and other things associated with this one centralization in the LAO.

On the second page of the briefing note, also included in this budget for 1998 to '99 is the allocation of funds for salary adjustments. This budget

is based on the return of 1.5% of the 5% salary reduction, merit increases for both non-management and management staff in 1998-99 as well as a 3% merit increase for management staff in 1997-98.

The reason why those dollars were not included in the 1997-98 budget: this decision is as a result of a previous Members' Services Committee decision not to deal with it last year. These adjustments have already been implemented in the government service in this fiscal year.

As well, we've consulted with Alberta Treasury. On their advice the budget also includes a contingency fund to deal with unexpected market adjustments in 1998-99. That's contingency only. If announcements are not made for the overall public service, these dollars would not be allocated in the fiscal year 1998-99, but in terms of prudent planning all agencies of the government in essence are including these dollars in their budgets at this time. The LAO feels that it would be most prudent and responsible to do it as well.

We've also looked at a number of aspects in terms of services to MLAs from the library and the like and basically have worked on it on that basis.

Now, when I was meeting with the three caucuses, there were a few questions that were raised with respect particularly to the salary side. So there is a briefing note called Human Resource Costing, 1998-99 Legislative Assembly Budget, which I just finished circulating. I want to point out again in response to the questions raised to me that the human resource budget increases which are projected for 1998-99 are based on ensuring that the compensation policy applied to staff of the Legislative Assembly Office is consistent with that applied to employees of the Alberta government.

In this budget the approach proposed to deal with merit and market adjustment is as follows. I think it's probably important to have this in the record.

1. Merit adjustments

Merit adjustments are salary increases within existing salary ranges that reflect recognizing performance. In the case of non-management employees, salary increments within existing ranges have continued to be awarded since the salary range freeze in 1991 and the subsequent 5% pay reduction in 1994. These increments were budgeted for in the 1997-98 budget and the 1998-99 budget reflects the continuation of awarding increments averaging 3% to non-management staff.

In the case of management employees, the government announced the restoration of in-range salary movements in 1997-98 for managers effective August 1, 1997 [and that attachment's included] and allowed the allocation of up to 3% of management payroll for these adjustments. The proposed 1998-99 budget includes allowance for this 3% adjustment for 1997-98 and assumes a similar level of merit adjustment for managers in fiscal 98-99.

Again I repeat: what a previous Members' Services Committee chose not to recognize for this fiscal year when they dealt with this matter after it had already done its budget last January.

2:10

The second item deals with market adjustments.

Market adjustments are adjustments to salary ranges normally resulting in individuals' salaries being raised by the same percentage that the ranges were adjusted.

The government announced a 1.5% compensation adjustment for non-union staff effective April 1, 1997 which was structured as a 0.75% increase to salary ranges and

individual salaries and a return of two unpaid holidays. Senior Officials' ranges and individual Senior Officials' salaries were increased 1.5% retroactive to January 1, 1997. (Attachment 2) The Speaker subsequently approved the application of this policy to LAO staff on the condition that funds come from the existing budget envelope.

In terms of budgeting for this adjustment, it should be noted that the Treasury Board in December, 1996, approved a general provision for increases to consolidated spending targets to address 1997-98 manpower cost pressures (Attachment 3). It was subsequently recommended to the Legislative Assembly that its proposed 1997-98 budget be adjusted by \$80,000 and a related decision item was developed for consideration of the Members' Services Committee (Attachment 4). In that the Legislative Assembly budget had been approved by the Members' Services Committee prior to this proposal being broached, the Assembly budget was not adjusted to accommodate this cost.

The 1998-99 budget accounts for the cost of the return of the 1.5% portion of the 5% reduction applied to LAO employees already implemented.

In the last item there was a question raised of me about the fiscal pressure contingency fund, which you'll see is a one-liner. That's a result of consultations that we've had with Treasury in terms of how they're dealing with and advice they're giving to departments of the government. Their advice to us was that we should include a contingency fund, and we all recognize that

it would only be accessed in the event that a decision is made to implement market adjustments in the LAO in response to adjustments implemented in other parts of the Alberta public service.

Since I've had the privilege of being Speaker, we've in essence attempted to ascertain the overall position of the government of Alberta and followed those decisions of the government of Alberta, not led. So there's a bit of the background with respect to that.

There is a briefing note here as well in terms of the Legislative Assembly Office that looks at the overall human resources costs and the position comparisons. As we go through each and every one of these, if that is the desire of the committee, we'll deal with the branch, the human resources budget, the FTEs, the salaried positions, and a comparative of the 1998-99 budget as compared to the current one, 1997-98.

The third briefing note that you have was just a question about why you sign off on some telephone bills and not other telephone bills, and there's an explanation note – I think it was Mr. Doerksen in particular who had raised that with me – that basically points this out in that regard.

So in this estimates book which you've got following those first two pages of course are the purpose statement, the vision statement, the goals. You've got a sheet that basically points out the organization chart, and on standby would be the managers that we do have associated with the Alberta Legislative Assembly should they be required or be asked to participate. Then you see an overall section prior to financial management and administrative services looking at the estimates comparison. Included in there are three columns: the 1998-99 estimate, the 1997-98 estimate, and the 1997-98 forecast. You'll see suggested modifications, proposed modifications by the Speaker with respect to what he has been able to determine during the last several months are the pressure points and the needs within this whole area.

Bottom line. You can see the overall change is 0.1 percent. What has been pointed out before – that's the bottom line – is that internally, within there, there is a needed adjustment in terms of re-establishment allowances, which has been dramatically reduced simply because we were able to take care of most of them prior to March 31, 1997. Hence there was no requirement for expenditure

of those dollars in 1997-98. In building this budget, I as the Speaker went to basically look at a simple note: to be equal. So the bottom line is that it shows a 0.1 percent increase. But if you were to extrapolate the MLA administration, then of course the percentage becomes – there's about 900-some odd thousand dollars there of readjustments upwards to provide for what I perceive to be the pressure points being experienced by private members associated with the Legislative Assembly.

The rest of the document breaks it down into the various branches that we have and then of course also deals with the special committees of the Alberta Legislative Assembly and also the document sections dealing with the allocation for government members, the caucuses, the Official Opposition caucus and the New Democratic caucus, and any other requirements that would be in there.

I'm entirely in your hands as to how you might want me to proceed with respect to the introduction of this. In discussing this with various members of this committee either collectively or privately, thoughts were that perhaps we didn't need all the detail that had been experienced in the past. So at this point in time I'm quite prepared to just stop, and I wonder if individual members would like to make some overview comments or provide some guidance as to how we should deal with this.

