

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

2 p.m.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is Thursday, and this is designated convening time for this particular committee, so may we call this committee to order.

Yesterday, prior to adjourning, I'd indicated that we would be prepared to come back today to deal with the motion that was moved by Mr. Doerksen and approved by the committee and bring you back some additional information with respect to the parameters of the motion. So being circulated now for each member are a number of pieces of paper. Perhaps we'll just wait a minute or two till they are there.

In the meantime, I'd just advise committee members that I've now been advised by the government caucus of their designate to work on Bill 205 as a result of the decision of the committee yesterday. They're going to nominate Mr. Glen Clegg. I don't know if the other two caucuses have got a designate to look after Bill 205.

MS OLSEN: We haven't met yet, but we will on Wednesday.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. WICKMAN: Glen smokes; doesn't he?

THE CHAIRMAN: Pardon me?

MR. WICKMAN: He smokes; doesn't he?

THE CHAIRMAN: What's that got to do with the issue?

MS BARRETT: I can tell you which person from our caucus is going to be nominated.

MS OLSEN: That would be Raj, Pam. That would be Raj.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: In front of you should be about five pieces of paper. The first one is a white sheet that has on it the motion that was moved by Mr. Doerksen as well as the *Hansard* yesterday dealing with the motion. The motion was moved by Mr. Doerksen that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services calculate the 1998-99 LAO budget estimates by starting with the 1997-98 approved LAO budget estimates in the amount of \$22,254,982, adding the New Democrat caucus leader's allowance of \$148,343 approved on April 30, 1997, less the net reduction in re-establishment allowance, then calculating 2 percent of this baseline, which amount would be used to address pay and compensation levels to LAO staff and constituency staff, with the remainder being used to address priority issues as identified by the Speaker.

That was the motion that all agreed to. Officials of the LAO and I met yesterday afternoon, and some of them met in the evening, and we met again this morning. So probably four or five hours were then spent addressing a series of decisions arising out of that.

The second sheet that you have has the title Calculation of Funds Available to Fund 2% Adjustment over 1997-98 Budget (Adjusted). So this is how it was done to get the available numbers. The 1997 net budget base is \$22,254,982. We subtracted the '97-98 re-establishment allowance of \$1,250,000. We added the ND leader's allowance of \$148,343. We added for the 1998-99 budget for re-establishment the figure that we're carrying in the event of two members, \$109,260. We added the reinstatement of the portion of compensation reduction, \$52,779. That was the percentage factor

we talked about yesterday during one of the discussions. So the total 1997-98 budget comparison base is \$21,315,364. Then 2 percent of that amounts to \$426,307. This is the specific figure. Yesterday you were talking \$425,000 or something like that. Then less the adjustment to constituency human resources budgets of \$58,956.

MR. WICKMAN: Could you explain that, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, I certainly will.

MR. WICKMAN: Is that the 2 percent?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry?

MR. WICKMAN: Is that based on 2 percent per average salary cost per . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no, no. I'll explain that though.

Yesterday in the discussion dealing with the human resources budget – this is the staff component of constituency offices – the figure was used of about 50 percent. Well, we did a little check yesterday and last night and this morning, and actually it's closer to 60 percent. So what we took was the constituency office allocation of \$39,462 times 83 times 3 percent – not 2 percent but 3 percent – times .6 because it's 60 percent. So that comes to \$58,956. In essence, this would then be reallocated back starting April 1, 1998. We'd simply divide \$58,956 by 83 constituencies because there are 83 constituencies. Whatever that figure is would be added to your \$710.32, and that's based on 60 percent of the constituency cost being manpower rather than the 50 percent yesterday. Our runs said that was so; I think we wanted to be accurate with that. Less the adjustment to the LAO human resources budgets: the figure that we gave in terms of total manpower costs for the LAO, of that 3.1 or so million dollars – that was 3 percent of that – is \$105,558. The same percentages were used for both. Subtracting that – that was what the first part of the motion said we should do – we then were left with \$261,793. The direction then was that the Speaker and the LAO should look at their priorities in terms of their budgets and deal with that \$261,793, which we have done.

On the following page, then we went through each one of these segments in the briefing book that you have. We looked at the base for this current year and we said: okay, fine; we've got a whole series of priorities here, there, and what-have-you. We've prioritized them all and then allocated in the management approach the \$261,750 in the following ways. The financial management and administration area would receive \$28,750; the human resources services area, \$47,000; the Speaker's office, \$17,000. The public information branch would be held at its current norm. The library: \$19,000 to deal with a number of issues that we'll come to later. House services: \$50,000. Information Services, because it was identified that in essence the EDP area was a prime concern to the three caucuses, received the majority of those dollars, \$100,000. That comes to \$261,750.

So the next page is the green sheet and includes these allocations. The second column, the 1997-98 estimate, is what is in the book, the current budget. The 1998-99 column deals with this global amount of dollars which includes the human resources amounts plus the so-called enhancement amounts. The pink sheet only shows the enhancement amounts without the human resources ones. As an example, you'll see that the green sheet figures for 1998-99 have the human resources components in each one of these little divisions included in them, whereas on the pink sheet they're not included in each one but come in globally in a figure at the bottom. So you come right to the bottom for the grand total on both pages. Of

course, they're exactly the same, and it shows a percentage change of minus 2.5 percent overall in this particular budget.

Now, I would be very happy to go to each and every one of these areas in the book if you so desire and would stop a moment to perhaps deal with a few questions on the global nature if you have them.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, from my point of view, it's not necessary to go through each of those because they're self-explanatory, based on the figures we got yesterday and the reductions and the pluses we see here. But my one question pertains basically to the budget adjustments of 2 percent, the \$261,000. By the calculations yesterday I remember Rob saying it was something like \$820,000, so that means that there's a difference of roughly \$650,000 in terms of a reduction from what the administration had requested for these different areas.

My concern now is that there hasn't been any item – like, every year we seem to go through this thing where the photographs are attempted to be charged totally to the constituency office to relieve that portion of the administrative budget. There's no other impact where we see any other budgets being shifted as a result of this reduction?

2:10

THE CHAIRMAN: The status quo was the word that seemed to come through much of the discussion yesterday, and that basically is the principal theme that goes through this.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if again you could just clarify the total on the pink sheet with the total on the green sheet. If I look at the right-hand column and the middle column, the totals are the same. Then you had mentioned that the pink sheet excludes . . . [interjection] Aha. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're at the back.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you. That was pointed out.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're the same numbers.

Would there be additional questions? Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: I have questions, but I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, if it's an appropriate time to raise them or whether or not there has been a change of position with respect to the Conservative caucus as to what their expectations are, what the ceiling might be.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm not in a position to answer that. We're dealing here with the resolution that we were asked to deal with.

MRS. SLOAN: Fair enough. I'll then proceed to ask my questions, unless we hear from the Conservatives that they are changing the requirements.

I think the LAO is to be commended for putting together a package of very comprehensive goals and performance measures. My first question relates to uncertainty as to whether or not the goals as they were proposed to the committee are going to be able to be met. I can go through each section individually, but perhaps just for the purposes of using it as an example, we could deal with financial management and administration. The allocation of \$28,000 falls dramatically short of what was initially sought, so I'm wondering whether the LAO has an indication of which goals will be met in that

area. Will the procedure review be done? Will the reporting standards and bank account be established? Will there be any sort of contingency fund set up? Which goals as proposed on the first page of that section will it be possible to achieve with the minuscule amount of money that is being allocated?

THE CHAIRMAN: In the section that you have in the budget book there are some pages, and at the back of the pages is the summary of the budget variances for each one of these divisions showing what we were requesting and what this particular branch was requesting. It means that we will not be able to deal with all of the new things that we're requesting, but there was a very inherent and I think a very, very responsible assessment from all of the managers yesterday afternoon and last evening and this morning. Basically, the agreement was: we're going to try and do the very, very best that we can do within the parameters of what we have, maintain the current level of service and try and enhance it a bit if we can, look at innovation, try to work smarter and sharper, and all the rest of those things. So it's pretty subjective. We need to have a chance now in the next number of months, in the next year, to prove that we can do it within the parameters we've been given.

MR. WICKMAN: Shouldn't we, Mr. Chairman, from a procedural point of view, have each of the department heads come forward as we go through each department so that the type of questions Linda has asked could be directed to that manager? Because that manager could best answer those questions. It's a fair question that Linda's asking. I just don't think you're in a position to answer it. Department heads should be able to.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm entirely at the hands of the committee. Yesterday I heard the member who's just given his statement say quite the opposite.

MR. WICKMAN: No, I didn't say the opposite yesterday.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, you said you didn't want to have all the managers appear before us.

MR. WICKMAN: No. I said to have them there in case there were any questions asked.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm quite prepared to deal with it in any way, shape, or form that committee members would like to deal with it. Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. I just had a question on the calculation of funds available.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. HERARD: That's the "Add reinstatement of portion of compensation reduction, \$52,779." I'd just like to have my memory refreshed on that one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yesterday we talked about the 1 and a half percent that the previous committee had not been able to deal with. I'll ask the Clerk to comment further.

DR. McNEIL: Yes. We handed out some material yesterday in terms of the various adjustments that have been applied in government. The first of those was a reinstatement of a portion of the 5 percent salary reduction, that was reinstated across government effective April 1, 1997, and for which all departmental budgets in government received funding in the '97-98 budget. The only budgets

that did not receive that funding were the Legislative Assembly envelope budgets because the committee chose not to meet in January of 1997 to consider that issue. That reinstatement is, I guess, recognizing that since all government budgets in '97-98 included that amount, therefore the base for the Legislative Assembly budget should also include that.

MR. HERARD: A supplementary. Perhaps I'm confused, but I thought that this was handled from within current budgets last year; in other words, that it was not done, that there was not a reinstatement of any proportion.

DR. McNEIL: If you remember the material that was handed out yesterday, there was a series of information there, one of which related to a directive from Treasury dated December 5, 1996, indicating that the budget guidelines were to be increased in each department, after which we were approached by Treasury to add that to our own budget. But because our budget had already been set, we did not have the opportunity to do so. So this is recognizing that the base should include the return of that 1.5 percent of the 5 percent adjustment, which all employees in the Legislative Assembly Office have received and which was funded only in our case from the budget allocated. We were not provided with additional funds to support that 1.5 percent increase.

MR. HERARD: Okay. So I guess I do have it right then. You did in fact fund it internally from existing budgets, so that was sort of out of your global LAO budgets. Now you're suggesting that you need that back after the year-end, so to speak.

DR. McNEIL: Exactly. The basis of that argument is because that money was given back to government departments in the '97-98 budget.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to compliment everyone who was involved in putting together these revised numbers. I think that while it could be argued, on the \$52,000 that Mr. Herard was just referring to, that 2 percent of \$52,000 is not a significant number that I think we need to spend a whole lot of time debating around this table now, I see this as meeting substantially the intent of the motion that was made yesterday, and I certainly would be prepared to proceed on the basis of the numbers that we have in front of us.

I would just like to remind Mrs. Sloan that when we look at the second page, which has the allocation of increases to each of the various departments, that is the increased net of the human resource adjustments. For example, when you were talking about financial management administration, the increase of \$28,000, that \$28,000 is over and above the increase that is also included to address the human resource side. So it would be a larger increase than that, and I don't know exactly what those numbers would be. They would vary from department to department depending upon the number of staff involved. For example, where we see \$100,000 proposed as an increase for information systems, that's a hundred thousand new dollars in addition to what was in the previous budget. Also, there would be an additional amount allocated to that budget to address the human resource needs.

2:20

If you look at the very first page, when we talk about the

calculation, 2 percent of the '97-98 comparison base is \$426,000, and of that, there is a component that is required to address the needs for human resources, leaving a total of \$261,000 for true, new dollars that would be available for additional programming. Basically, this is what I would see in these numbers. These are true, increased numbers that are available for additional services to members. All existing services should be covered by the existing budget, so in any of these cases there should be additional services provided to members. In the case of financial management and administration, services totaling \$28,000, additional services will be available to members. All existing services would be covered, and the human resource side would also be covered within this proposed budget.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The difference between the figure on the green sheet and the figure on the pink sheet on the 1998-99 columns is the manpower costs. So in the case of the example just used, information systems, which has been increased to \$100,000, there also is an adjustment there of \$13,000 approximately.

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the purposes of making the record clear, I think Mr. Renner has made a very valiant attempt to suggest that this is a progressive budget. However, I will restate the points I made yesterday. We have no indication and no information to suggest that the deferral of costs by imposing the 2 percent ceiling is not going to be paid subsequently from the other side of our nose in retraining, recruitment, and retention costs at some later date.

