

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

1:02 p.m.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's 1:02 and the meeting will now be reconvened. When we left the other day, prior to adjournment, we were discussing an item dealing with information systems services. There was a discussion going around, and Mrs. Sloan at that time put forward a motion, and it basically said that the 1998-99 budget estimate for information systems services be approved in the amount of \$1,125,525 as originally presented to the Members' Services Committee. Where we're at right now is on a discussion of that motion and this item.

MRS. SLOAN: I have some comments, Mr. Chairman, but in light of the fact that at the conclusion of our meeting on Friday Mr. Renner requested that the motion be deferred in order for his members to have further discussion with respect to it, I'm wondering if he has any comments that he would like to make in terms of reporting back.

MR. RENNER: Sure. We did have an opportunity to sit down as a group, and we concluded that the revised budget as presented appears to address the concerns that we had in this area and are satisfied that the additional \$100,000 will be satisfactory to deal with some of the pressures that have been observed in this area and as such would now be prepared to support the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion, then, on this motion? Shall I call the question?

MRS. SLOAN: I would like to make my remarks if I may.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not convinced that the additional \$100,000, while it may be able to offer some support with respect to the purchase of new hardware, is going to result in sufficient activities and actions to reduce the turnover rate in this department. I believe, to recap the statements made at the previous committee meeting, that the turnover rate of staff was approximately 90 percent in the last fiscal year. I think all members of the committee are cognizant that that is costly, will continue to be costly, and how \$100,000 will, in essence, make even so much as a dint in that is not clear to me.

The Liberal members of the committee took it upon ourselves over the weekend to do some per capita costing across government and ministries with respect to information systems, and in our analysis of these figures we would see that this government puts sufficient money towards the updating and purchase of information systems when it comes to their government ministries. It is puzzling to us that that same priority is not given to the Legislative Assembly. In fact, the allowance being proposed is significantly less than would be offered to even the Executive Council of this government, which in a staff complement would be very close to the complement of staff for the Legislative Assembly.

Perhaps I could end my remarks, Mr. Chairman, by posing a question: why is there a double standard, and why is it that the government can choose to make allocations for computer upgrading and computer support for their ministries and not offer the same in allowances for the Legislative Assembly?

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion?

HON. MEMBERS: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The question's been called. All those in favour of the motion put forward by Mrs. Sloan, please signify by raising a hand. All those opposed? The motion is defeated.

I take it, then, that there's consensus with the proposal that has been put forward by the Speaker with respect to this item.

Shall we now move, then, to legislative committees? Comments with respect to this matter? Louise, would you like to join us? The Clerk Assistant is basically looking over these committees. Mrs. Kamuchik, as I recall, you'd indicated that you'd consulted with the chairpersons of these various committees, and these were the numbers that they had forwarded back to you.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that's exactly what we have in here, that consultation with all chairmen in terms of these various committees. Anyone like to say anything?

MR. DOERKSEN: If the chairman could advise – we have a new green sheet.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry?

MR. DOERKSEN: We have a new green sheet at our table. I wonder what the significance of that is?

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. DOERKSEN: Not to be confused with the previous green sheet.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: The green sheet on committees, if I may, Mr. Chairman, is to update the 1997-98 forecast of expenditures.

MR. DOERKSEN: It does look the same as what was in our book.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: I wasn't sure. I thought the one in your book hadn't been updated, so I was just wanting to make sure that it's the correct forecast for '97-98, not the '98-99 estimate. To the right again, Mr. Doerksen.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. I understand now.

The one question I would have as we approach this estimate. The new green sheet that was handed out for this meeting shows a net expenditure of \$158,607. Correct? That should match the previous green sheet, which shows \$159,045.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Sorry. I don't have the \$159,000 that you're referring to.

DR. McNEIL: Right here.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Oh, that's it.

MR. DOERKSEN: So your grand total on the new green sheet should equal what was on the previous sheet and doesn't.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: I didn't generate this one; that's why. I just generated the committee one. That's the one I have dated. I'm sorry if I didn't address the other sheet that was generated by a different area.

MR. DOERKSEN: It's only an \$800 variance, and I'm sure you can

find it in one of those. That's more to note.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: We had some new items with the heritage committee that were not there the previous year. The formula, when I went through it, wasn't captured in the spreadsheet. It's my fault that I didn't catch it early enough, so I apologize to the committee members. I caught it before the committee meeting, and that's why I brought you the updated sheets.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, Mr. Doerksen?

MR. DOERKSEN: I'm fine. I'm not sure that cleared everybody.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the green sheet that was out here today – and I'm sorry – was dated November 10. The green sheet that I circulated the other day was dated November 13. I don't know where this one came from or why it is, but it was dated two days before, and it shouldn't have been here.