MR. WICKMAN: Again, Mr. Chairman, I go back to last year, which worked extremely well. Those members that were here last year will remember that we had a very smooth day and a half and wrapped things up. As we went through each department sort of page by page, we had the manager or the head of that department sit at the table and address any questions that came up – as questions arose, they were addressed – rather than make lengthy presentations. That was very, very effective, I thought, very efficient.

THE CHAIRMAN: To be here as additional support people rather than to provide overall. Okay.

Any comments or thoughts?

MR. RENNER: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if we might just have a brief general discussion on the overall budget before we get into the tab-by-tab discussion. I have some overall concerns, and I wonder if we might be able to address those. Certainly I think it's absolutely essential that we go through each of these tabs one at a time and be sure that we understand where we're allocating dollars, but could we have a more general discussion to start out with and then, depending upon the outcome of that discussion, move into the tab-by-tab points?

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like to begin?

MR. RENNER: Sure, I will. Mr. Chairman, I have some concern with the budget as it's presented. We've had a considerable amount of discussion among our caucus members on this committee, and as you quite rightly pointed out, although it is presented as a relatively no increase budget, a .1 percent increase, the fact of the matter is that there are some \$900,000 of increases in various areas in this budget that are there and don't appear to be as obvious as a result of a significant decrease in allocation of relocation allowances for members.

On the surface when you look at this budget and you recognize that it's about a \$22 million budget, the amount of increase seems insignificant, but if you go back and look at the numbers by taking out the line – if members will look on the first page of the summary statement, there's the line MLA administration. That line there essentially consists of statutory payments to MLAs, and there's very

little discretion on the part of this committee on what is included or is not included in that line. If one were to subtract that line from both the '98-99 estimates and the '97-98 estimates, you would see that we're basically coming from not a \$22 million base but rather an \$8 million base, and adding that \$900,000 – it's a little over \$900,000 – to an \$8 million base results in, I think, a significant increase, in the neighbourhood of 12 percent is the way I calculated it.

Frankly, Mr. Chairman, that magnitude of increase I think sends entirely the wrong message. I don't see that as being acceptable in the world that we are living in as a government in this day and age. We are talking about hold-the-line budgets all the way down the line, and I have a real concern that this committee would send the wrong message by establishing a budget that does in effect have in excess of a 12 percent increase.

2:20

I recognize that there are some pressures that need to be addressed, and you've done an excellent job of providing us with background information with respect to the wage and salary increases. The 1 and a half percent increase that was passed on to employees this year I understand was not included in last year's budget, and I think it would be reasonable that there should be an allowance set up for a further increase in the coming year. What that allowance is I'm not sure. I think a further 1 and a half percent would certainly be in the ballpark. So when we're talking an overall 3 percent increase to reflect some pressures that come on the wage and salary side, I think that is perfectly legitimate, and we've got our heads in the sand if we don't respect the wonderful people that we have working for us.

In the case of merit pay, Mr. Chairman, I'm reading things and I'm confused, and you'll have to maybe help me out. If I look at the memo that you handed out in this background information – I saw it here a little earlier. It's the first memo. It's from Mr. Dixon to deputy ministers. "Subject: Restoration of In-Range Salary Movement 1997/98." The second paragraph reads:

Effective August 1, 1997, departments may spend up to 3% of your July 31, 1997, management payroll for in-range adjustments. Note, these adjustments must be funded from your existing budgets. Note also, this is not a salary range adjustment. Therefore, employees at range maximum or overrange are not eligible for an increase.

That to me says something significantly different than the second paragraph under point 1, Merit Adjustments, where we're talking about establishing a 3 percent allocation for merit adjustments in 1997 and a further 3 percent in '98-99. I'm not convinced that that is in accordance with what is taking place in other departments across government, and I would need some clarification on that. So I think that we have to have a look at meeting some of the pressures, some of the obvious need from the wage and salary side.

This increase in the budget that we have in front of us also includes a significant amount of dollars, and frankly I'm having difficulty in sorting out the amount of dollars that is allocated to additional FTEs and that which is allocated to addressing some of the salary and wage needs. We're going from a total of approximately 80 FTEs to 89 FTEs for an overall increase of nine FTEs in round figures.

Certainly we have heard in our caucus and from our members significant concern regarding service levels in the information technology area, and we acknowledge that there needs to be some significant investment of resources in that area. We had the discussion earlier this afternoon about the increase in technology that we see around this place, and I think that we have to acknowledge that around this table.

You referred earlier to some pressures on the administrative side. There has been some downloading from departments onto the Leg.

Assembly Office, and that accounts for a number of other FTEs, but frankly, I haven't been convinced nor have my colleagues in the discussion that I had with them over the last few days that all of these FTEs that are being proposed here are absolutely necessary to maintain the level of service to our members. After all, there are 83 members in the Legislative Assembly today. There were 83 members last year and the year before that. So it's difficult for me to understand how we have to have 10 extra people to maintain current levels of service. I think there needs to be some reasonable increases in some areas. Whether they have to be across the board, I don't know if that can be determined.

There also needs to be an acknowledgment that just as the Leg. Assembly is facing some pressures and coming up against the wall with respect to wages and salaries, so are the MLAs in their constituency offices. We often have people that are long-serving members working in constituency offices. Those same types of pressures that we are experiencing in this building many of us are experiencing back home. So I think there needs to be an acknowledgement of that perhaps through a slight increase of the same magnitude at the constituency level as what we are proposing to do at the Leg. Assembly level.

All of those taken into account – and I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, because I just haven't had opportunity to deal with these numbers enough to go through them. The bottom line is that I cannot justify in my own mind – after all, these are still taxpayer dollars that we're dealing with, and this is the place that really should be setting the tone for the rest of government – approving a budget that comes forward with a 12 percent increase. I could live with some increases. I have acknowledged areas where I think there needs to be increases. I don't know that I feel that I'm in a position to start going through each of these various tabs on a line-by-line basis and deciding what goes and what stays.

I would propose that you and your staff review these numbers and go over them with a little bit more scrutiny perhaps than what has gone into them with a view to maintaining as close as possible a status quo budget, recognizing that there are some areas that need to be addressed, but I'm not convinced in my review and in my colleagues' review of all of the tabs we have in front of us that there is justification here for us to be asking for an increase in spending at the Leg. Assembly in the magnitude of a million dollars annually. I would therefore ask that the committee request that the Speaker and staff review this statement and bring it back to the committee in a form that more accurately reflects the overall spending agenda of the government.