I think the other fact, which Mr. Renner evaded, was the fact that the recommendations made with respect to hiring additional staff people and increasing complements from perhaps .6 to full-time are not going to be able to be encompassed by the ceiling that has been imposed. Therefore, while the chairman and, I'm sure, the management staff are going to make a very valiant attempt to work within the ceiling that they've been given to work with, the reality is that that may be very difficult to do. It may compromise services not only for current members but for past, retired members. How that shortfall is going to be picked up – if it's a matter of deferring it, then so be it, I guess. Let's make that very clear for the purpose of the record.

MS BARRETT: Well, a couple of things. I do have a question. I'll make a couple of observations first. Based upon the assumption that between yesterday and today we would be dealing with this budgetary matter for approximately five hours, the difference between the numbers that are being presented today and yesterday comes to \$412,000 and change. By my calculations that means that what we're doing on an hourly basis is discussing equivalent to \$82,000 per hour of discussion. By my calculation that would mean that if we were spending the same amount of discussion time debating the \$130 million that we're probably going to lose to AI-Pac, we would need 1,576 hours.

So having made the point, I think, I would like to say that the one we didn't get in this package is the difference between the FTEs that we had last year and the FTEs – I mean we're talking about the creation of a phenomenal nine jobs. I know that Alberta is so broke that we can't afford the nine jobs. Can anybody tell me which of these nine jobs will not be refilled either because they were abolished or because they were just not posted after a person left it or it was left by attrition? Can somebody tell me this?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we will. Remember that on the sheet you had yesterday, the current component for FTEs for 1997-98 was 79.9. The first budget proposal yesterday, at least the one that came

forward, was looking at 89.1, and it was broken down. We should have had a sheet. I'm sorry; I guess we ran out of time.

MS BARRETT: Well, it was an awful lot to do in a very little time frame.

DR. McNEIL: I had a sheet, but it didn't have all the numbers correct on it. I'll calculate it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Maybe you can help by looking at the sheet.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Essentially, I think the formative area would be the information services one, where the \$100,000 was to be for two manpower. Mr. Gano, in your area, information systems, there were two manpower there. Is that correct?

MR. GANO: Yes, that's right. Instead of three.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have some questions for Mr. Gano, and I guess I'm really concerned about the information systems services.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could I interject for just a second?

MS OLSEN: Sure.

THE CHAIRMAN: How would hon. members like to deal with this?

MR. WICKMAN: Department by department.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's organized in a certain way. Maybe there are some there are no questions on where we move on; otherwise, we'll be bouncing around here, there, and everywhere. So would you like to take it one at a time with your questions?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll go back to the first one, then, and the first one is the financial management and administration area. The manageress in that area is Jacqueline Breault. We've got it all identified, so if there's a particular question an individual member would like to raise, would you kindly do it through the chair, and then we'll just keep it co-ordinated that way.

Questions in this area? Then I gather there are none, so thanks very much, Jacqueline. Oh, I'm sorry. Am I going too fast?

MRS. SLOAN: I'm wondering if perhaps Jacqueline can answer the questions that I asked at the onset with respect to this area. Will there be a contingency? Will the department be able to establish the bank account and fulfill the reporting standards? Will the procedural review be done?

MS BREault: In terms of the bank account and preparation of financial statements, my area currently is responsible for that now. There have been some changes in government overall in terms of departments being responsible for preparing financial statements that will appear in their annual reports and will be audited by the Auditor General, as I understand. So we are looking forward to ensuring that we prepare complete, accurate, and appropriate financial statements. Given the increase that I requested, I believe we'll be able to handle

that. With my current complement of staff I think we have the necessary expertise, and this will allow us to either bring somebody in if there is a deficiency or allow other staff to participate in that process if they need to be called away from, say, direct processing.

As well, for the Legislative Assembly bank account I believe, again, that having the one position in total, we'll be able to accommodate that and ensure that the proper controls and, again, reporting are in place.

I'm not quite sure what you meant by "contingency."

MRS. SLOAN: I believe the intent was to have a contingency fund established which was to be a cushion for any unanticipated salary adjustments or market adjustments.

DR. McNEIL: There's no allowance for contingency in any of the budgets nor overall.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. So what would be the reality, then, of that? Would the department run a deficit if those adjustments occur and there's no contingency? What is the plan? What would be the plan?

DR. McNEIL: Well, we can't run a deficit.

MRS. SLOAN: Regional health authorities do.

DR. McNEIL: If we had unexpended funds in some areas, depending upon where they were, we'd either have to deal with it within the LAO or come back to the committee to suggest a reallocation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner, did you want to get involved in this?

MR. RENNER: I just have one question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

This is without a contingency, so there are actually the two options that the Clerk had indicated and a third one. If the government decides to deal with this sometime in this next budget, we're going to assume that the employees associated with the LAO would also be covered in the same way that all employees in the public service would be covered as well. If it were to be a new policy or a new statement, then I don't know how else we could deal with that.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. If I look at the financial information, the forecast for '97-98 is roughly \$300,000, which is about \$26,000 less than the estimate, and then the estimate for next year will now rise to \$364,000. Is there a particular reason why we would be substantially under budget for this year, and how would we expect that to be reflected next year?

2:30

MS BREault: This year I had vacancies in my office, one of which was the accountant's position, which has been filled, and one is another accounting assistant's position, which has yet to be filled. There were lapses between when the individuals left and the point at which we recruited them and they were hired, so there were some gaps in that respect that we anticipate being filled effective '98-99.

MS BARRETT: Jacquie, does this revised budget allow for the hiring of the additional person that had been requested?

MS BREault: Yes. That's essentially what would cover it, the

\$28,750.

MS OLSEN: Jacquie, have you set any benchmarks, targets, or outcomes for your performance measurements?

MS BREault: We are certainly in the process thereof. Our branch has gone through a number of changes, I guess, over the past four to five years, especially concerning having a greater role in the financial information system. Right now we're in the process of looking at what procedures, what processes we're using, what we believe are efficient guidelines, time lines, tasks, and we hope to set some guidelines for all members of the staff in the branch to measure ourselves against in the coming year.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. Can you identify stress points or goals that you would not be able to achieve as a result of losing the additional money that had been requested? What won't you be able to do?

MS BREault: What we may not be able to give as much attention to is the issue of electronic commerce. We have some opportunities which we're trying to move forward on whereby large vendors, a.k.a. Telus or Diner's Club/enRoute, can provide information to us in electronic form that would be able to enhance our reporting both for ourselves internally and to you as members. As well, it may aid in data entry in terms of being able to transmit information from their source, electronic disk or electronic file, directly into our system. That would mean we'd have to try it out, make sure it was debugged. We'd need the assistance certainly of the information systems technology department. That may be something that we can't take advantage of as much as we would like to.

MS BARRETT: And are there any stress points that you can anticipate during the coming year as a result of a lower than asked for budget that could turn into potential crises endangering systems?

MS BREault: We have a requirement to prepare the financial statements and submit them to a central agency like Treasury. Our timeliness is probably the most distressing thing in my mind. There's a move to be more accountable and more timely, and that could suffer as a result of just not being able to get them out as quickly as we would like.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. You can see how important your answers were to some members at the table.

MS OLSEN: With the hiring of the accountant, how is that going to impact the turnaround time? In some instances the payment to some people that we've done business with has been very slow to come, and I'm a little concerned when some of the members are getting reminder statements.

MS BREault: We do have an accountant on staff right now. This accounting position could potentially be of assistance to the accountant with some of the other initiatives that we're considering pursuing, which would in turn allow him more time to address the issue of timeliness.

We've certainly in the past prided ourselves on having good turnaround. We know that members do a lot of business with small business, and it's important for them in terms of cash flow to get paid promptly. So if we are falling behind in that, that is something that is of concern to us. We would like to keep up our good record, and

certainly an extra person would help take the stress and strain off the staff currently in place.

THE CHAIRMAN: Additional questions of Ms Breault?

Jacqueline, thank you very much then.

I'm sorry. Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: This question, Jacqueline, you may not be able to answer. Given the responsibility overall that you have for the financial administration, do you have any idea of what the recruitment and training costs have been overall for the last year in the LAO?

MS BREault: I'm afraid I don't. Off the top of my head I couldn't answer that accurately.

MRS. SLOAN: Would you have a ballpark average?

MS BREault: No, I'm afraid not.

DR. McNEIL: That question would probably be best addressed to the director of human resources.

THE CHAIRMAN: Who's next up.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. I'm interested in it both with respect to time and also what that figure is financially as well.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my question may be best directed to human resources as well, but I'll give it a try here.

THE CHAIRMAN: If it's best for the next one, why would you want to do it now? Okay. Go ahead.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, she may very well have it.

Of the component that's going back in terms of the human resources aspect that Rob referred to, what portion of that in addition to the \$28,000 increase is allocated to your department? Have the managers been able to figure that out?

MS BREault: We have it broken down. How much of that global figure relates to my branch?

MR. WICKMAN: Right. Exactly.

MS BREault: If my math is correct, \$9,380.

MR. WICKMAN: Originally you had requested \$78,000 more. You're getting roughly \$38,000 more. So you're roughly \$40,000 short from what you had originally requested.

MR. JACQUES: Twelve thousand seven hundred dollars.

MR. WICKMAN: I get the figure \$40,000. The original requested increase was \$78,000. The increase now is \$28,000.

MR. RENNER: The original request was \$50,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: The original request was \$51,000.

MR. WICKMAN: Oh, \$51,000. Okay. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms Breault.

Members of the committee, as the Speaker what I've tried to do

with our managers is work as a team. I'm trying to get away from this branch or division kind of mentality. If one person has a concern, they try to empathize with somebody else in another area, so you'll see cross-referencing going on. I think this is good for our whole organization in the future.

Mrs. Scarlett, human resources. Did you want to say a few things first, Charlotte, or deal with some questions? Why don't you just give a quick overview? Quick. She's really enthusiastic about what she does; that's why I say quick.

MS BARRETT: It's because you keep calling her Charlotte.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know. I'm sorry.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Cheryl Scarlett. Charlotte.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, that's right.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I get it now. Good excuse.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Sorry, Cheryl.

MRS. SCARLETT: Okay. Within human resources our prime emphasis is on delivering the core services to our members and staff, and the realities of the core services at this point in time are the essentials in terms of continuing to run the pay system to ensure that our employees and members are paid and that the benefits are administered, that all the corresponding third-party reporting by legislation to people such as Revenue Canada, WCB on your behalf is attended to. Because we are a complex operation in terms of our various kinds of components, resources needed to keep that system going relative to pay takes most of our energy. That's where our emphasis will continue to be in this upcoming year, on ensuring that the core services relative to HR, which are primarily pay, benefit administration at this point in time, are met so that you get paid.

The other kinds of services relative to assistance to members on a one-on-one basis and constituency and caucus staff relative to individual questions and concerns will be dealt with to the best of our ability, but we have to make sure that you get paid.

2:40

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. Cheryl, can you explain what the difference will be in terms of goals that you had wanted to accomplish and those which you would be able to accomplish, considering that the original request had been for about an additional \$80,000 and what's being contemplated here is \$47,000? Can you tell us what you won't be able to do?

MRS. SCARLETT: Again, the goals that we will be able to accomplish will be sound systems management relative to the pay issues. The things that may be impacted are more along the lines of the one-on-one service relative to our ability to respond immediately to questions and concerns that you may have. That may be a situation where we have to get back to you, whereas in the past we dropped it and you had an answer immediately. So the level of service will be affected by that.

Other kinds of things include our ability to go out and provide specific training to constituency staff to assist them in the work that they do and our interaction back and forth relative to the contracts, the time sheets, again everything that's involved in paying members and staff. Things that are not necessarily directly related to members

but part of our job that may not be addressed promptly will be some of these additional reporting requirements that we've identified. Benefit-type studies, pay and market studies: those are things that are going to have to take their priority.

MRS. SLOAN: Two questions, Cheryl. First of all, I'm wondering how many employees you currently have on occupational disability and whether or not their return to work will be compromised by the lack of funding. My second question relates to one I posed earlier about recruitment and retraining. I'm wondering how many positions you've had to recruit for in the last year and what the cost of that recruitment and then the subsequent training has been.

MRS. SCARLETT: I see our requirements relative to occupational health and safety as one of those nonnegotiables that must be attended to, so any impacts in terms of how we do our business will not change. Those needs relative to staff that may be off and need to return to work will be addressed and met.