MS OLSEN: I'm going to make the assumption, then, that because there is zero amount allotted to the Law and Regulations Committee, that hasn't sat together for over 10 years, there's no anticipation that it's going to sit again.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Well, we have no way of knowing that, Ms Olsen. These committees, the ones with the zero dollars, would only meet if there were a resolution passed in the House referring a matter to these committees. If that were the case in the spring session, the committees would then meet, and we'd have to develop a budget. But until something is before the committee that they can consider, we cannot establish a budget because we don't know what the mandate of that committee would be, how wide-ranging it would be, whether they would be requiring public input, advertising. So we always put in a zero budget until such time as a resolution giving the committee some work to do would be passed by the House.

MS OLSEN: So then where would you find the budget?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: We'd have to try to find it in the committee envelope budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the first alternative. A second one: if it's a resolution of the Legislative Assembly, that we can't anticipate at this time, we'd have to request the Assembly to provide the funds, which is a very, very normal process.

Additional questions?

Then session assessment. Okay with that? So basically what we're looking at, then, is this so-called envelope, the green sheet that you had dated November 13, looking at the 1998-99 estimate for that area, a subtotal of \$5,508,502. Consensus provided to that?

1:12

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

The next area, MLA administration. Again, you can see the figure that is provided in there. We've had some discussion with respect to that at the moment. On the white sheets, the briefing sheets that you've got, we've explained to you earlier how we calculated the figure by reducing the re-establishment allowance. This committee has already reviewed the question of constituency allowances and has agreed that there should be an allocation based on some – what? – \$709, \$710?

DR. McNEIL: Seven hundred and ten.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seven hundred and ten dollars. We've already agreed to that.

I draw your attention, though, to members' services allowances. I indicated the other day that the number that had come back for that was based on the status quo, which were the operative words in the resolution that came before this committee. So the status quo figure for 1997-98 for the communication allowance was \$973,914 and for the promotion allowances, \$293,536.

However, every five years our census is done. In 1996 the census was done, so the budgeted figure that we had put in in the original budget – the original budget – showed figures higher than that. To this point in time, if I understand this absolutely correctly, under the figure that we've currently got for MLA administration, we're carrying for both the communication allowance, the figure of \$973,914, and the promotion allowances, \$293,536. That's what it's in, and if you want to go with the status quo, those are the figures that will carry through. If you want those to reflect the census adjustments, then it's an opportunity to deal with it.

Mr. Renner, Mr. Doerksen, and Ms Barrett.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognize the need to have a discussion in this particular area. The reason for the change as proposed in the estimates before us is because of the change in population.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

MR. RENNER: We've been working with a set formula for determining both the communication allowance and the promotion allowance, and that is a floating rate based upon the population of each constituency. I'm confident that the numbers that we had presented to us would reflect the most up-to-date population figures in each constituency. That, then, would necessitate an increase of approximately \$118,000 in this area over the '97-98 budget. Unless this committee is prepared to amend the formula – and I'm not prepared to suggest that we do at this point in time – that \$118,000 would have to either be found elsewhere in the budget or we would have to approve an increase to reflect that increased population.

The one question that I have relates to the operational expenses on the same page. I note that for '97-98 the forecast is \$2.043 million, and the estimate was \$2.180 million. It would appear at the outset that the roughly \$118,000 that's required to offset the increase in population under members' services allowances may well already be included in the operational expenses. I'm wondering if someone could provide me with an explanation why it would appear that our forecast is going to be some \$140,000 less than our estimates for '97-98 and perhaps provide the committee with some actual figures for '96-97 so we could have some comparisons and see exactly where these dollars have come in relation to the budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Clerk, can you help in that regard?

DR. McNEIL: I've asked for those figures. I don't know whether you've been able to generate them yet or not.

MR. GANO: We've not been able to pull them together yet.

THE CHAIRMAN: The forecast, of course, is a guess as of November 3, the date of that document, as to what might be expended in this area to March 31, 1998. It is a guess, based on some experience of course.

MR. RENNER: Oh, I certainly appreciate that, and I understand the Clerk has got someone looking for those numbers. Committee members, this relates to expenses that members incur on behalf of themselves. Travel expenses . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The biggest one item under operational expenses – the guess anyway – is that the travel will be down some \$77,000 by the end of the year. That's based on a whole series of things. We don't know when the session will begin exactly or what meetings might be entailed in here that we're unaware of, so we're just guessing that up to that day certain things have happened.