I really hate to pull numbers from the air, Mr. Chairman, and I'm not going to. I'm going to ask that you keep in mind the comments that I have made, areas where there are concerns, but before we get into the tab-by-tab investigation of the budget, I would like to be assured in my own mind that we're going through a budget that is being developed clearly with the intention of maintaining the level of service that our members are entitled to but without enhancements that on the surface appear to be built into this budget. I'll leave my comments at that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we go to Mrs. Sloan, Mr. Wickman, Ms Barrett, I just want to clarify for Mr. Renner any misunderstanding at all with respect to the salary adjustments. On the last two pages of the document that I've circulated today – and it's been highlighted in the overview of savings in there – there is something called the January 1997 meeting.

On December 5, Treasury Board approved increases to consolidated spending targets to address 1997-98 manpower cost pressures associated with Ministry employees.

That was on December 5, 1996. The Members' Services Committee,

looking at the 1997-98 budget for the Legislative Assembly, had already reviewed – already reviewed – this budget to begin on April 1, 1997. That meeting was in November. Subsequent to that, a couple of weeks later the Treasury Board made the decision of December 5. The Members' Services Committee had another meeting in January.

2:30

DR. McNEIL: No, they didn't.

THE CHAIRMAN: They didn't have a meeting?

DR. McNEIL: They tried to schedule one.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was tried to be scheduled; it wasn't scheduled. It didn't occur, so this budget then went forward, April 1, 1998, following behind what every department of government had done. So we were one fiscal year out, and to meet that Treasury Board, at least, allocation, we would have been able to carry an additional \$80,000 in the 1997-98 fiscal year for manpower adjustments. All other departments had those dollars and had already planned for it. Then if somebody comes along and says, "Effective August 1, 1997, you may allocate to your employees a certain percentage of allocation adjustment; do it within existing dollars," these departments have the existing dollars. The Legislative Assembly Office does not have these dollars. So I just wanted to clarify that one point in there, which obviously I wasn't able to do very well before.

Mrs. Sloan, Mr. Wickman, and Ms Barrett.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are made in a general sense and are somewhat in reaction to my colleague Mr. Renner's remarks. I think the reality, perhaps, which Mr. Renner attempts to evade is that we have a reality in this province which the Auditor General pointed out very succinctly in his annual report, that our public service is extremely undervalued, underappreciated, and underpaid. While there has been reference made perhaps to government not acting in a responsible fashion with respect to employees and that business would somehow do it differently, I think the reality is, as well, that we have regional health authorities in this province that have given managerial staff incredible increases, incredible merit increases, and unbelievable severance allowances.

In the face of our employees doing the work on behalf of 83 MLAs and a population that is growing each year, continuing to ask those employees to work for less than what they would receive in the private market – I think that reality was recently recognized by the federal government. We cannot deny the fact that across this country employees of the professional institute of Canada have been offered a 27 percent increase in the information systems sector. So to suggest, I guess in general, that 12 percent across the board is not acceptable I think, Mr. Chairman, denies reality. It also denies the reality that we have not paid sufficient attention to the human resources programs for staff of the Legislative Assembly Office, and we need to do so.

Just on a partisan point it causes me discomfort as well that we would start this discussion with the suggestion that a caucus in particular is uncomfortable with the amount allocated and that there be some suggestion for an alternative amount suggested. I think we're all here in a nonpartisan fashion to discuss the issues, and to try and leverage the direction one way or another on the basis of where a caucus sits I think is unfair.

Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Renner has raised some valid

points. I look at the summary page and, for example, I see public information asking for an increase of \$134,000; House services, \$155,000; information services, \$268,000. I took that into consideration before I made my earlier comments. I disagree with him in his approach. I want to hear from Mr. Gano on information services, for example, if it's true what I'm hearing about the horror stories out there: a 90 percent turnover in staff in information services, the federal government dealing with a similar problem with computer analysis, the industry there having a problem in terms of computer analysis. If that's the reality, I want to hear it from the expert.

If Mr. Gano, for example, can't satisfy me that he requires that \$268,000, fine, then he doesn't deserve it from my point of view. But he first should be given that opportunity to justify the budget that comes in front of us. If we're not satisfied with his rationale, his justification, then we either send it back for reductions or else this committee makes the decision that we're going to reduce it by a certain amount. To refer it back at this time with that type of blanket approach for a review I don't think is the solution.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think a couple of things should be brought to Mr. Renner's attention. First of all, in the '94-95 fiscal year – and you would know, because you were here – there were positions that had previously been held by people that were either taken into evaporation by the process of attrition or simply not being refilled, so it's pretty clear that there's some catch-up required in terms of staffing levels.

To follow what Mr. Wickman was just saying, I'd just like to do an anecdotal story here and tell you that a friend of mine who graduated last year from the Microsoft certified engineering program went to work for a local hospital. She thought she had a pretty good job until a few months ago. She was getting just under \$40,000 a year. Well, a big company out of Calgary phones her up and says, "Hey, we want you." Well, you know, now she's working for 70,000 bucks a year and a whole bunch of expenses and so forth. I mean, she's got a pretty cushy life. All for that, you know, little 10-month investment in learning how to build computers from scratch. So the fact is that there really is pressure in a number of areas. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, we're lucky to still have Dr. Bill, which is my name for him.

Finally, in terms of, for example, library allocation, info systems, I think what we're looking at here is an enhancement so that we really can participate in the current level of the information superhighway, to use a way overused phrase. I believe that's appropriate. When you look at the overall number of increases from, you know, approximately 80 full-time employees to 89, it is only nine positions. For an organization as large as we are, I don't see that as being a problem.

One more point, Mr. Chairman, and that is this. In Mr. Renner's comments it sounded like I was reading *Hansard* from '93, '94, '95, but the fact of the matter is that I keep hearing the Premier saying, even at the Growth Summit, how good things are. I don't have access and I don't know if anybody at this table has access to what the government's budget is going to look like. I don't know if the AUPE members, for example, are going to get their 5 percent back. In some divisions they might; in some they might not. So a 1.5 percent increase I don't think is at all a hardship on the taxpayers, keeping in mind that the taxpayers also benefit from having public employees because they go out and spend money and they, too, pay taxes. So they help keep the economy a little bit more alive than it might be otherwise, and they are paying their taxes and their health care premiums.

Overall, I couldn't detect anything in here that would suggest that cap kind of budget, notwithstanding the general concerns that you have. You know, if the Premier is willing to phone me or Stock Day is willing to phone me and tell me what he's planning for his general budget and it's a repeat of 1994-95, then I'll say okay, all right, everybody plays on the same field. But I have no indication of that. In fact, in terms of public relations exercises I would say that the messages we're getting from many cabinet ministers are the other way around.

Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Doerksen.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the way I approach this is that it's a little different than comparing it to other areas of expenditure in the government because these are services that are for the members of the Legislature, and that means us. So anything that we'd approve here is a reflection on the kinds of services that we are demanding as members of the Legislature. We have an onus to the public to make sure that those services we demand are reasonable and appropriate, and I think we have to approach the decision on that basis. That is not a reflection in terms of the staff that work for the legislative office for the members, because I receive nothing but great service from them. I feel comfortable phoning them up and asking them for help, and they've always been helpful. If I heard Mr. Renner correctly, in his statements he says: yes, we have to recognize that and build into the budgeting process that element of recognition for the services to the members that are provided to us by the staff that you won't receive.

2:40

I think it's also been acknowledged that there is a particularly sensitive area on the information system side. We're seeing that across government. But we don't want to predict whether from your point of view that is in fact your number one item or your number two item or number three. We're sort of making the assumption here that information systems is the number one item, and it may very well be. I think that's what we need you to tell us. When we're looking at allocating some funding in the services that we are demanding, we need to know where you see the biggest demand for those dollars, because I, too, am reluctant to do a 12 percent – well, not reluctant. I find it not acceptable to do a baseline increase of 12 percent. So I would join with Mr. Renner and ask that you come back and give us a little clearer idea of where your priorities fit with respect to the provision of services.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think a lot of the points that I would make have already been made, and I'm not going to repeat them. I think there certainly is merit, obviously, in going through each of the departments as Mr. Wickman suggested, as was done last year. I don't think that's one of the issues of debate. I think there is a question, however, with regard to, quote, what are some of the overall guidelines that the committee as a whole would be willing to either accept or provide some guidance on.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would ask if we could recess for 30 minutes.

MR. WICKMAN: For how long?

MR. JACQUES: Thirty minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do all members wish to recess for 30 minutes?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The committee adjourned from 2:43 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: It is now 3:15, so the 30 minutes have evaporated.

Mr. Doerksen, you caught my eye.

MR. DOERKSEN: Yes. Mr. Chairman, in order to try to move this discussion along, I'm going to propose a motion. I understand that you're probably looking for some direction from this committee in terms of where we go from here, so I'm going to suggest that we take the budget that was approved last year, which I read to be \$22,254,982, take out the approximate million dollars that was allocated to benefits for retiring members and use that as your base figure. On that base figure, if we say that you can look at increasing that baseline by 2 percent maximum, you use that 2 percent to address your pay and compensation issues for both the LAO as well as the constituency office levels. Then use the remainder from that to address issues of importance and priority to you and the staff there as they see the pressures that need to be addressed.

I'm going to ask Dr. McNeil if he wishes to comment or you, Mr. Chairman, to make some presentations to us as to where those priorities are for you and how you would allocate those dollars. Asking you to do it today I don't think would work because you haven't had time to reflect on it. I would suggest that maybe you give us some idea as to when that might be able to happen. We want to have flexibility with you and your staff. We want to recognize the employees and the staff that work for us, and we want to make sure those messages are clear yet give you some time to come back to us within those parameters.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion, as I understand it, is that Mr. Doerksen has basically said that you look at a base for 1997-98 of \$22,254,982 and extrapolate out the difference on the re-establishment allowance. Whatever that base is, then look at it at 2 percent over and above that but within that 2 percent address the pay and compensation matters for those individuals within the Legislative Assembly Office, consider the employee aspect of constituency offices, and then come back with a list of so-called priorities that the Speaker would want to then put forward within that package. That's the motion as I understand it.

MR. DOERKSEN: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Yeah. A couple of questions first, if I could. Is it the intent of the mover of the motion to allow the department heads to participate in that review and those recommendations as to how they would achieve that limited 2 percent increase?

MR. DOERKSEN: Absolutely, and that's why I suggested that we give them time to re-evaluate the budget we have before us and come back to us once they've established their own priorities.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. My second question would be: would this method or approach not deny members of this particular committee, that represents the interest of the 83 elected MLAs, the opportunity of requesting those same department heads to rationalize or give their justification as to why these particular needs may be required, Mr. Chairman? At what point will the administration have the opportunity to address this committee: now or after the fact? That's my question to the member.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. I'm a little concerned about supporting this motion for a couple of reasons. The Leg. Assembly has taken on jobs that hitherto had been done by, for example, the department of Treasury in terms of making payments to MLAs and former MLAs. There are more than 70 former MLAs as well that have to be administered, so they have to do all of those cheques as well. While we did lose people, as I've mentioned before, I don't think the department of Treasury would want to take that job back. In fact, it was punted to the Legislature so they could get their budget shrunk a little bit.

We do some other work as well that might not be possible if we take such a strict approach of 2 percent, one of them being able to get the public accounts out, being able to get our stuff done for public accounts. I know that we've effectively lost a position in the Library, so that needs to be looked at. We've lost a position in visitor services while demand continues to grow. In fact, there are some realities here that I don't think can be taken into consideration with the 2 percent line that you're suggesting for a starting point.

I can't remember who it was earlier today who was saying: well, you know, we're looking after the tax dollars. That's certainly true, but in the meantime members and former members get a lot of service from the LAO, and the public itself does too, because when our operations are well serviced, that gives us more time to be available to people who need us. In a way I think that's pretty important, so I can see dots that haven't been connected there and would ask members to try to connect those before we try to jump to some really strict guideline.

Ultimately, it seems to me that if we do hear from the department managers, any increase in their full-time equivalents would certainly be, I would suspect, well explained and justified. I think that's the big chunk here. That's aside from what you were talking about, and that is the 1 and a half percent that has basically been decreed to go back into the workers' pockets, whichever way that plays. I think we'd be better off listening to your managers right up front. Can the member explain what kind of time line he had in mind for getting this whole thing rejigged?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Doerksen, a time line?

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, I had wished to hear from your office or from Dr. McNeil on that because that's a question that I can't answer for them. I'd rather hear from them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. But first of all, we have Mr. Renner and Mrs. Sloan on the motion.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I am in favour of the motion. I think this is a reasonable motion. I think it will help to focus the committee on the task at hand. We've been throwing around a lot of percentages all afternoon. We talked about the one and a half. Now we're talking about 2 percent. I talked earlier about 12 percent. It's all percent of what that is the big question. I think that this is really a reasonable way of dealing with this.

We recognize – and it needs to be recognized – that there are some considerable pressures that we're experiencing around this table and that the administration are experiencing. When I pointed out earlier that we really are working from an \$8 million base, the mover of this motion has not based his motion on the \$8 million base. He's in fact gone back to the overall \$21 million base, so it makes a significant difference. I talked earlier about the fact that of that \$21 million a significant portion is in statutory payments to MLAs, so those are not likely to change. We're talking an overall 2

percent increase. It will amount to in round figures \$420,000. It's not an insignificant amount of money.