Relative to recruitment costs, again some of it's tangible and some of it's intangible. My human resource consultant has spent most of the time in terms of supporting or recruiting in the last year, and the primary recruiting, just because there are changes in the market now and the jobs have opened up, means that we've spent a lot of time trying to find systems people, but we also are having more difficulty recruiting and retaining sessional staff required for support when the Legislature is sitting.

There's significant time in terms of my human resource consultant, myself, and the spin-offs from a pay perspective. Those are the intangibles I can't give you in terms of cost. Our costs in terms of advertisements in the paper have gone up; however, we've chosen to go out and network. I think one of the important components in terms of trying to recruit staff is that our operation is very complex and we are looking for someone who can do all. We ask a lot of the people, so that makes it more difficult.

MRS. SLOAN: Given those increasing costs and given the status of what will be allocated for the next year, how are you going to fill the gap in that area?

MRS. SCARLETT: The money that's been requested will allow me to hire the human resource consultant on a full-time basis. Presently that person works .6, so that will move that person to full-time. That will assist with more time to address not only the recruitment needs but address ongoing employee relation needs that come out of the constituency caucus and the business of employee relations. So I feel good about that. That person can also take some of the load that falls within pay administration in terms of troubleshooting. Those kinds of needs will and can be met that way.

MRS. SLOAN: If I may ask, Mr. Chairman, for the purposes of succession planning, I would appreciate it if in subsequent reports of this nature to this committee the number of recruitments that have had to be undertaken in the last year would be provided and the accompanying costs for that as well as the number of people on either short- or long-term disability and the associated costs. I think that would be valuable on a succession basis for this committee to be aware of.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques, then Mr. Herard, then Mr. Wickman.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you. I just want to clarify the issue on human resources in terms of the payment system, particularly for

MLAs, and the benefit – if you like, the whole administration. The comment was made in the introduction in here – I just want to find it because I want to provide the direct quote on it. Here we are. Where your summary of budget variances starts, there's an overview. In there, just starting down about the second sentence, it says: "Pay and benefit . . . has changed significantly over the last few years." Then it goes on to say:

A major factor, as a result of direction from MSC, [being this committee] was the move to an autonomous pay and benefits system. This allows the Legislative Assembly . . . to meet the unique needs of Members and staff relative to compensation and benefit administration.

I know I was on the committee at the latter part of the last session. I know there was discussion around this last year, and maybe some of the members were here at the time. It was my understanding that the change in the pay system by the Members' Services Committee was based on a recommendation that had been presented to the committee, that it was felt that this was a better route to go, that it would be more efficient versus the system that was previously used. I guess my question is: by making that decision based on that recommendation, is the system not doing what we thought it would do, or is it taking a lot more manpower to administer the system than what we thought? I'm a little confused in this area. Maybe you can help me out.

MRS. SCARLETT: I'm very proud that our overall system is doing exactly what it was intended to do relative to ensuring that members are paid properly, relative to ensuring that payments are administered and that the total benefits package is administered properly.

It also has taken and addressed needs relative to paying constituency staff, where an old system, that we were trying to best fit into, was not meeting those needs at all. A lot of overrides and manipulation had to be done to it relative to reporting, particularly as it goes back to financial management, the kind of reporting that is required for each member relative to the different items that you're responsible for tracking. Our system does that exactly versus the old system, which did not allow any flexibility for that, particularly at election time. Our ability to take care of the members that retired and deal with their pay situations and the staff that were affected by that and get the new members onto the system and the new staff – we had no problem at all with it. It was very efficient, much more efficient and effective than the old system in terms of what needed to be done.

Notwithstanding, pay management, benefit management, regardless of what system you're using, continues to become more complex relative to the reporting requirements that Rev Canada is looking for, that WCB is looking for, and also, perhaps as a spin-off, because benefit plans are changing and there is more administration inherent in modified flex benefit plans and those things. Pension administration is significant as well. So it's the business that we're in.

2:50

MR. JACQUES: Right. So when you talk about the change in complexity, if you like, of administering, particularly in terms of the benefits, that would include not only members but would include total staff within the Legislative Assembly offices.

Just to summarize, then, as I understand it, the decision and the experience arising from that decision to go to that system indeed has paid benefits.

MRS. SCARLETT: Most definitely.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you very much.

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

DR. McNEIL: I would say that we would likely be unable to handle the administration that's required now with the old system without having maybe two or three or four more people. The other load that's come onto the system that we didn't have before was because after every election there are more former members. So now we have 83 members to administer; we have 70 former members to do administration and benefits for.

As well, we administer the pay for all the government committees. So even though that's a cost to a department in that the funds come from there, we still have to handle the administration. That was sort of a broad decision made a number of years ago that that was the most efficient way to do it, rather than having Cheryl and her staff at the end of every year run around to every department to ensure that the member's T-4 was correct and rather than the member receiving half a dozen T-4s. That's the kind of issue that we've had to deal with in this area.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before we go to Mr. Herard and Mr. Wickman and Ms Barrett, I'm just going to make a comment in terms of this exchange of the moment. I just raise it as one of those interesting constitutional matters that I think the Speaker should raise. This committee deals with the Legislative Assembly of a parliament. In the parliament elected people come from all over in a jurisdiction and sit there. In the chair's view, he is blind. He doesn't see the difference as to which party, other than the fact that people arrive and then some form the governing party and some form the opposition. But in the chair's view, everybody is the same. In the purest form of it all, the people associated with the Legislative Assembly have to be absolutely able to maintain a neutrality for the protection of democracy. Salaries for MLAs and what have you get paid for, processed, that kind of thing. What's evolved, though, and has added work to this area is that we now are doing and processing payments that come from government committees.

MRS. SLOAN: Shame.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. Please, no. These are all decisions made.

I want to just outline this whole process. That's fine, if we've all agreed to it, but if the department in the past that had paid and processed them has downsized their staff because they no longer have to deal with that but it's only added in this area, then all we're saying is that something should be considered with that. In recent times we've even undertaken processing other claims. Now, we've done it for the efficiency, because at the end of the year the hon. member gets one T-4 slip, essentially, and deals with one income tax rather than having to go to three, four, five, or six different sources. But we're now doing that administration. It's been agreed to do it for efficiency's sake for the overall system, but there is that administrative side that comes in here. At the end of the year the hon. member gets the one thing, and everything's fine. It's great for the hon. member, and that's all the attempt is to do here. But there is some time consumption associated with that. Not shame or anything else, just reality.

Mr. Herard, Mr. Wickman, Ms Barrett.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps more for the

members who are attending this for the first time, a little bit of history with respect to human resources services. As I look at the '95-96 allocation in the budget, it was \$168,000. In '96-97 it was \$177,000. The '97-98 estimate was \$371,000, and the '98-99 is \$425,000. I'd like to understand the events that took place – and I think part of your answer to Mr. Jacques may have covered it – but I just want to be sure that I understand it properly. You know, what major thing happened between '96-97 and now to have essentially more than doubled the budget in that area?

MRS. SCARLETT: I think this issue in terms of the growth within human resource services goes back a little further than that, and I'd like to go back. Basically, prior to 1989 there were no human resource services, so what we offer today to you, to your constituency, to your caucus staff, to our own staff is significant in terms of a full-service human resource component. From starting with nothing to what you have now is significant, and what you're seeing are impacts of that growth that has happened from zero to this.

To be able to do that, I have had very few, very competent people. Those people from time to time turn over, and the costs of recruiting to get comparable, competent staff have increased and impacted the services that we offer and the business that we're in, pursuant to the discussions. What you're looking at in terms of what we're doing in business in human resources as a full component related to services to constituency people with benefit options, to caucus people, various kinds of contracts where we allow flexibility to members – all those kinds of things take resources and effort and systems to be able to administer them. Within that, in terms of addressing all of the areas – employee relations, recruitment, occupational health and safety – those things are what comprise the full component.

MR. HERARD: Okay. Just a supplementary, Mr. Chairman. With regards to the big change in cost, was it primarily due to having to do your own payroll system? I understand what you're doing, but was that the major change in cost between one year and the next when it went up almost \$200,000 in one year?

MRS. SCARLETT: A portion of that cost also accommodated occupational health and safety concerns in terms of our formal ergonomic awareness plan that we have in place and continue to have in place. That represents a portion of that as well as increasing staff to address all needs, not necessarily focusing in on the cost of the pay system.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clerk, did you want to supplement?

DR. McNEIL: There was also a transfer from a couple of other areas within the organization that is encompassed there rather than that necessarily being new, additional funding. We did transfer – and I'll rely on my memory here – at least one if not two positions into that area from other parts of the organization. In one instance anyway some of those functions were being performed in that area, and we thought it best to consolidate them in human resources. So that's a portion of that increase anyway.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, again just to try and get an indication of the numbers here. By my calculation you had originally requested \$90,000. You now are getting \$47,000 plus, the human resources aspect. Do you know what your human resources aspect is, the total amount that's been reallocated?

MRS. SCARLETT: I'm sorry?

MR. WICKMAN: The comments that Rob had made about the reallocation – what was it? – \$102,000 total?

MR. RENNER: A hundred and fifty-two thousand.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, it's the difference between the figure on the pink sheet and, if I understand the question correctly, the green sheet. In this case it should be \$7,000.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Good. Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Back to the stuff, first of all, Cheryl, that Mr. Jacques initiated. If I'm not mistaken, when I first came here as an elected person – I came here way too long before that even – wasn't all of that stuff that you now do all in Treasury and other departments?

MRS. SCARLETT: Really, the stuff that we all do now did not exist.

MS BARRETT: No. I mean payroll, for example, the benefits administration. My recollection is this all started because Dick Johnston wanted to download from the department of Treasury. Now, I know that's a politically loaded statement, but I know somebody around here must be able to verify that. Mr. Chairman, do you remember? You were on the committee at the time.

3:00

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, I spent all of the 1980s on this particular committee, but the principle that I always had was the absolute independence and security of the Legislative Assembly Office, and it should be doing its own accounting, not somebody else.

MS BARRETT: Oh, yeah. I just want to sort out for people at this table who weren't here at the time that it wasn't the Leg. Assembly that dreamed up this idea that they were going to take it over. It was all initiated by the department of Treasury under the leadership at that time of Dick Johnston.

Let me ask you a question about this .4 position that you lost a couple of years ago. Have you been able to make that up since then?

MRS. SCARLETT: We never lost a .4 position.

MS BARRETT: You didn't?

MRS. SCARLETT: No.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MRS. SCARLETT: The human resource consultant has always been at .6, and what we're asking to do is bring it up to full-time.

MS BARRETT: I see. Will you be able to do that?

MRS. SCARLETT: Yes. That need will be addressed.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Will you also be able to add the other person that was projected in the paper that we got yesterday under FTEs to bring it up to 6?

MRS. SCARLETT: No.

MS BARRETT: No. What would that position have been?

MRS. SCARLETT: That position would have been a pay administrator, a person that would have assisted the other pay administrators in terms of being able to provide prompt, immediate, one-on-one service.

MS BARRETT: Okay. That's back to the response to my original question. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Additional questions in this area? Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm still having a little bit of confusion, for lack of a better term, trying to figure out where this \$47,000 increase is going to go. We've heard that there will be one position that will be increased from .6 to full-time, so that's .4. Then it's identified that there is an extra \$5,500 for advertising and \$1,000 for supplies. Am I then to believe that a .4 position plus another \$6,500 comes to \$47,000? Where's the rest of the money? I don't quite understand why, if we're only going to be increasing staff by .4, you're asking for \$47,000 in addition to any increments that are necessary to address the employment/human resources side of it. Where's the rest of the money?

MRS. SCARLETT: If you take a look at the summary of budget estimates in terms of the estimate of money related to human resource expenses for this year, '97-98, versus the forecast, there's a difference there, and that difference reflects the actual cost of the present staff that are there, very qualified staff required to do the work that we do. In terms of getting new staff over the past year and making adjustments relative to the work that they do, those are the true costs of the deficit relative to what was asked for and what real costs are going to be this year. That plus the additional .4 reflects this.

MR. RENNER: But if I look at the summary of budget estimates – we're looking at the operational expenses – I understand that above the line, which is the human resource component, there will be an additional .4 FTE and associated costs with that individual, plus there'll be the additional prorated costs for addressing your human resource needs internally. That says to me that that's going to be – I don't know; I have no idea – a portion of that \$47,000. Then below the line when you look at the comparisons, you've already identified \$5,500 as needed for increased advertising, and you identified \$1,000 as needed for increased office administration supplies. That's \$6,500. If you need \$6,500 below the line and you're getting \$47,000, I don't understand where you need the other \$38,000 for hiring a .4 FTE.