DR. McNEIL: Historically we've budgeted in these particular categories – and this includes MLA air travel, gas and maintenance, taxi, parking, car rental, and automobile mileage – for the actuals here rather than the theoretical potential. So these numbers are reflective of this.

MR. RENNER: So the forecast being some \$77,000 less than budget: there's an anomaly this year that would account for that?

DR. McNEIL: Well, I think the anomaly this year relates to some extent to a shorter spring session and the expectation, if we start in mid-February in '98, that the session may be a little bit shorter than what we would have budgeted for.

MS OLSEN: Shorter than we already had.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, when did we start this year? We started in April. It was a relatively short session. Oftentimes members from out of town have opportunities during the week to go back to their constituency. They might fly back once or twice during the week and be back here the next day. But the longer we sit for more days than we have budgeted for, that could all be evaporated in just a couple of weeks.

Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While those numbers are being looked for, I wonder if we could also have some idea of the amount of money that essentially remains unspent in terms of constituency allowances that essentially are turned back in, I guess, with respect to what the historical amount has been every year with respect to that. Some MLAs don't spend their entire budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's true.

MR. HERARD: And some hopefully don't overspend, but perhaps some do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Historically do we have any . . .

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. We did have a chart. Moses, do you have a copy of that chart?

THE CHAIRMAN: I for one never have anything left over.

Would you say then, Mr. Herard, that if there were dollars left over, they should be allocated for the communication allowance and the promotion allowance? Is that what you're suggesting?

MR. HERARD: Well, what I'm suggesting is that I need more information before I can make that decision.

DR. McNEIL: There is no question there is quite a variation in the expenditure of members. In '96-97 . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: That's this past year.

DR. McNEIL: . . . this past fiscal year, there was one member who expended under 50 percent of his or her allowance, four who expended between 60 and 70 percent, six who expended between 70 and 80 percent, 25 who expended between 80 and 90 percent, and 47 who expended between 90 and 100 percent.

MR. JACQUES: What was the total in dollars? Is that shown there?

DR. McNEIL: The total dollars? In '96-97 the average . . .

MR. JACQUES: No, just the total paid out for all members.

DR. McNEIL: That doesn't come out on the sheet, but I'll give you an average. The average was that 90 percent of the allowance was spent.

1:22

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, if I might. So roughly 10 percent of that figure, then, the \$4.6 million, would be about \$400,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Three hundred and twenty.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay, \$320,000. If there were to be a overrun on the travel, you'd still be within the overall budget of this area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's correct.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Thank you. I think that's the point Dennis was trying to find out and one that I was also going to ask you about.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think I understand what the member is saying, which is basically: well, if he's only spending 90 percent of it, could we then just use the communication allowance or the promotional allowance within that same thing? But what happens if it's a hundred percent? Then what does the Speaker do? Send all hon. members a letter saying, "You now have to come up with the difference"? So if there's a surplus left over, it's returned to the general revenue fund. It's not used elsewhere. It just shows as a reduction at the bottom. But from a management and bookkeeping point of view, a budgeting point of view, I don't know how you could budget for 83 MLAs with a discount factor. If you want to try it, I don't have any problem trying it, but you'd better be there with me on the 10th day of February, when there's no more money left to pay for these things.

MR. DOERKSEN: If we can look at the numbers, I think the point is that if you look at what the forecast is on the operational expenses of \$2,043,500, because we have to find essentially about \$120,000 because of the population increase on the members' services allowances, we either have to add that to the total or find it somewhere.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. That's correct.

MR. DOERKSEN: So we're saying – or I'm saying. I shouldn't say "we." This is my position. If you take that \$120,000 out of the operational expenses, you will still have an increased budget of approximately \$2,060,000 for operational expenses. Then if by some chance there's an overexpenditure in that particular area, because traditionally we have gone under on the members' services allowances, it doesn't cause this particular budget page a problem. So my view is that we do not need to increase the total on this line

item for MLA administration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MS BARRETT: I think on the operational expenses one of the reasons the forecast is less than either last year's budget or this year's projected budget would have to do with the fact that right after an election the new MLAs aren't doing the kind of traveling they would have been doing. Things go very quietly for that six- or seven-week period while all the machinations get together for the start of a session. So I think that's one of the reasons it comes out lower for this year. I don't think it will for other years; I've never seen that happen. And the same with other costs associated.

On the constituency allowances I'm going to speak very much in favour of getting that \$118,000 in to reflect the current census, and I don't care where it comes from. My constituency budget is partly affected by the fact that 4,000 fewer people were enumerated for the '97 election compared to the '93. I live in the riding. I know that we didn't lose 4,000 people; in fact, I know that it's grown. My budget is hurt by that, so all I can afford is one full-time staff person. I want to throw out an idea at this point – and if any members have any idea about where they want to take it, I'm certainly open to suggestions including the formation of a subcommittee – and that is that the demographics of a constituency need to be taken into account.