Mr. Wickman indicated earlier that he wondered how this committee was going to have input. I would suggest that the committee would have just as much input under this scenario as we do at this table right now. None of us were involved in the development of the budget that we see before us. By giving some direction to the Speaker and to his staff on this overall 2 percent limit, then the committee will have as much input as we would have on this budget, because it will then come back to us, and we would go through it tab by tab. We would then have a very clear indication from LAO on where their priorities lie, where the important areas are.

This budget that we have in front of us today is not written in invisible ink; it'll still be here. If committee members feel that the priorities that come back in the revised budget do not adequately or fairly reflect the priorities of the members around this table, it's well within the responsibility and the right of this committee to amend the subsequent budget accordingly. I think that this does send a clear direction. It's a 2 percent increase, which is, I think, somewhat more reasonable.

Getting back to my \$8 million base, that I referred to earlier, it's in excess of 5 percent. I think that is a significant increase, and to me that's more than I would probably like to see, but I also recognize that there are significant pressures and that we do need to deal with some areas of importance. I also recognize, as has been pointed out around this table, that this Leg. Assembly Office to a large extent is responsible for my success and my ability to serve my constituents. So I think this is a reasonable way to go.

3:25

I think that we should allow staff – and perhaps Dr. McNeil can address even today the amount of time that it would take – to be able to have a look at their budgets and find out what the ramifications would be of living within that guideline and then come back to us. If at that time we feel that it's not acceptable, that it will not allow us to serve our constituents, well, we can deal with it then. But I think it's a good way of getting our heads around a very complex issue.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of clarifications. I am not clear on exactly the wording of the motion, so I don't know to what degree it allows this committee to make any amendments or perhaps reversals at a future date.

The second is that I would like to see the current costs for recruitment, retention, and training the Legislative Assembly Office incurs. If we wish to tie the salary and wage allotments to a 2 percent figure, I want to see the justification so that we're not, then, in essence paying through the other side of our nose for recurrent retraining, recurrent recruitment, and that we're not just ignoring the problem. That information has not been provided, I don't believe, in the reports that are before this committee, and it's a concern that I have.

I'm not quite sure how the Conservative caucus arrived at the 2 percent, and I'm not sure as well whether or not that recognizes – it seems restrictive to me overall. There may be certain classifications that are by market standard entitled to – and in order to retain them, we will have to consider more than 2 percent. If I interpret your motion, your motion is blanket.

MR. RENNER: The 2 percent is an overall spending cap. We're not dictating how it's allocated within.

MRS. SLOAN: But you're saying that it would be a max still though. You're not? Well, is that clear in the wording?

MR. RENNER: I think it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: There are three aspects to the motion, and I'll repeat them: to address the pay and compensation parameters of the LAO; to provide some type of an adjustment, undefined at this point, to the constituency offices' staff portion; and the remainder, the recommended priorities. Now, Mr. Doerksen, it was your motion. If I'm wrong or in error in terms of this interpretation, please go ahead.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, I think that's pretty accurate. We're trying to give you and your staff some direction so that you know what you're dealing with and at the same time maximum flexibility. As Mr. Renner pointed out, the 2 percent does not correlate to the increase to staff. That is something that you have to deal with, and as we've heard before, there may be considerations in IT, for instance, where that will be different than for the rest of the staff. I don't know; we need the direction from your staff on that point.

This is not part of the motion but for clarification. When it comes to the constituency staff, I might suggest that we look at making some assumptions. Out of 83 they're all different, but if we say that maybe half of our expenses are staff related, then you take 3 percent on that amount and say that that's the amount we'll increase the constituency allowance. That is somewhat close to what has been suggested in some of your documents, so that would give you a starting point for what I might suggest in terms of a constituency allowance based expansion.

Again, I want to be clear. What's important to me here is that we recognize the staff and their contribution to our lives. That's very, very important. I do not want to see this 2 percent as a demand for more services for myself as an MLA. That's not how I view it. I'm getting good service. I do not want a bunch of additional services to be provided to me just because I happen to be a member of the Legislature. So the intent of my motion is directed primarily at staff and some significant areas where we're under pressure and is not a demand for more services to my offices.

MRS. SLOAN: May I ask a supplemental?

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

MRS. SLOAN: Then if the managers review and determine that there are benefit adjustments that need to be made, how will those be dealt with in the context of your motion? Is it intended that they're encompassed in the motion or not?

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, the intent of the motion is to give some overall, broad direction. We still expect these documents to come back to us, albeit altered, showing presumably the discussion with the other managers – I don't think this is done by edict – and they'll tell us where they're going to allocate that money. We get to still debate those allocations.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess I'm still not clear. Does 2 percent include wages and benefits, or is it just wages?

THE CHAIRMAN: That's their choice.

MRS. SLOAN: So it's within their purview, then, to make adjustments on the benefit side that would be above the 2 percent?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry. Whose purview, just for clarification?

MRS. SLOAN: The managers.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the supreme manager of the LAO is the Speaker, so he will be the one doing it in consultation with his managers and signing them off.

Now, in terms of your constituency office allocations, the supreme manager is you, is the MLA. So if you want to give adjustments to your staff, you can pay them whatever you want to within the allocation that you've got. If you're going to pay somebody \$42,000 a year and pay no dollars for rent, that's your choice.

MRS. SLOAN: My question was more specific to the motion at hand. Is the 2 percent that you're proposing the ceiling for salary and benefits or just for salary?

MR. RENNER: For neither.

MRS. SLOAN: So it's for everything. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

Sorry, Mrs. Sloan. Are you finished?

MRS. SLOAN: Yes. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mr. Herard and then Mr. Wickman.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. I was just going to attempt to maybe assist with respect to that. When you talk about 2 percent overall and more than half that budget, in fact \$13 million of that budget, is in essence not going to change, then you really arrive at an overall factor of, as was stated before, 5 percent on the things that need to be decided upon by the managers of the various departments. You know, it's got nothing to do with 2 percent of salaries or wages or benefits or anything like that. It's 2 percent overall, and then we want to see a new budget based on that limitation.

MR. WICKMAN: Just one more question, Mr. Chairman. The disadvantage we have in not being able to go through the budget at this time brings a question to mind. In Mr. Renner's opening statements he made references to pressures on the constituency offices for example. I agree. There is tremendous pressure on constituency offices. We haven't had the opportunity to look at those particular budgets. The statement is being made that the MLA administration, the \$13 million, is basically locked. We haven't even discussed it. How can we make that decision at this time, that that's locked? Possibly this committee will re-evaluate and say that constituency offices need a slight increase. Does that then come out of the \$420,000 that is proposed to be allocated for the first eight departments? In other words, you're looking at a figure of \$420,000. If there are any increases in any of these other areas, is that then deducted from the \$420,000? It's my question, but it also points out the difficulty in using this particular approach, in making assumptions before we've had a chance to discuss it or ask questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, what we're doing now is discussing the motion, so this is wide open.