MRS. SCARLETT: Based upon the estimates that were put forth last year versus actual costs, there is a difference of \$33,000. In my area the budget is primarily manpower expenses, and that is the money that has been requested and funded to accommodate that plus additional dollars to take the human resource consultant from .6 to full-time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Clerk, did you want to add something?

MR. RENNER: I'm sorry. I'm either dense or I don't understand it. I thought we were addressing the human resource side before we started talking about the allocation of the additional \$260,000. We're looking at this page dealing with the \$260,000 in additional funding, which was to be in addition to the funds required to deal with the human resource side which is identified on the worksheet that we started out with. So if we've already addressed the human resource side and we've got an additional \$261,000 to allocate, why

are we allocating \$47,000 in this area for essentially an additional .4 FTE?

DR. McNEIL: Well, first of all, the dollars allocated to the human resource side are to deal with the salary adjustments, not to deal with other issues like reclassifications or anything like that. We have a particular situation in human resources where after the election we took on a . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Is this an internal personnel problem?

DR. McNEIL: I would say it is, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And we have to deal with it. Now, we can go in camera. We won't discuss internal personnel problems in public. We don't do that anywhere in the service. So if you want to deal with that in camera, we can deal with that. These are management decisions that we have to undertake. There are issues, and there are reasons why there are personnel concerns. We'll deal with that in camera.

MRS. SLOAN: It would seem to me, Mr. Chairman, that the purpose of this committee is not to micromanage the LAO, and it seems that would be sort of the direction this discussion is going.

MR. RENNER: Well, no. I'm not trying to micromanage. All I'm trying to do is establish, when I look at the \$261,000 that's available for addressing needs – the \$47,000 in this one department sticks out like a sore thumb, and I think I've obviously identified something.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've said that we've gone through the whole thing. The group as a team went through the whole thing. If you go line by line, this is true. On another line we'll have zero, and on one we'll have \$47,000 because we've all agreed internally that's the priority of the area that we have to address. It has to do with a manpower situation that's – I'm not sure unique is the exact word, but decisions occurred with respect to it. I'd be happy to discuss it in camera.

MR. RENNER: Mr. Chairman, I'd suggest that we leave it for now and then if it's necessary come back to it. I don't think we need to do it right now.

MR. WICKMAN: Maybe just talk to David in the back after. He'll explain it to you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, you can get an appointment in the washroom. Sorry; I'm not suggesting that.

Would there be additional questions for clarification on the human resource side?

Thank you very much, Cheryl.

The next one I'm not sure I even want to talk about: the Speaker's office. The documentation is there. The Speaker feels most uncomfortable at having to deal with his own defence, although he did it for 10 years as a minister of the Crown, consistently explained his budget.

Originally the anticipated approach taken was to put it on an average, par, with all the ministers' offices in Executive Council and be equated with that of the allocation for the Leader of the Opposition. It's very subjective in terms of dealing with that. As a result of the discussion yesterday, we went back and did some re-engineering of the whole thing. You can see that the two aspects in there, the human resource expense and the operational expense, have both been whittled back, and the request now is to move it to

\$282,419, which is identified on the green sheet. It has to do simply with the staff of three, to deal with them and to deal with the amount of services that the Speaker will undertake on an annual basis. This budget has basically been held for the last several years, but the principle was to get it one objective target; then it would just rest with whatever happened on the outside rather than to promote something for himself in this case.

Ms Olsen.

3:10

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if you could explain to me the role of security in relation to the Sergeant-at-Arms. Does he fall within your specific office?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. The three people that fall within my – well, there are four. There's myself; the executive assistant, Mr. Jung; and two women that work in my office. The Sergeant-at-Arms is out of this. He's in another area.

MS OLSEN: Could you tell me which area that is so I can address that when we get there?

THE CHAIRMAN: House services, number 6.

MS OLSEN: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for coming in late, so I'm a little behind the eight ball on this. I just need a clarification from you if I can, sir. Because we're on you, we'll hit you, the Speaker's office. On the old budget that we were dealing with yesterday, we were looking at your original budget of \$297,754.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. FORSYTH: Now, am I correct? This is your new budget, the green sheet?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes; \$282,419.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. So in my figuring that has been a decrease of \$15,335, when you take it away.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. FORSYTH: Then I go to this sheet, the Speaker's office, and it says it's an increase of \$17,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that was based on the pink one, because that sheet also includes the manpower ones in a different column than in the previous one. The green sheet is the one that covers both: what you've got on the white sheet plus the manpower adjustment. It equals \$22,000.

MRS. FORSYTH: What's the pink one?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'll explain.

MRS. FORSYTH: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I was in Treasury Board.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. No problem.

The pink one basically deals with the adjustments less – but it does not include the manpower adjustments. The green one includes both of them.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: They both compare. It all follows the same way down.

MRS. FORSYTH: So in actuality in your budget you yourself, sir, have taken it down \$15,000. Correct?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if you look at the green sheet as compared to the original, yes, it's \$15,000.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. Thank you. I just needed a clarification because I was wandering around lost.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Public information branch, Dr. Garrison. Before Dr. Garrison has a chance to say anything, yesterday I indicated when we took a break that one of the neat little things that was going on in the interpretive centre has been the creation of a mock Assembly for children. There's a room in there that has desks which are children's size. There's a Speaker's chair. This is a new service, and when you have groups from your constituency come, I think you would really enjoy meeting your school group there. They sit in their own desks, their size. Old costumes. All the history is there in the room, and it's really quite unique. It's one of those interesting little things that comes around.

In this case the public information branch, you'll see, as a result of the reviews we had basically holds the line.

DR. GARRISON: I have copies of the material related to that mock Legislature program for anybody who'd like to have one.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sure they'd want to deal with your budget right now, but go ahead.

DR. GARRISON: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I'm open to any questions given the changes that have been made over the last couple of days.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, first of all, Gary, I really compliment your area and the services it does provide to the public. With the exception of one school in my riding, they all take the opportunity of touring the Leg. I go to the school afterwards, and they do thoroughly, thoroughly enjoy it. So to you and your staff, I appreciate that service that is provided.

With the photographs – and this has been raised in previous years – there's no proposed change there in terms of the costing of that?

DR. GARRISON: No, no. That'll stay the same.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Still 50-50?

DR. GARRISON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Excuse me. I believe it was Mrs. Sloan.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ah, why do I do that? I'm sorry about that. Slap me both; okay?

MRS. SLOAN: Gratefully. Thank you, sir. I may take that opportunity, although I'm not prone to violence.

THE CHAIRMAN: I wouldn't consider it violent; I would consider it payment in view of not more attention. Sorry.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. It seems that in my review of the goals that were proposed by the branch for '98-99, the key focus was public education. There were two specific areas, one that related to providing program material for teachers and students as well as providing a complimentary copy of the Citizen's Guide, which I have had the pleasure of reading and utilizing in my constituency with a number of people. I would assume, given there is no allocation, that your ability to do those two endeavours will be somewhat compromised, if you will be able to do them at all.

DR. GARRISON: Well, as I mentioned on the goals page, the proposal was to print 50,000 copies of this and to give one to each grade 6 student. An alternative was mentioned in the last sentence, where it commented that corporate sponsorship is an alternative. That, of course, is still an alternative. So that is a route that we could go even if there were no funds in this budget to do this project.

MRS. SLOAN: It seems, if I may, though, draw the contrast. The government just came through a process called the Growth Summit, in which they self-confess, say, that there is a priority in this province and in the next budget on human development and particularly on education. I think it speaks very loudly in contrast to that objective or goal when we have to seek corporate sponsorship to provide a very fundamental piece of information about democracy and how the democratic process works. In my view, it flies in the face of what the Premier has told Albertans is a priority in this province. If we do not view it as a priority to educate students on the democratic process, I think we have other significant issues to talk to them about, and that is: what is a dictatorship? So I'm concerned about the fact that those things may not be done or that, secondarily, the public information branch may need to seek private sponsorship in order to conduct that. I think it's a public service that we should be able to provide.

DR. GARRISON: One thing I should mention. I didn't answer the first half of your question. I think you referred to getting information out to teachers?

MRS. SLOAN: Uh-huh.

DR. GARRISON: One project, that I believe is mentioned on the second page, refers to—I've got to count the points down here. Point 6 of the performance measures refers to a grade 6 teacher kit including a coloured poster. That is under development right now, and that is being done out of this fiscal year. So the impact of holding the line on this budget for '98-99 will be that it will restrict our ability to develop future materials and future programs.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. If I may just ask a supplemental then. The activity book for kindergarten to grade 4, that's not under development now?

DR. GARRISON: It is under development now.

MRS. SLOAN: It is under development?

DR. GARRISON: Yeah.

MRS. SLOAN: Do you have enough flex in your current budget to be able to accommodate the printing of that?

DR. GARRISON: We expect that we do, yes.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner and then Mrs. Forsyth.

MR. RENNER: Thanks very much. I'd like to address the revenues from operations. It's not clear to me if the numbers that we see here are gross or net. If they're net, I congratulate you on doing one heck of a good job. If they're gross, then where do the expenses fall in? It's on the summary sheet showing \$118,000 last year with a projection of \$123,000 next year.

3:20

DR. GARRISON: Yeah, I see it. I'm just looking at some supporting material I have here. That is gross revenue.

MR. RENNER: Gross revenue.

DR. GARRISON: Yeah. Sorry I can't merit the compliment for the net being that high.

MR. RENNER: Well, I thought it was awful high for a net. I'd take over the shop in an instant.

Where are the associated expenses for that, the cost of goods sold, inventory, all that good stuff?

DR. GARRISON: I believe they're under other labour and services. I may be wrong about that. Under office administration and supplies I believe is where they are.

MR. RENNER: So do we have any idea if we actually make any money on anything we sell in there?

DR. GARRISON: Yes, we do. I gave the committee a report about a year ago, and I've got some updated information that I can supply to the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you have a sheet that would have these numbers?

DR. GARRISON: I have one copy of the sheet here. I can read off the numbers.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would committee members like to get a copy of this that shows the gift shop report: the sales, what have you? Perhaps just give the figures; then we'll have the copies run off.

DR. GARRISON: Okay. I'll just round it off to the nearest thousand.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're talking this year now, I take it.

DR. GARRISON: This year, '97-98 projections. That's for a complete fiscal year, based on figures to date: \$71,000 for retail sales; \$127,000 for MLA sales, so gross income of \$198,000. The cost of the items that we sold came to \$156,000. So the sales less the cost of the items comes to \$42,000. I estimate that the cost of

the staff time to deal with stocking the gift shop, handling the sales, and doing all that kind of stuff comes to \$35,000. So the net income of the gift shop is around \$7,000 for the year. Last year, those of you who were on the committee may recall, the net income figure was around \$8,000. So it's virtually the same as far as net income is concerned from year to year.

THE CHAIRMAN: And who gets the net income?

DR. GARRISON: Who gets the net income? Well, it basically balances off against some of the operational expenses, so we can budget \$7,000 or \$8,000 less.

MR. RENNER: Why, then, do we budget for \$100,000 in revenue?

DR. GARRISON: That's basically to reduce the total expenditure line. So we're asking the committee for the amount that's on the net expenditure as opposed to the gross expenditure.

DR. McNEIL: It's just the way the Financial Administration Act requires the budget to be set up.

THE CHAIRMAN: There's no revolving account in the LAO. In most other departments if you have income in or income out, you have a revolving account. There isn't one, as I understand it.

MR. RENNER: Well, it's not a significant number in the overall big scheme of things, but the numbers just don't jibe. It's \$123,000, and you said the sales were \$198,000. The gross is \$158,000.

DR. GARRISON: That's because if you look two pages further back under summary of budget variances, gift shop revenues, it says up from \$66,000 to \$76,000. The other part of the revenues comes from subscriptions, which is \$47,500. One of the things that happens here is that where I say \$76,000 for what the revenues are up to, that's gross revenues. That is excluding the cost of goods, which are covered under that other line item. So the net income, as I mentioned, the sales less the cost of the items, is around \$40,000.

MR. RENNER: All right. I'm not going to belabour that. So, then, the net effect of this revised budget is that you will not be sending out 50,000 complimentary copies to every grade 6 student in Alberta. Is that the main difference?