Mr. Jacques?

MR. JACQUES: Yes. Two things. First of all, I did want to emphasize again what Mr. Renner was putting forward, and that is that the 2 percent is based on the total. The application of those dollars, the 400 and some odd thousand, is really to a large extent for

the benefit of the \$8 million budget, which excludes the MLA administration.

3:35

Having said that, I recognize what was incorporated in Mr. Doerksen's motion, and that is that if you deem approximately one-half of the MLA constituency allowances as a round number being generally attributable to salaries, then that would also be adjusted. That number should be somewhere in the order, I think, of about \$50,000 or \$60,000 out of your \$400,000.

One thing specifically I did want to bring up, Mr. Chairman, and to Mr. Doerksen, is that we do have an anomaly with regard to the New Democratic caucus services. The intent of the motion – and I fully support it – would mean that New Democratic caucus services, which would increase by \$148,000, would come out of that 400 and some odd thousand dollars, which I do not believe was the intention of your motion. I would suggest for comparison purposes that the motion be amended to

delete the New Democratic caucus services line for purposes of determining the total amount on which the 2 percent is calculated.

If you turn to page 1, if I could, Mr. Chairman, at the very beginning, the one that's headed up Estimate Comparison by Summary Centre Code, about two-thirds of the way down you'll see a section that totals \$3,191,000. Within that figure you'll see a figure of \$234,000. Then if you jump to the next column, '97-98, you'll see a figure of \$85,690. The difference of that is \$148,000. Now, that's already been agreed to by this committee. It's an automatic in the sense that it's a given, if you like, and therefore should not have to be used in the \$400,000 or whatever that number is. It should stand alone, as we're also saying the reallocation allowances would stand alone.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion on this motion? Would it be inappropriate for the chairman to ask a couple of questions with respect to the motion, as the direction will be given to him, accompanying his staff, to make sure that this is done? How innovative does this committee really want to become in terms of doing some things?

Now, I raise this to you in this regard. Okay? One of the guidelines is status quo. This is a very serious question. Under your caucus allocations you get a blanket figure, never debated here before this committee. I support that. Under those caucus things you hire your own people, but the Legislative Assembly does the busy work. Do you want the Legislative Assembly to continue that, or would you be quite happy to do that administration within your own caucus budgets? That applies to a wide variety of statements throughout this whole budget in the sense that if an individual MLA gets an appointment by the government to serve as whatever it is, the administration for that salary and those apportionments comes under the Legislative Assembly Office. We've agreed to do that. There's no cost recovery to the department in question. We just add it on to the services we do with no staff complement added. It's just part of the increasing workload, and from an administrative point of view that can all be returned. We have no problem doing that.

My biggest question is this. In terms of the discussions I had with you, you all basically indicated that one of the concerns you had was the EDP, the electronic data processing centre. You currently within your own caucuses get a certain amount of dollars. You hired the people you have; you determined the services you have. Would you be happier if we took the dollars, whatever it costs, under information systems today, the status quo, and simply said, "Each caucus, you determine what it is you want to do in terms of the EDP within your own caucus, determine the formula for the allocation, and the LAO is out of it"? The LAO does not have to be involved

in this.

I say this as a very sincere, serious question, because certain things are being done by the LAO, and we should focus on our focus of business: to run the Legislative Assembly, to make sure we've got a Sergeant-at-Arms, to make sure we've got a Law Clerk, to make sure that everything's done, that *Hansard* is done, that the security in the inner building is done, how we should be in terms of visitor services for the Legislative Assembly, and those things.

You know, the dilemma we've got is that we've got eight staff in this area, which in our humble opinion, in terms of the demands put on us by the various caucuses and the private members for more and more services – seven out of the eight, as clearly identified, have had less than one year's experience, and we can't retain them beyond one or two years. Maybe we're not doing the best job. Maybe it's better just to take those funds and you do them internally within your own caucuses. Have your own network, if that's what you want, because this is becoming increasingly a manpower-intensive area and an increasingly costlier area, and that is driving most of these increases in here.

Quite frankly, if there's a better way of doing it, I don't have any problem as the Speaker of the Assembly recommending it to that committee. But I want to know if you can help me as we pursue this. We have no problem doing this, and in fact I can be back here by 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon with this revision. We'll work – I won't go to a certain meeting tomorrow morning – and we'll get it done for 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, because I think there's some importance to doing it and within the guidelines if this motion is passed and approved. But if there are some other areas where you think it could be done better, I don't have a problem. If somebody wants to offer some suggestions on that, I'd be happy to receive them. If you don't have any suggestions, that's fine too.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, when you say you'll have it back by tomorrow at 2 o'clock, I look at the time now and what's in between. There's a massive impact from the motion that may very well pass, and I don't think it's fair, again, to force yourself and the staff to come back by 2 o'clock tomorrow with the revision that would properly reflect the priorities within legislative services. I don't think it's reasonable.

THE CHAIRMAN: Monday soon enough?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I'd prefer not to see the motion go through, but if it has to be, let's have some damage control.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry. Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm really, I guess, wanting to ask a frank question to the Conservative caucus about how much forethought they've given this issue. I made the point earlier that I have not seen the figures on recruitment, retraining, and retention. It's all well and good to say maybe we want to fragment some of the services in each caucus, accrue their own, but to me that does not serve the long-term interests of Albertans. The reality could be that there could be an election where there's a dramatic shift in representation. All of a sudden you have a very fragmented system, and this Legislative Assembly Office is the glue that holds it all together during the course of an election. If it's all fragmented, as the chairman has suggested, it seems to me that that glue is not going to work very well.

I am not in support of the motion for three reasons. Number one, I would have liked to have had a much broader discussion of the elements of the budget, and it seems to me that this motion circumvents that from happening. Number two, we have not as this

committee addressed the recruitment, retraining, and retention issues. Number three, I would like to see a longer view taken with respect to this discussion and have some formal proposals brought forward in that regard rather than having it verbally.

On that note, Mr. Chairman, I am still not completely clear on the exact wording of the motion.

3:45

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Mr. Renner, do you want to add something further? We're still on the motion, so we'll go back. We can have Corinne reread the motion if you wish. Would that be helpful?