THE CHAIRMAN: That was my idea. It was a proposal I had as the Speaker for an outreach program, and that was to make sure every grade 6 student in the province of Alberta had access to the guide, which I think is an excellent, excellent book. We won't be able to go with 50,000. We'll find some amount in there if they're required or requested or we have to deal with something between now and April 1 to see even if – say one MLA wanted 3,000 – maybe on a cost recovery basis. We'll just have to deal with it. We've got a manual, a booklet, that's being updated, and we'll look at some alternatives. If we can find a private-sector sponsor, maybe we'll go that way. It's a proposal from the Speaker to deal with outreach on that one, and we'll find a way of dealing with some of it, but not 50,000 obviously.

MR. RENNER: Okay. Thanks.

MRS. SLOAN: I think, Mr. Chairman, in essence what you're glossing over is the fact that we are expecting the private sector to subsidize educating our children about democracy. I think that statement needs to be made.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Fair game.

MRS. FORSYTH: Do we have a speakers' list?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we do.

MRS. SLOAN: The other thing, though, just to ensure that the record is clear. If I heard correctly, there are other elements of the fourth goal that will perhaps not be able to be completed in the area of education in the nature that they were originally intended.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth, then Mr. Jacques.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to follow up on your Citizen's Guide, which I think is a well-done book. I'm wondering, maybe to get around this: do we have to go to an updated one? I know it's pretty old fashioned, but the expense of a glossy – I personally buy it out of my constituency allowance and give it to my grade 6 students as a gift with a pin, and it's been very successful for me when I'm talking to my grade 6 classes about politics and democracy, et cetera. I would hate to see us lose that book.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, no. Sorry. We're not going to lose the book. This was a proposal to go and make it provincewide. There's a whole series of outreach things that the Speaker would like to see happen.

MRS. FORSYTH: So we still have the opportunity to purchase the book for a dollar and deliver it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. And when a certain batch goes out of print, before we print another batch, we will update it to make sure that the constituency maps are the current ones, that we have a listing in the index for all MLAs in the province of Alberta, which has never been included in there, and things like that. So when an MLA goes to visit their little grade 6 students, they can say, "Aha, there you are," that kind of thing. I mean, we're not talking costly stuff here; we're just talking education services.

MRS. FORSYTH: I have no problem purchasing them and handing them out to my grade 6 classes, which I've done in the last four years.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you. Being a former accountant, I have to follow up on Mr. Renner's question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Former accountant? You've retired?

MR. JACQUES: Yes. I retired many, many years ago.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Renner, why don't you take the chair while the chairman goes and visits a place for a minute.

MR. RENNER: We know where you're going.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like a break? Would the committee prefer a break for a few minutes?

MR. RENNER: Good idea.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Why don't we take a 15-minute break and come back at 3:45.

[The committee adjourned from 3:29 p.m. to 3:41 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: It's not quite 15 minutes, but I think everybody has returned. We were with Mr. Jacques, who's going to have a question because he's a semiretired chartered accountant.

MR. JACQUES: Yes. Just coming back to this earlier point with regard to the sales and the number presentations on the green sheet. As I understand it, the public information branch number of \$1,392,825 is in fact the gross amount that would be comparable to your original white page, where you show a total expenditure prior to any revenues from operations. Is that correct?

DR. GARRISON: Yes, that's right.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. Therefore the revenue from operations forms part of that second line from the bottom that says revenues of \$133,560. Correct?

DR. GARRISON: That's right.

MR. JACQUES: Okay. Given the sheet that you just distributed, which you had referred to earlier, in arriving at the \$123,500, I took the amount of retail sales and added in what you had made a note of on the third page of your original submission for subscriptions on the basis that MLA sales are internal. You said that these aren't shown because they net out, and I understand that. So in essence the \$123,000, then, as I understand it, would be the sum of the retail sales plus subscriptions?

DR. GARRISON: I believe that's right. Except the way I figure it is the \$36,000 in the bottom paragraph there plus the approximately \$40,000, where it says sales less cost, the third box up from the bottom in the right-hand column there – \$36,000 plus \$40,000 is \$76,000. That's how I came to the \$76,000.

MR. JACQUES: No. I'm not talking about the \$76,000. It's the \$123,000.

DR. GARRISON: But the \$123,500 comes from adding \$76,000 and \$47,500.

MR. JACQUES: And the \$76,000 again – I'm sorry – equals?

DR. GARRISON: That's the gift shop revenues, which is the amount budgeted for purchasing the items plus the sales less cost, which is that third line up in your gift shop report.

MR. JACQUES: The \$42,000?

DR. GARRISON: Yeah.

MR. JACQUES: I guess I don't understand it, but I'm not going to persist. I'll talk to you later. Thank you.

DR. GARRISON: Okay.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, I just can't resist making this statement. In the microscopic scrutiny of the LAO budgets I come to the question of how it is in this province that we have lost millions and millions of dollars in Al-Pac and other private-sector loans. I wonder if the Conservative caucus members put Mr. Pocklington and other executives to the same kind of microscopic scrutiny of their budgets as they do to our own staff members.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know. If you want to carry on with political statements, go ahead.

I have no other questioner of Dr. Garrison on my list. Any additional questions of Dr. Garrison?

MR. HERARD: Well, I can't resist, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, sorry. We're dealing with Dr. Garrison. We're dealing with the public information branch. Mr. Herard, you had a question?

MR. HERARD: I'll pass. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Gary, I just wonder – I might have missed something. I'm afraid I had to go and fix a contact lens. It's true. Perils of life.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to go to the bathroom.

MS BARRETT: Oh, is that what that break was about? I thought it was an official smoke break.

Can you describe the impact that your department will experience by not being able to hire the additional one and a half positions that had been originally projected with the budget that we were presented with yesterday?

DR. GARRISON: Okay. About .3 of that we had initially put in as a proposal for a historical interpreter in period costume. They do this in Ontario and in the House of Commons, and it's quite popular with visitors. That accounts for the .3. The other part is for staff to deal with what's been a significant increase in our visitor traffic this year. I mention somewhere in the material, I believe, that our visitor traffic so far this year has been up 18 percent over last year. So the impact of that would be that we simply wouldn't be able to deal with the visitors in as nice a way as we'd like to.

MS BARRETT: Did public information lose a position a couple of years ago? I think you did; didn't you?

DR. GARRISON: Yeah. We did lose one last year. We've lost several over the years since visitor services has joined the Assembly.

MS BARRETT: How many positions?

DR. GARRISON: Oh, I'd really have to do some research on that because there was a lot of reorganizing involved.

MS BARRETT: That's okay.

DR. GARRISON: It was maybe three, maybe four.

MS BARRETT: So with a zero budget change you're not going to be able to hire to even replace people that we lost either through attrition or layoffs.

DR. GARRISON: No. We'll be able to maintain our current staff levels, but with the workload for visitor services increasing by 18 percent, that's a big difference.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I can imagine.

With each increase that you get in terms of visitors, you also see correlating increases in the money that they spend in our little store.

DR. GARRISON: Well, to some degree, although if you look at the gift shop report, the biggest increase from this year over last year has been in MLA sales and not in retail sales. So that hasn't really borne out this year. We're hoping that it does more so in the future.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Dr. Garrison.

DR. GARRISON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lorne Buhr for the Legislature Library.

MR. BUHR: Would you like me to start with some comments?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. Why don't you just focus in. We spent a great deal of time, and there was a \$19,000 adjustment, so you can be very specific about where that \$19,000 is going to go.

MR. BUHR: Yes. That's what I was intending to do. It's comprised of six items from the original budget submission. We'll add \$3,000 to each of four of our materials areas. We'll spend \$3,000 more on books, \$3,000 more on documents, \$3,000 more on periodicals, \$3,000 more on micromaterials. To that we add \$7,000. Five thousand of that is for CD databases, which would be available in the library, and \$2,000 is a new initiative, but it's an initiative brought on because Bill C-32 passed the House of Commons. It's the copyright legislation, and we have to investigate whether or not we need to become a member of CANCOPY, which is a licensing agency. The Alberta government is already a member of CANCOPY, but the Assembly is not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth and then Ms Barrett.

3:51

MRS. FORSYTH: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to find out where the adjustments are in the library. What are you determining to take out of your budget?

MR. BUHR: No. We just add \$19,000 to what we had last year.

MRS. FORSYTH: You're adding \$19,000. So that's the books, the CDs, et cetera.

MR. BUHR: Yes, for those six areas.

MRS. FORSYTH: All right. I'm sorry.

THE CHAIRMAN: The major proposal we had in this area was dealing with an Internet librarian, but in the discussions we had yesterday, last evening, this morning, we can't proceed with that.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. That's what I was trying to find out. So it's the Internet librarian that you're not . . .

MR. BUHR: We won't hire that individual.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett, then Mr. Wickman.

MS BARRETT: I'm really, really quite concerned now. You lost the equivalent of a full-time position with the retirement of Blake. That job has never been replaced; right?

MR. BUHR: The individual, no. We lost a position. We actually lost a position and a half overall in our budget cutbacks.

MS BARRETT: That's what I thought. Okay. So now some members of this committee are asking us to remain in the dinosauric age by not enabling the library to participate in the most cost-efficient way of conducting research, which is the Net.

MR. BUHR: Well, those are your comments.

MS BARRETT: Yes. Okay. Well, would you not say that using electronics for research is actually the most cost-efficient method that there is? It's got to be. It's way faster than searching out written material, way faster. I know because I surf all the time. I do my own research. It's way faster. Would you not agree?

MR. BUHR: Most of the time it is. It's a different sphere than what we have now. It's an enhancement, but it also gives you access to material that you can't get any other way.

MS BARRETT: How much more than the \$19,000 that is being proposed under the revised budget would you need in order to get an Internet librarian?

MR. BUHR: Well, we had asked, I believe, for something in the order of \$40,000. That includes benefits. It was a two-year project.

MS BARRETT: Okay; \$49,498 including benefits.

MR. BUHR: Yeah, but that includes some of the other increases for existing staff. We were starting with a salary of \$37,000, plus I guess you have to add about 15 percent on for benefits.

MS BARRETT: And were you looking at hiring a librarian or a library tech?

MR. BUHR: A librarian.

MS BARRETT: A librarian who would specialize in the Net.

MR. BUHR: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'd like to encourage members of this committee to really re-examine this. Losing pace with technology is extremely dangerous. This is one area that I believe is more cost-efficient than hiring a regular librarian, mainly because you're not dealing with paper. You can move pretty fast on the Net. There isn't much out there that you can't get from the Net, and I would argue that every office in this Assembly – cabinet ministers, SPCs, and individual MLAs like those of us sitting around this table – would benefit enormously. And if you don't believe me, ask your researchers.

Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, then Ms Olsen, then Mr. Herard.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, two questions. The first one is in the performance measures, where you refer to "requests for information and reference dropped somewhat to 8,298." What do you mean by "somewhat"?

MR. BUHR: Well, there weren't as many as there were in the previous year.

MR. WICKMAN: No. I mean how many were there, say, the year

before? What's a comparable figure?

MR. BUHR: Oh, it might have been in the neighbourhood of 8,500.

MR. WICKMAN: So it dropped marginally.

MR. BUHR: Yeah.

MR. WICKMAN: Could that possibly be because of the shorter session in terms of sitting?

MR. BUHR: It's hard to say. We also serve the government departments in terms of them coming in to ask questions or phoning in. Over the years of their re-engineering that has taken a bit of a down for us as well. There are fewer people out there working for the government.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay.

My second question refers to your operational expenses, where you've added a line: CDs, \$5,000. What type of CDs?

MR. BUHR: Okay. These are not music. We've gone through that in our management meetings several times. These are CD databases such as full text of 200 or 300 Canadian periodicals, for instance. It would greatly enhance our collection to have some.

MR. WICKMAN: It's for internal use really.

MR. BUHR: Yes.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Don't feel badly, Mr. Wickman. I thought we were going to get one good collection there, frankly, of country and western music. I was assured that that wasn't the case. It wasn't the case at all.

Ms Olsen, then Mr. Herard.

MS OLSEN: How many government departments do you serve? You just said that you service government departments.

MR. BUHR: Well, our library has always been open to anybody to use. The members get service first, but anybody in Alberta can phone us. That's been the case since whenever.

MS OLSEN: Sure. Most libraries are like that.

MR. BUHR: Individuals in the public phone us, and people use our resources.

MS OLSEN: So do other government departments contribute to the budget at all?

MR. BUHR: To our budget?

MS OLSEN: Right.