MR. RENNER: I'd like to respond in a couple of areas, first of all to your comments, Mr. Chairman. I think that members of this committee should be open to all kinds of innovative and different ways of doing things. I'm not so sure I'm thrilled to death with the couple that you threw out, but it doesn't hurt to look, and we could explore them. You know, I rarely agree with Mrs. Sloan, but I think she makes a good point that perhaps if we left each caucus responsible for development of their own IT areas, we could create some long-term problems overall for government. So I'm not sure that that is a logical approach, but there may well be some other ways that would be much better than the way we're doing it now. I know that you just kind of threw that one out.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. I've been thinking of this for a long time. Nothing in this document here has just been thrown out. This booklet has been worked on in consultation with the managers, the directors, and everything else.

MR. RENNER: No. I didn't mean the document was thrown out; I meant the suggestion. You know, I think we should be open to some innovative and different ways of doing things.

I want to get back to the actual motion though. I'm not sure that there's general agreement or understanding around this table on what the motion exactly says. I hear Mrs. Sloan saying that the committee will not have an opportunity to discuss the details of the budget. Well, that's clearly not true. The committee will have ample opportunity to discuss the budget, but it will be doing so in the context of a budget that has been reworked with some parameters around it, and it's entirely up to the committee to decide whether or not they want to agree with those parameters.

It has absolutely nothing to do with recruitment and retraining, because the motion does not in any way put a cap on salaries and wages. In fact, if the staff wants to take that \$400,000 and put it entirely in wages, that would still meet the requirements of the motion. I'd have a little difficulty with how it would meet the requirements for addressing some of the areas in the constituency and IT and some of the things that Vic talked about, but it does not put any kind of a cap on wages and salary settlements. It puts a cap on the overall spending increase for this department, for lack of a better term. Leg. Assembly last year spent \$21 million. Next year, if this motion were to pass, it would spend \$21.4 million instead of \$22 million, as we have in front of us. That's it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Coutts.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm supporting the motion. I'm hearing within the wording of the motion that there's some concern from some of the members around the table that it may be restrictive when it comes to giving this Members' Services Committee its scrutiny. I don't see that. As a matter of fact, in your comments in the discussion you've opened the door to a broader

discussion, and the scrutiny that we give may include part of that broader discussion.

I've sat around this table and have seen that when the various department heads bring their budgets and their ideas forward, there are some strong comments and questions being brought forward by every single, solitary member of this committee, from all caucuses. I think we have an open opportunity at this point in time to bring forward (a) the reports back from the various department heads based on the guidelines of the motion, (b) an open door here where some of your ideas that were placed on the table could be configured into their plans, and I hope that we'd all be given till Monday to take a look at how this could be restructured. I know very well that this committee will spend a couple of good solid days to rework this so that it's workable for everyone. I see some greater things happening here and know very well that this committee will make sure that this gets full scrutiny. This is not a done deal by this motion. I just don't see it as that. I see it coming back fully for full discussion, so I heartily support the motion.

Thank you.

MS OLSEN: Just a couple of comments. I would rather, as Mr. Renner stated earlier, that the 2 percent he's talking of in the overall budget be not necessarily written in stone. However, he wants to give the parameters of 2 percent. I'm concerned that when you work within that number, it's going to be one or the other in terms of the ability to give the staff the marginal or minimal increase that may have to occur or the ability for us to have the appropriate supports through ISS. That really concerns me. I would rather see the budget debated and, quite frankly, questions to each manager in supporting what they're asking for. Without justification, then it shouldn't be approved. I think that gives us a little more latitude. Right now I think the motion is really restrictive. It basically handcuffs the department managers in trying to come up, then, with their own solution.

Maybe you have \$400,000. Your comment was, well, it can go all to salary. Well, if it's going to be one or the other, then the needs are not going to be met. I mean, there has to be a balance here, and I don't think we're reaching the balance. I think that we should debate the budget as it stands and as it's come out. Then any reductions in that budget can be made, or we can request a review, as easily as we can on your position of reducing it down to 2 percent, and go from there. I think the work has been done, and I'm going to assume that there's been a tremendous amount of work put forward by the Speaker and the LAO and that they already have put forward their needs. It's a matter now of us determining whether those are in fact needs that can be met or whether we indeed want to pass a budget of 12 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent, whatever it is. I think the arguments and the debate have to go forward, and then we look at the overall picture at the end of those debates. I think that's the way it should proceed, and I can't support the motion based on this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps it might be appropriate for the Clerk just to give some background in terms of how this process was used, if it's okay with members.

DR. McNEIL: I've been around here for 10 years, and the approach that we've taken in the time I've been around is that the managers attempt to assess what the needs are. For the most part we're not talking about the managers' needs; we're talking about the members' needs, because what we're here for is to serve the members. What we've done, because we ourselves can't determine what the members' priorities are, is each manager puts forward, with some discussion among the group of managers and with the Speaker, what his perception is of the priorities. In the times of restraint that we've had

over the past three or four years, we've factored that into account, and then we've presented a budget. It's been up to the committee then, in looking at the whole set of proposals put forward, as to what they then conclude should be there and shouldn't be there.

3:55

It may be difficult – and I can't tell you the answer to this in this particular situation – for us to decide how much emphasis we should put on adding human resources in the human resources area to do the payment of members or whether or not we should allocate the resources in the financial management area to generate the public accounts or handle our own chequing account. That's the difficulty that we always face. What we try to do is sort of look at the overall picture and then let the committee decide, because it's in effect the committee whose needs we are attempting to deal with. The managers then have to sit here and justify what they're saying, and sometimes, you know, they'll say: this is for maintaining our existing level of service. In other areas they say: this is to improve our services. Then the committee can decide: "Yes, we want that," or "No, we don't want that."

That's just the process we've used in the past. We haven't, generally speaking, observed a particular percentage guideline, but that's not to say we can't do that. I'm just saying that in the history of this committee it's been more the other way around, sort of laying out what our assessment is of where the pressure points are and then letting the committee decide what the priorities are in that presentation.

MRS. SLOAN: Is there any reception on the Conservative side to amending, withdrawing, or deferring the motion until the office has had an opportunity to perhaps look at this angle in hand with what aspects of their proposal that has been provided to us would be impacted? There's a number of questions that come to mind just in taking what I think is the motion into the context of this proposal, and there's a number of questions that I don't have answers to. Does your motion propose that there would be no fiscal pressure contingency? Is there an allowance being made for unionized staff? In terms of the allocation, the ballpark that's going to be considered there, does this 2 percent ceiling apply to them as well? Is it intended that your 2 percent applies to or includes the creation or alteration of classifications and staff complements? All of those types of things. As well, does that 2 percent also incorporate training?

I feel that where we stand, Mr. Chairman, we're at a point where the motion is somewhat binding not only to the committee but to the ability of the office to bring back. It seems to me that if we pass the motion as it currently stands, it is going to restrict us from considering these other factors.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I think if there is a concern that certain things such as training and retention are concerns, that can be the subject of another motion. In other words, we could ask the departments to deal with that and provide us with that. I believe Mrs. Sloan is quite right: there's not a whole lot in here that speaks to that with respect to what we have before us. So if that's a concern, well, certainly I don't think I would oppose that kind of a motion.

I don't believe the motion that's on the floor at this point in time is restrictive in any way with respect to allowing other members to bring their own motions forward if they feel that they need information of a particular type or whatnot. I think what this does is set certain parameters with respect to giving direction to the

department heads to go back and look at the budget in light of the 2 percent overall and to come back. I think the chairman was quite right, you know: innovative solutions. Sometimes necessity is the mother of innovation. So in this case I'm sure that we'll be able to debate every section of the estimates based on new information which could very well, if the motion is made, include the concerns that we hear from Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Just one other point of information to try and lend some degree of thoughtfulness to this. You calculate your proposal at roughly \$400,000. Divide that by the 151 employees, approximately, in the Legislative Assembly Office. What that translates into is only approximately a \$2,600 adjustment. I think in light of the fact that these employees have taken 5 percent, they're already, by industry standards, way behind in some of the classifications.

This motion is, I think, extremely regressive, Mr. Chairman. I would ask the Conservative members to reconsider and give more thought to whether or not they want to bind the decision in this regard.

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Chairman, I think one of the things that we have to keep in mind, as someone who was in management previously, is that you come up with a budget, and the head honchos or whoever maybe don't like it and say: "Go back; rework your budget. See what you can do within the defined of the 2 percent or the 5 percent or the 10 percent. You work with that again, and you come back." No one's saying that 2 percent is sworn in blood, but what we're saying at this point in time is: "We'd like you to go back, rework your budget, find out your pressure points. See if you can come back to us with a 2 percent increase overall, and we'll work from there."

I'd like to call the question. I think this has been debated enough.

THE CHAIRMAN: Question. All those in favour – do you want me to read the motion again, or are you okay?

MRS. SLOAN: Yeah. That would be good, probably, if you'd read it.

THE CHAIRMAN: From the words of the secretary:

Moved by Mr. Doerksen that the Members' Services Committee start with the budget approved in the 1997-98 fiscal year minus the NDP caucus allocation minus the establishment allowance and increase this baseline by 2 percent, funds to be used to address pay and compensation levels for the LAO staff and constituency staff, with the remainder to be used to adjust priority issues as identified by the Speaker.

Is that correct? All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those opposed, please say nay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the ayes have won.

Okay. We can come back tomorrow at 2 o'clock. I can have this done. In essence, the intent of the motion is that there's approximately \$420,000, and with my reading of the adjustments in terms of the salaries, it would probably be \$250,000 or something like that with the whole thing. So we're dealing with \$150,000 in priority items, and I can tell you that by 2 o'clock tomorrow. So if you want to have it at the next meeting, we can do it tomorrow. In essence, basically the '97-98 estimate lines, plus adding three

different adjustments in about three different areas, and that'll be that.

Okay. So tomorrow at 2 o'clock?

Anyway, we're not finished the agenda, if I can just follow through on that one. Although we did skip to 6, it was scheduled anyway, so that's not the issue. Old business was 5(a), the Former Member Survey. That is a follow-through. There's an item in a tab in here as a follow-through with materials that you had from a previous review by a Members' Services Committee. It's here as much for information as the like. There was a survey done of members to ask them if they would be prepared to entertain a survey, and the general consensus was yes. So my intent would be to basically send this thing out at some time in the future when I do a regular mailing to all former members.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would move that we strike the item from the agenda.

Speaking to it briefly, the administration spent a great deal of work on this, and I was never convinced from day one that it was going to achieve anything beneficial. It's an idea somebody had, that we look at priorities today in terms of time and effort. To me it's a waste of time and a waste of money. I think we can just drop it and get on with other things.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want to make a motion to that effect?

MR. WICKMAN: I made a motion that we drop it from the agenda.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, you did: that we drop it from the agenda.

4:05

MR. WICKMAN: Right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anyone else want to participate in the discussion? Question?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of dropping 5(a) from the agenda?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Okay. It's been carried and dropped. We'll be back tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

MS OLSEN: Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, madam.

MS OLSEN: Could I make a motion – and I know it's going to be a little tough on some of the smokers – that we don't smoke in this room during the meetings. I would appreciate that. I have an allergy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS OLSEN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want a motion on this?

MS OLSEN: Yup. Oh, no. Okay. Agreed?

THE CHAIRMAN: Why don't all the members voluntarily agree to

refrain from smoking instead of abandoning the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS OLSEN: Come on.

THE CHAIRMAN: You've said the same thing. What's the wrap on this?

AN HON. MEMBER: Agreed.

MS OLSEN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Motion to adjourn? Mr. Herard, you have something else?

MR. HERARD: Yeah. We kind of got quickly into that other agenda item. One of the difficulties . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Which agenda item, sir?

MR. HERARD: Well, when we talked about the survey that was done.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's already been voted on, and it's been dropped.

MR. HERARD: I understand that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. HERARD: We kind of got quickly into that without finishing the other subject, in my view. That is, one of the difficulties I think we have in all of this is that we are only provided with information that deals with '97-98. How difficult would it be to add a column to show us '96-97 in terms of these estimates so that we could see . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, the estimates. I'm sorry. Okay. Estimates.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. I meant to discuss that prior to getting into all this other stuff. That's one of the difficulties that we see: only looking at '97-98 on everything and not seeing anything from '96. You know, there are some things that happened, I'm sure, with respect to the LAO having to take over the payment of bills and payroll and all that sort of stuff that happened in prior years which we don't understand because we weren't members at that time. So I think it would be helpful to have some of that background as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, as you already have it, we thought it would be redundant to do that. I mean, in the spring of 1997 in the Alberta Legislative Assembly you as members of the Assembly approved the Legislative Assembly estimates, and the numbers that you're asking for are included in these estimates. It's there.

MR. HERARD: Those are the actual?

THE CHAIRMAN: They're there. Yeah. The comparable for 1996-97. Yeah.

MR. RENNER: In the same format?

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. Yeah, it's all there.

MR. HERARD: Great. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Tomorrow at 2 o'clock. Motion to adjourn?

MRS. FORSYTH: Motion to adjourn.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The committee adjourned at 4:08 p.m.]