MR. BUHR: Not directly in this way. We do some work for them by running an interlibrary loan service to the university, which benefits the members. That's on a fee basis. They pay us for that.

MS OLSEN: So you don't get a piece of somebody else's budget to help fund the library even though you're providing services for others.

MR. BUHR: No, no.

MS OLSEN: I'm just wondering if we shouldn't be looking at some alternative, then, from other departments' budgets to help supplement what was Ms Barrett's concern, that we are in the dark ages in terms of access to the Net and the information highway. Would that be of some benefit to help offset some of those future costs?

MR. BUHR: Well, I'd answer it in this way. Libraries work reciprocally. We can phone up any library and get help just the same way they can phone us up and get help. So we don't differentiate between if it's the Library of Parliament phoning or whether it's Alberta Agriculture phoning. It becomes very difficult to monitor that. We'd prefer not to get into flipping costs back and forth, because we might actually pay out more in the long run.

MS OLSEN: Well, I can understand that, but I guess if we're looking at losing the potential to move ahead, I'm wondering what benefit that's going to be.

MR. BUHR: Well, it certainly can be looked at.

MS OLSEN: Then what impact is it going to have on us as members, who serve our constituents, if we can't access the information in a timely fashion?

MR. BUHR: Well, that's certainly something we could look at, but generally libraries don't deal with their publics that way. There are certain things that we charge fees for. But if that's the wish, we can certainly look at it.

MS OLSEN: I'm looking for alternatives.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard, then Mrs. Sloan.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, let me say that I've been exceptionally pleased with the service that the library has been providing. I guess over time they sort of get to know you. Sometimes I get notes that say: we've reserved this book for you because we know you probably will want to read it. That's, I think, beyond the call of duty, and it's very nice to have that happen.

How many librarians do you currently have on staff?

MR. BUHR: We have five.

MR. HERARD: How many of those librarians are Internet literate?

MR. BUHR: We are all semiliterate.

MS OLSEN: Internet literate.

MR. BUHR: In terms of the Internet, yes.

MR. HERARD: So to say that we're in the dark ages I think is not portraying the right picture, because I certainly have seen some things that the library has done with respect to research over the Internet. I think we have that capability now; do we not?

MR. BUHR: In a limited way. We need to focus what we're doing in that area. Some of us are doing this sort of 5 percent a day sometimes, when we have time, or we drag a lot of work home if we're doing the Internet kinds of things, because some of that takes a fair amount of time to get yourself up to speed. So there's a price to pay for it. What we want to do is focus it with one individual.

That's why we put that proposal forward.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MRS. SLOAN: Two questions. The first one relates to the fact that there have been libraries closed or transferred by government to other jurisdictions or other parts of the province. One particularly is AADAC. I think the other one that has been proposed possibly for closure is Family and Social Services. I'm wondering whether or not there has been any impact or if you've noted that people are attempting to resource you for services that they can't access in those.

MR. BUHR: Not in those two examples you give, but there were some other ones where they have made overtures for us to actually become a departmental library. We've had two of those, I believe, and in each case we simply said: that's not our job; we can't do that.

MRS. SLOAN: Do you mind telling us what those two were?

MR. BUHR: Transportation and, I believe, FIGA at one point. But I've been here so long – this is over a fairly long period of time. It didn't all happen within the last couple of years.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no additional speakers.

I just want to make a couple of comments about the library. This building is unique in the sense that it is the centre of government, and this library has a very, very focused objective in terms of doing that. Included in its collections is probably, well, the unique of all collections, the newspaper collection that you have, Lorne. Do you want to just briefly explain your exact focus in terms of what we've got in this library?

4:01

MR. BUHR: Yeah. Well, thanks for the opportunity to say something about our newspapers. It's the best collection of Alberta newspapers that exists anywhere. Over the years we've been trying to microfilm it, and now with the funds we have, we do about one major community a year. That in effect preserves that piece of Alberta history forever. We have two copies of each microfilm series. One is not in use; it's in safekeeping. We can print masters off that in case the one that we use becomes destroyed or if something happens to it. That material is in constant use.

I don't think there's another legislative library in Canada that operates this kind of a service like we do, simply because they've all had different histories. Ontario has recently downsized their newspaper collection considerably. We have not done that. In fact, a number of years ago we added quite a few papers that we weren't taking. It doesn't cost us that much for the subscriptions, but as you can imagine, with the wear and tear on newspapers their life span isn't very long. So the faster we can microfilm them, the better it would be for everybody in the future.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that. I guess I'm an historian by trade, so I find this area really, really fascinating. I'm not going to prolong this; I just want to give some hard data in terms of this. I presented our proposals in terms of our priorities, so I'm not going to change right now. But if you took the number of MLAs we have in Alberta and divide it into the total cost of running the budget, it's about maybe \$10,300 per MLA. If you went to other provinces and looked at the jurisdictions, in British Columbia it's nearly \$30,000 per MLA, about three times as much. In New Brunswick it's about \$15,000. In Quebec it's about \$25,000. The Library of Parliament in Ottawa is about \$60,000. It's an area that doesn't get a lot of buzz and a lot of play, and I think we all have to work a little harder, including me, with respect to that in the future.

Thanks, Lorne.

House services. Mr. Clerk.

DR. McNEIL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The House services budget, in addition to the manpower, contemplates, in terms of the \$50,000 that's listed there, \$20,000 to carry out a CPA seminar which will be in the fall of 1998 and involve 25 to 30 members from across the country. It's Alberta's turn to host this seminar. I believe one of the members of this committee, Mr. Herard, attended one in New Brunswick last year, so he has some sense of what's involved and the value of such an activity.

Another \$5,000 is devoted to Alberta's membership in the AIPLF, Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française. We've been pursuing this membership for the past three years, and it would appear that in the next fiscal year this membership will come to fruition. It's something that Speaker Schumacher initiated and that has continued with especially the Francophone members of the Assembly being quite involved. Specifically Mr. Langevin has been sort of leading the way in that regard. This \$5,000 is for the membership fee and associated costs in that association.

The balance is to fund member travel so that we can send members to the same seminars and conferences that they normally attend from year to year. That budget tends to fluctuate quite significantly depending on where the conferences are from year to year. We budget economy fares for members, plus the accommodation and meal costs. Because of the locations of these various events that we send members to in the next fiscal year, that's why this budget is expected to increase by that amount.

Those are the three components to that \$50,000.

The issues that aren't addressed that we hope to address in the next year would be to conduct activities to increase the understanding of parliamentary democracy among high school students especially. Our judgment is that is an area of the curriculum that has not enough emphasis, and our proposal was to organize a CPA youth parliament. That is not necessarily off the books, but our proposal would be to seek sponsorship for that activity so that we could move forward with that.

In terms of the pressures on the services of the House services branch, in the legal area we've had to devote a lot more time in the past six months to freedom of information issues and have had quite extensive involvement in one particular hearing and so on. That's still in process, so I won't comment any further on that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Committee members, I advised – and hopefully we'll have time to do it – to go in camera, and that's one area that I would like to discuss with the committee members to give everyone more detail on that last point.

Go ahead.

DR. McNEIL: I think that's all I need to say at this point. I'd entertain questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Who had raised the question about security?

MS OLSEN: That was me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clerk, do you want to comment on that as well? The Sergeant-at-Arms comes under this area.

DR. McNEIL: Brian might want to come to the table too. Essentially, we're responsible for providing security for the Chamber and its environs; in effect, the Chamber, the galleries, and the lounges surrounding. A major portion of our budget relates to providing funding for our part-time security staff, who are all ex

police officers from one police department or another. Our primary focus is on members during session. With respect to the building and the grounds and the Annex, the responsibility for security there is carried out by the Department of Justice. We've taken on and the Sergeant-at-Arms especially has taken on the role of trying to ensure that constituency offices are very up to speed with respect to security issues. He travels to constituency offices and provides information, training in effect, to those offices. As well, he's conducted security awareness seminars for Legislative Assembly staff along with the director of protection services in the Department of Justice.

That's a very brief overview.

MS OLSEN: I guess if I could start with a couple of questions about the security. I'm to understand that in our House here it's the Chamber, the galleries, and that's it?

MR. HODGSON: And the lobbies: the room that we're in, the lounges, the Confederation Room, the members' lobby, and the opposition lobby.

MS OLSEN: Okay. You're not responsible for the offices, then, of the Premier or the offices of the members here.

MR. HODGSON: No, I'm not.

MS OLSEN: Okay. How is that in relation to other Legislatures across the country? What is your role?

MR. HODGSON: It varies. Some parliamentary jurisdictions define the precincts, and the definition of the precincts varies from one jurisdiction to another. In many instances it is the Sergeant-at-Arms who has the control over the security of the Legislature Building, the offices contained therein, the Chamber, galleries, and lobbies or lounges. That is not the case here, but in other jurisdictions it is. I think it's fair to say that right across the country there's a range of different security arrangements.

MS OLSEN: As the Sergeant-at-Arms here have you ever had that responsibility for the entire Legislature Building?

4:11

MR. HODGSON: I haven't personally, and I'm unaware of any of my predecessors having it, bearing in mind that the nature of the security arrangements has changed over time. I mean, 20 or 25 years ago I think it's fair to say that it wasn't as much of a concern as it is now, but a quick survey of parliamentary jurisdictions across the country would lead one to conclude that security concerns are prevalent. They're not necessarily on a daily basis, but if you did a survey of what went on in this country over the last four or five years, you would see that many parliamentary jurisdictions have had serious security concerns, and they remain.

MS OLSEN: I guess the reason I'm asking these questions is that I'm trying to determine whether there was a cost saving associated with having the Department of Justice administer security in this building and then you operate within the Chamber and the galleries. What is the cost to your function, then, overall, and is there increased stress? We've had some incidents now that you've had to attend to, so I'm wondering if we go out of your jurisdiction when we're asking you to become involved and what the impact is on your manpower as a result of that.

MR. HODGSON: Well, I certainly provide advice, as the Clerk mentioned, to members and constituency office staff relative to

issues relating to their personal and office security. I guess we take a fairly elastic view, I would say, of how far that should go, but it certainly doesn't extend beyond providing advice. I also provide advice in relation to constituency office alarm systems, but my advice is certainly not binding. It's to be accepted or rejected as the case may be.

MS OLSEN: Okay. So the constituency offices, then, are part of it?

MR. HODGSON: In the sense that I provide advice. There isn't a particular standard in terms of security that a constituency office must meet.

MS OLSEN: Okay. Then your performance measures in relation to the constituency offices and the number of security visits and the reports of theft: would these not be more Department of Justice concerns?

MR. HODGSON: No. The Department of Justice monitors the constituency office alarm system of behalf of the Legislative Assembly, but in terms of the number of visits to the offices, they don't visit constituency offices. The Department of Justice has a responsibility to provide security advice to members of Executive Council, but that's not within my purview. I treat all members as equal in terms of providing advice or service.

MS OLSEN: Okay.

MS BARRETT: David, I'd like to ask you: what won't you be able to do as a result of having asked for a budget of \$145,000 compared to what's in front of us, which is pared down to \$50,000?

DR. McNEIL: I guess one of the most significant things is conducting a youth parliament.

MS BARRETT: I couldn't find a price tag in here for that. What was that?

DR. McNEIL: About \$20,000.

As well, we proposed some wage funding. One of the difficulties we've experienced over the past couple of years, especially during session, is pressure to do procedural research, research of various types. None of the managers have a secretary per se. I have an administrative assistant, but we have no research capability other than our own capabilities. We've found that at times we would like to take an issue and develop a better background than we're able to do, especially during session. So the funding was to do that, to assist with a youth parliament if it was going to be organized, and to provide some administrative support to the various managers in House services. There are five: two legal counsel, the Clerk Assistant, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and myself.

MS BARRETT: So the biggie there that you've identified, though, would have been the researcher?

DR. McNEIL: Yes, definitely.

MS BARRETT: Does that mean that during session things may slow down in terms of Parliamentary Counsel being able to do their work on the spot, as it were?

DR. McNEIL: When we get a STEP student in the summer, we usually hire a law student, and that's very helpful. If we get a law student in in April or May, then that really facilitates the session for

us. We don't always get a STEP student, but if we do, we're in a much better position.

The other thing is that there's a lot of historical information in the House services area, the committees branch, that needs to be developed. The Clerk Assistant spends a lot of time doing that, but again it's an area where some kind of research assistance would be helpful.

MS BARRETT: So the continuity in fact would be particularly useful between the work that would be done outside session and the work that would be done during session.

DR. McNEIL: Well, exactly. It would help to have somebody who could develop some degree of expertise and knowledge of the parliamentary area. Right now we get a student for a summer, and then we retrain them the next summer.

MS BARRETT: Got to retrain them, the next crop. I hear you. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth, then Mr. Herard.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thanks. On the \$50,000, David, you talked about the seminar, which I understood to be a cost of \$20,000. Am I correct?

DR. McNEIL: Correct.

MRS. FORSYTH: And then you said \$5,000 for membership in the *parlez vous français* thing?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. That's the *Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française*. This is an international organization. We've had a number of members of this Assembly attend in recent years. They brought back a recommendation for participation.

MRS. FORSYTH: I don't have a problem with that, Mr. Chairman. I'm just getting clarification.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Not *parlez vous française*.

MRS. FORSYTH: All right.

And I missed the balance of what you . . .

DR. McNEIL: That was for travel.

MRS. FORSYTH: Sorry?

DR. McNEIL: Member travel.

MRS. FORSYTH: Travel?

DR. McNEIL: Yes.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. You talk about the travel and increases due to the locations of the parliamentary conferences and seminars attended by members of the Legislature and offices of the Assembly, so we're looking at \$25,000 there. If somebody said to me, "Would you rather go to a parliamentary meeting in Tuktoyaktuk compared to having the information back in the library?" I think probably there would be some clear choices.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, okay. Thank you.

In the fiscal year 1998-99 the Canadian Parliamentary

Association's annual meeting is in Ontario. In 1997-98 it was in Regina, and it's providing exactly the same service. All members who are elected throughout the whole Commonwealth are members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Members around here have participated. The reason for the difference is the cost to get Ontario versus the cost to go to Regina. Same service: nothing more, nothing less.

I'm sorry to interrupt. Please go ahead.

MRS. FORSYTH: I don't have a problem with that, but you're looking at a budget that has been very, very difficult. Mr. Chairman, can you not represent without having to worry about the rest of the members? I mean, I don't want to take anything away from the members, but looking at it as a cost factor, when David can look at a researcher and that, I just don't know. I don't want to micromanage. Certainly as a member I would have no problem with that as far as a priority.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

There are three other speakers – Mr. Herard, Mrs. Sloan, and Mr. Coutts – but I will respond to your question.

MRS. FORSYTH: Please.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is a priority for private members. This committee and this Assembly is made up of private members who are neutral to the Speaker. He sees no difference as to who they are. All the Speaker knows in the background, though, is that some members, because they're members of Executive Council, do have opportunities to travel. Some members are invited by members of Executive Council to do some visitations and other things. Other members, by the nature of the positions they have, can do these things.

We are members of the Canadian Parliamentary Association. This is an annual opportunity for private members – again, private members – to attend to meet with their colleagues. This is a well-established Canadian organization, and I feel very, very strongly, to respond very specifically to your question, about the need to respond to individual interests of private members. The Speaker does not see differences as to who they are.

MS BARRETT: Can I add to that, please, Mr. Chairman? It will only take 30 seconds.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you'd be ahead of Mr. Herard and Mrs. Sloan and Mr. Coutts.

MS BARRETT: Is that all right? Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was not Mr. Herard who said okay, but go ahead. Thirty seconds.

MS BARRETT: As an opposition MLA I went on one trip. I went to Regina, and I drove because I don't fly. I just want to assure committee members that, believe it or not, it was worth while. The seminars were really useful. It would be a sad thing to take away, and I didn't consider it a perk. They made me work.

4:21

MRS. FORSYTH: No, I'm not talking about a perk. I'm talking about a priority. The chairman has answered that, and I am comfortable with that.

MS BARRETT: Good. Thanks.

MR. HERARD: David, where in the budget would the cost of broadcasting question period appear?

DR. McNEIL: That's in the House services budget.

MR. HERARD: Where in the budget? What line?

DR. McNEIL: Oh, what line? Under other labour and services.

MR. HERARD: Okay. What is the cost of broadcasting question period? I notice there's been a reduction of \$52,000 there.

DR. McNEIL: What we budgeted last year is \$71,500, and that's what we would budget this year.

MR. HERARD: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: In effect that's for the production of the show.

MR. HERARD: I understand it's only that good a deal because at this point there's a contract with Access that was done through Advanced Ed I believe.

DR. McNEIL: Correct. That contract will be in place for another year.

MR. HERARD: And that's it?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. In other words until the spring of 1998.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that the spring of 1999 or '98?

DR. McNEIL: In '99. Sorry.

MR. HERARD: All right. So there's at least one more year without impacting your budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: This will be one of the alerting things that we'll bring forward to the committee in the new year in the sense that we've got one more year, one fiscal year, to deal with it. Then it becomes an issue of whether we want or do not want it.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan and then Mr. Coutts.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm wondering if Dr. McNeil could give me an explanation as to what a corporate sponsored intern program is. Perhaps I'll allow him to give his definition first, and then I'll ask my question.

DR. McNEIL: First of all, an intern program is a program whereby the Assembly hires typically university graduates to intern in the Assembly for a period. In the past it was I think 10 or 12 months. We did have an intern program, and when I was here we had eight interns. They rotated among the caucuses over the period they were here and in effect learned the ropes as far as how the system operates. Most of them that I've ever talked to found it a very worthwhile experience. Because of funding difficulties a number of years ago, that and some concerns about the program, that program was eliminated. The idea for a corporate sponsored program would be to attempt to solicit corporate sponsorship for a number of intern positions, if you will, to get this program back, to reimplement this type of program. There are a number of parliamentary jurisdictions

across the country that do have intern programs of one type or another.

MRS. SLOAN: How many would have them corporate sponsored?

MR. HODGSON: I think Ontario's is corporate sponsored. It's the only one I'm aware of at the moment.

MRS. SLOAN: That's a coincidence. In essence, then, once again even though we have said provincially that we have human and education as top priorities, we are calling upon the corporate sector to subsidize both the intern program and educational aids on democracy in the legislative process. So that will be pursued even though the allocation in this budget year is not there and hasn't been for several years. We'll pursue to try and find a corporate sponsor to do that; is that correct?

THE CHAIRMAN: I think this committee basically decided it no longer wanted to support the intern program. It was about 1990. Somebody help me. What year was it?

MR. HODGSON: In '92 or '93.

THE CHAIRMAN: In '92 or 1993. So it's one of those things, ongoing things. When you meet with nice groups, they might want to sponsor it – and it's university students – to be available.

MRS. SLOAN: My second question is in relation to security services. It has two parts to it. The first is with respect to the improvements to security systems and what was intended there. The second is in relationship to security surrounding verbal or written threats to members. Who deals with those? Is there an accessible process in which those are handled?

MR. HODGSON: To answer the first question, there were technical improvements made to the security arrangements surrounding the precincts. These included a closed-circuit TV system and a card access system. Ultimately we hope to move to an improved security system that will involve a card access and keypad to increase the level of security even more. What we attempted to do through technical improvements was reduce our manpower complement. I think we've gone about as far as we can go in that regard, but there were substantial, significant savings realized through that exercise.

MRS. SLOAN: And the second part?

MR. HODGSON: Relating to written and verbal . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: You be careful what you talk about; okay? If the committee wants to have an in camera meeting on security, we'll be happy to arrange for such a thing to deal with it. But security is not the kind of thing you can discuss in public. Otherwise there's no security.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, is there a process? If there is, I'm not aware of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: A process? If somebody sends you a threatening letter?

MRS. SLOAN: My question, Mr. Chairman, was: is there a process for the resolution of threats made verbally or in written form? I'm not seeking anything of a confidential nature. It's strictly from a security standpoint.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Respond. You can provide advice on that.

MR. HODGSON: If a member receives a threat, if it is a threat against the member or some other person or property, generally in the first instance my advice has been invariably to call the police immediately and let them know. Now, I like to know after the fact because I maintain some continuity. Individuals that have called one member very often have called other members or have gone to visit constituency offices, and not all offices know about this. But in the first instance, you know, it's the responsibility I think of the member, if it involves a threat against himself or herself or a member of staff, to call the police. The police are in a position to react immediately.

MRS. SLOAN: Just to respond. This isn't directed specifically to you, Brian, or to the statement that you've made. Number one, I think we've compromised our ability. One of the goals of the program is to promote awareness and educate police with respect to parliamentary law. Given the budgets, I think our ability to do that is compromised.

Secondly, we know from the municipal funding cuts that our police service has more than their share of much more serious complaints to deal with. As a result, a member receiving a threatening letter which, of course, doesn't involve any particular act of violence isn't very high on the priority list when you've got other people in the community that are having direct threats made, whether it's physical or break-ins or whatever. I'm not satisfied. Again, I'm not labeling this as being your particular response, but when it's dictated because of funding cuts . . .

MR. HODGSON: Your question is what?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I guess I don't accept the fact that the only route that we have as members to go is to call the police.

MR. HODGSON: That's not the only route that you have to go. I mean, you can choose not to call them, I suppose, if you so wish, or advise me. All I would do would be to call the police and advise them of the threat, because the police are the ones most capable and able to handle it.

MRS. SLOAN: So as a Member of the Legislative Assembly I'm not entitled to any other means of security for verbal or written harassment or verbal or written threats than a normal citizen would be. That is in essence what your answer tells me.

THE CHAIRMAN: And the bottom line conclusion is yes. You're not entitled to any more.

MRS. SLOAN: That's very reassuring, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, it isn't, but it's reality.

MRS. FORSYTH: If I may, Mr. Chairman, on this point.

THE CHAIRMAN: On this point? Okay.

MRS. FORSYTH: As someone who was threatened last October I have to say that the Leg. Assembly was notified; I called the police. The police both in Edmonton and Calgary were well aware of the situation, and they knew at the Sergeant-at-Arm's office also. So they did what they could. The police did the job that they are supposed to do. I was even at times asked if I was home safely. I felt that they did a job very well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett, do you want to get in on this specific, singular point? Mr. Coutts has been waiting for quite a while.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead then.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Thanks, and thank you, Mr. Coutts. I would like to assure the members at this table that there is another route as well, and that is going to Leg. security. I've had to resort to that many times. I'm not going to state on the record exactly the circumstances because I don't want kooks to read about them. But I'll tell you: they got the guys. They used the police in a very quiet way, and they got the guys.

THE CHAIRMAN: But that's part of the police response.

MS BARRETT: Well, no. What I'm saying is I went directly to Leg. security. You can go to Brian; you can go to Leg. security. There are lots of routes to get looked after.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're not going to have a great big discussion here about what exists and what doesn't in security.

Mr. Coutts and then Ms Olsen.

4:31

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Briefly, David, your initiative to plan and implement a high school model parliament is admirable from an individual who comes from the Tuxis system. You mentioned in your comments that you would be looking for a sponsor. Would that Tuxis parliamentary system look at being that sponsorship or being that co-ordinator? I think that reducing duplication might be a priority too, particularly when we're looking at some cost savings.

DR. McNEIL: Well, we provide a venue in effect for the Tuxis parliament. We see this as more of an across Alberta parliament, where each member would have some involvement in nominating, selecting the representative from his or her constituency. I think we'd like to work more with the Department of Education to focus in on the curriculum at that level, at grade 10, where they do cover parliament again after grade 6, to strengthen that aspect.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much.

MS OLSEN: Just one last question for Brian. Do you have a formal protocol in place with the police now in relation to exchange of information, what information they're able to give you and would give you?

MR. HODGSON: I have an agreement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for access to the Canadian police information centre for information, yes.

MS OLSEN: What about the Edmonton Police Service in relation to a formal protocol?

MR. HODGSON: There isn't a formal protocol.

THE CHAIRMAN: But there's a very good working relationship, including the presence in this building of an officer from the Edmonton city police.

MS OLSEN: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah. Well, there may not be today, but there certainly has been.

MS OLSEN: There was in the past. That's why I'm asking that, because that person is no longer here.

MR. HODGSON: I have a pretty good liaison with the chief of police and people in his office, and I do communicate with him regularly on a number of issues that relate to security, among other things. And I have access to him.

MS OLSEN: And you have access to all the reports and everything that occur.

MR. HODGSON: I haven't had occasion to ask for specific reports other than those that may involve thefts from constituency offices or other incidents.

MS OLSEN: No. I'm talking about here at the Legislature. Pictures of bad guys and names and stuff like that.

MR. HODGSON: Yes. There's never, ever been a problem. Excellent co-operation.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Clerk to supplement.

DR. McNEIL: Just maybe in conclusion. We go to great efforts to co-ordinate any kind of response that's required to a security issue, whether that be with the city police, the RCMP, the Department of Justice security, especially the guys at the front door, if you will. We're implementing a security co-ordination mechanism to try to formalize that, and that will be in place over the next short period of time. I think the key is that we're playing a key role in trying to co-ordinate the responses that are required to whatever threat arises to a member or members.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Information systems. Mr. Gano, that's your area of responsibility.

MR. GANO: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps just a bit of introduction here. As the chairman indicated at the beginning, information systems has been allocated a significant amount of the amount that was provided to us. This, however, has affected the budget that was previously approved by the EDP committee. I have not had an opportunity to discuss those changes with that committee, so basically I'm speaking from my position as director of information and not for the committee at this point.

MRS. FORSYTH: Then could you explain where you get your \$100,000?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Ms Barrett was first, and then we'll go to you.

MRS. FORSYTH: Sorry, Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, a couple of items.

MR. RENNER: I sort of thought he cut off in mid-thought.

THE CHAIRMAN: You can explain where we're going to allocate the \$100,000.

MR. GANO: The \$100,000 is allocated to two positions for information systems. Over the past number of months we have had a number of indications that our service levels have been dropping off. We have had a significant amount of staff turnover. The technology that we are expected to support is increasing in complexity. We need the additional two positions to simply maintain the current level of support and allow us to continue on with what the members and staff of the Legislative Assembly have become used to.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Forsyth, then Ms Barrett.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you. If I may, Mr. Chairman, I think Pam was ahead of me.

THE CHAIRMAN: You prefer it that way? Okay. Ms Barrett, then Mrs. Forsyth, then Mr. Herard. I've already got Ms Olsen down.

MS OLSEN: Outstanding.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. So we'll go with Ms Barrett, Mrs. Forsyth, Ms Olsen, Mr. Herard.

MS BARRETT: All right. You will recall yesterday I told you the story about bringing my own computer into the Leg. to use because I didn't have one. Well, I should tell you that when I got back here in March and saw that people were operating with 286s, I was shocked. I mean, less than a year after I left here, I went out and got me a big fancy 486, and even now I consider that a dud. It's a slowpoke. I think that this department has obviously been underbudgeted for years. Aside from the hardware – and I know you've got some money in here for hardware and software – I was very appreciative of your cost analysis between our operation and the private sector. There's no question that this is an efficient machine that you've got here, no doubt whatsoever.

I told you the story about the friend of mine, you know, working for 37K for a local hospital. A Calgary company called her up. She got \$70,000 plus an expense allowance plus they're putting her up. I mean, she's doing just fine. This is a woman that took one course for 10 months, admittedly an intense course, the Microsoft certified engineering program. Now, a lot of the people that should be contemplated for here should be graduates with four-year degrees, no doubt about it, plus the range in between: the NAITs and the Grant MacEwans and so forth. So my editorial comment is: I don't know how you've done it; I just don't know. But do tell me, because this is an area that is very close to my heart. What are we going to lose? You had asked for and I believe you should get the total 270,000 additional dollars that you were looking for. What are we going to lose as a result of you not getting that money? It's going to be a lot. It's got to be a lot.

4:41

MR. GANO: Certainly there are a number of issues that we were hoping to address within information systems. The number one priority was – and you alluded to it earlier – the upgrading of the hardware at a faster rate. Right now I am budgeted to upgrade the hardware every three to four years. That means a workstation shouldn't be older than four years old. A hundred thousand dollars of that \$200,000 was budgeted to allow me to increase that rate to once every two years. That will not be possible. Other initiatives that will suffer are Chamber automation. We will not be able to support 50 or 83 additional workstations in the Chamber, how ever many members choose to have laptops in the Chamber. These two positions are, as I indicated, to support the current level of hardware

and software that we have. With this budget increase we cannot provide any enhancements, for example, to the Internet. We cannot upgrade software at the rate that it should be upgraded. Those are the major impacts.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'll just conclude by saying that this reminds me of 1986. At that time, to the best of my knowledge, only two MLAs were computer literate. That was me and Dick Johnston. I don't know about you, Mr. Chairman.

MS OLSEN: I don't think his mathematical program worked very well.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, you're right.

THE CHAIRMAN: The abacus. It's eternal.

MS BARRETT: It was an incredible fight to get Members' Services to agree to computerization. At one point I even resorted, off the record of course, to calling some members of this committee Luddites. Well, I won't do that right now. However, if we don't spend the money on making sure that our equipment is up to speed – if it's not up to speed, if it's not sufficiently advanced, if we don't have particularly the latest in software, we're falling way behind. I would urge the committee members to reverse this \$100,000 that's on this little white piece of paper and go back to the original request, which would add the \$270,000. It'll pay back dividends in no time. Thank you.

MRS. FORSYTH: I just want to clarify with Bill that the \$100,000 is two positions at \$50,000 each.

MR. GANO: Yes, which includes benefits. Yeah, that's basically it.

MRS. FORSYTH: All right. Thanks.

MS OLSEN: I just thought we could get Bill Gates to be a corporate sponsor of our ISS here.

However, I am concerned, and I'm concerned because when we over in the other building there have tried to do work which benefits our constituents, which benefits the research that we do as the opposition, we repeatedly run into things such as computers freezing while trying to access web sites on the Internet, slow downloading of information from the Internet, a total inability to access or transmit video and audio information via the Internet, the inability to use programs requiring a Windows95 platform – and we're into Windows97 here – printers with insufficient memory to print large or graphically rich files, and we have no in-house CD-ROM capability. These are pretty basic. Those systems can be purchased at a very reasonable cost.

I'm just going to go back and reflect on some thoughts that have been put forward before. It's all fine and dandy, you know, that certain MLAs who are ministers can use their budgets to supplement their equipment and hardware, or may or may not do that. Other MLAs have opportunities through different committees they are on to have access to other technology. Then some of us have access to little or no technology, including our researchers who are required to do the work as the Official Opposition.

I get increasingly frustrated, not with Mr. Gano's department – because they are working very hard – recognizing that there are a number of computer-literate MLAs. We are moving ahead, moving forward – or we are supposed to be – yet we keep our particular employees behind. They can't do their job. I get really frustrated when I do look at other departments, if you will – I know this is the

LAO – where they've been able to spring for the \$8,000 laptops and the docking machines. The directors of departments have that.

You know, we're still sitting here in the dark ages, and I have some difficulty because I don't believe that Mr. Gano can meet his goals as a result of this. He's going to get two more people for roughly \$50,000 for how long we don't know because private industry pays a heck of a lot more, and it won't be long before they're gone. That turnover is constantly costing this department. I'm concerned that we don't recognize that and move forward.

If there's any area in this budget that I really believe shouldn't be compromised, it's this particular area. Look at the ISS correlation to private-sector spending on support and hardware and software. We either move forward or we might as well get rid of the whole kit and caboodle here and go back to pen and paper.

My question to you, Mr. Gano, actually is: we now have the Chamber ready; is that correct?

MR. GANO: The Chamber is wired, yes.

MS OLSEN: Okay. What was the cost of that?

MR. GANO: The wiring of the Chamber itself was performed by Public Works, Supply and Services, so there was no specific cost to the LAO for that. We, however, will have to maintain the equipment that will attach to the ends of the wires. Those are different pieces of hardware, \$2,500 to attach 20 members.

MS OLSEN: And those costs will vary with technology changes?

MR. GANO: Right. The cost is not only for the hardware. It's the resources to support those workstations inside the Chamber.

MS OLSEN: What has your turnover rate been in the last two years?

MR. GANO: The turnover rate over the last year has been 90 percent. I have one person that has been there more than a year.

MS OLSEN: You can move on, Mr. Chairman. I'm done. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard, Mr. Wickman, then Mrs. Sloan.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, with regards to constituency office terminals, where are we at roughly in terms of having machines in virtually every constituency office that are Internet capable?

MR. GANO: There's about 50 percent of the constituency offices that are Internet capable right now. That doesn't mean that the resources in those offices are capable of using the technology.

MR. HERARD: Right.

Now, I saw some documentation. I can't put my finger on it right now, but there's a considerable amount of technology that is purchased through constituency office budgets; is there not?

MR. GANO: That's correct, yes.

MR. HERARD: Is that mostly all done through your office?

MR. GANO: It varies. A number of members do consult with our office. They ask for advice and then go out and purchase their own. Other members use us entirely, simply request that we buy them a workstation. Other members will just go out and buy something on their own. We have had one instance that did occur within the last week where an office, without consulting us, has gone out and

bought a new printer that we do not know anything about. We don't even know if it's compatible. They've asked us to come and hook it up, and we have had to indicate that we are not going to be able to do that.

4:51

MR. HERARD: So any member who really has a burning desire to get on-line or have an upgraded terminal on his desk or in his constituency office can in fact use your services to purchase such equipment out of their constituency allowances.

MR. GANO: They can use their funds to purchase the equipment. The question then becomes supporting that equipment. Again, that impacts information systems. I'm indicating that with this number of positions I will be able to support 300 workstations which are currently out there. If that continues to rise, which it has been doing over the last number of years, I can't continue to support additional workstations.

MR. HERARD: The last question is: have you talked to places like NAIT and the colleges to see if in fact you could make arrangements to do work experience, mentorship, internship, partnership kinds of arrangements? A lot of these facilities have some pretty bright young folks that are quite literate in all this stuff and are looking for some hands-on experience somewhere. Are you doing any of that at all?

MR. GANO: We do that a fair amount, specifically with the STEP program. We normally are able to acquire one person for the summer. The unfortunate part of those programs is that they are very short term, and just as they're about ready to leave, they're becoming productive. It's not just a matter of understanding how to run a computer. It's also understanding the organization; it's understanding all of the different pieces of software. NAIT does not train in Corel, WordPerfect, and Microsoft Suite. Neither does Grant MacEwan. We're expected to support those products.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Just two questions. Your in-house, on-line access to *Hansard* and statutes of Alberta and such, which can be accessed now through the caucus office: when is it intended to expand that access to the constituency offices?

MR. GANO: That access to them is available now through the Internet.

MR. WICKMAN: *Hansard* and the statutes of Alberta?

MR. GANO: Statutes of Alberta are available via the Queen's Printer, via the Internet.

MR. WICKMAN: For the 50 percent of the offices that have been upgraded.

MR. GANO: That's right.

MR. WICKMAN: Dennis asked about that earlier.

My second question. You hear that when we hit the year 2,000, the impact on a worldwide basis is going to be to the tune of \$3 trillion as far as computer upgrades are involved and such. Exactly how are we going to be affected by that? How are we going to deal with it?

MR. GANO: Well, we're affected in a couple of different ways. First off, we have to ensure that our software is year 2,000 compliant. I have a project under way right now examining our current software. Windows 3.1 is not year 2,000 compliant, so we have to ensure that we are at Windows95 or Windows97 by that period. We have a subscription system that we're currently using which is not year 2,000 compliant. We're going to have to do something in that area.

The other effect is finding resources in the market to hire, because as you indicated, those resources are being gobbled up by other agencies, other government departments to work on the year 2,000 problem. There are estimates that range all the way from 30 percent to 50 percent of EDP resources that are going to be dedicated to the year 2,000 by next year, yet graduation out of EDP programs is decreasing. Those are the realities that we're currently dealing with.

MR. WICKMAN: Do you feel a level of comfort within budgets and such that your goals will be achieved as far as the year 2000 are concerned?

MR. GANO: I hesitate because I'm not confident. No.

MR. WICKMAN: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, we will not solve the problem of the year 2000 for the universal computer market in the LAO in the province of Alberta. We will rely on the expertise found elsewhere and follow suit.

MRS. SLOAN: I would like to make a motion, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: A motion? At any time you can make a motion.

MRS. SLOAN: That the '98-99 budget as originally proposed for information systems services be approved.

MS BARRETT: I'll second that.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

MR. RENNER: No seconders are required.

In light of the hour and in light of the fact that we're obviously not going to resolve all of the issues before us today, I would suggest that we defer the discussion on that motion until we reconvene on Monday. That will give all members involved an opportunity to consider the motion, and we'll deal with it on Monday.

THE CHAIRMAN: We do have a motion, then, and the secretary will have it. We have scheduled the next meeting for Monday at 1 o'clock. It's been announced, so we'll just follow through. We will adjourn now, and should any committee member wish to consult with me prior to the meeting at 1 o'clock, I'll be here for much of the morning on Monday.

[The committee adjourned at 4:58 p.m.]