The riding that I represent contains the poorest section of the entire province. Poor people generate a lot more work for an MLA than rich people do. Even though I've got Ada Boulevard in the riding, Ada Boulevard only constitutes, you know, a half of 1 percent, right? Most of the riding that I live in and represent is core inner city. If we threw demographics into the picture, it would mean that ridings like the one that I represent would get more money for staffing. It's not money going into my pocket. I believe Ms Olsen would probably be in the same situation. I know that riding of Edmonton-Norwood almost as well as I do Edmonton-Highlands. If you threw demographics into the mix, you would see what I'm talking about. It's a lot easier. As I've said to Dave Hancock: I'd rather represent your riding; it's a lot easier in the southwest than it is in the core of the inner city.

So I want to throw that on the table for consideration. Obviously we're not going to amend our formula today, but I think it would be appropriate to do so. Probably only a handful of ridings, mainly in Edmonton and Calgary, would get additional money by that, but if there are ridings where, like, 50 percent of the constituency budget isn't being spent, then I would suggest to you that those ridings are probably pretty well-to-do ridings and that's why they don't need a lot of staff and a lot of resources.

Back to the \$118,000, though. I personally think it's kind of risky to try to get that out of the operational expenses. Maybe what would be less risky – I mean, risk is risk. We're the people who control the pens over these things. We can always come back in six months and say that we need to rewrite part of the travel budget, for example. Rather than having to do that, I would think that maybe what we should do is look at getting part of the \$118,000, maybe half of that, out of the operational expenses as a trial balloon and add the other half onto the bottom line here.

Those are my pitches.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I share Ms Barrett's concerns about the suggestion that we should try and find this approximately \$118,000 from operating. You know, I reflect on the fact that very recently, in fact this fall, we've seen significant expenditure to hold a communications and promotional event called

the Growth Summit, upon which I would estimate we probably spent in this province somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$500,000. But when it comes to doing grassroots communications and promotion of the Legislature, the democratic process, and the education of people with respect to that, we have an attitude which suggests that we need to do this by allocating money from other legitimate expense areas.

We're talking about \$100,000. It seems to me that the rationale for inclusion of that because of population growth is very sound. I would lend my support not for the suggestion that that money be found in another budget category but that that money be newly allotted to this budget area.

MR. RENNER: Mr. Chairman, I would have no objection to including this \$118,000 as an additional budget item provided that I could have some kind of documented evidence that we do not already have sufficient funds on the operational side. Looking at the numbers as they appear before us, it would appear that the \$118,000 is already there. If there could be some kind of factual, historical evidence shown to us that would indicate that this year is an anomaly – and I can understand Ms Barrett's suggestion that because there was an election, perhaps there was a decrease in the amount of travel in the early going of the year. If that's the case, then I have no problem. But I haven't yet heard or seen any evidence to indicate that the \$118,000 would not be there at the end of the year next year.

I think most members that I know – and certainly this member is – are being much more frugal in their travel. Those of us who fly are flying on discounted airfares. Airlines are having a price war right now. Travel costs have gone down. I think it's quite reasonable to expect that the \$118,000 would be found within the existing budget.

1:32

MS BARRETT: So basically, then, you're saying: if you're wrong, we've got to come back and fix it after the fact. That's fine. Sure.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you. We also have a contingency amount there for re-establishment allowances. We have a number for telecommunications that is \$495,000, which is a good chunk of the budget, yet we have no processes in place to make those costs visible to the MLAs. They don't even get their bills to sign off every month. Maybe there's a way of saving some money there by making those things at least visible to the MLA that incurred it so that they can look at their telecommunications costs and act appropriately. On top of that, there is an amount that probably will not be spent by MLAs with respect to that. Personally I think there's enough money there including the contingency on re-establishment to deal with it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I take it, then, that the general consensus that I can understand is that we go with the same subtotal that we've got on the green sheet, \$13,070,223, but that we carry the figures for the communications allowance and promotions allowance at the original budget estimates for 1998-99.

MRS. SLOAN: It would be correct, Mr. Chairman, to say that there is a majority of consensus but not a general consensus in that regard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. A majority consensus.

MS BARRETT: Okay, but summing up here, Mr. Chairman, are you acknowledging that the shift would happen somewhere in here so that the constituency allowances would go up by that \$118,000 to reflect the census changes?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's correct.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: We go with the same envelope number that we had on the green sheet but include those things, so we'll just deal with it.

MRS. SLOAN: Is it also clear and on the record, Mr. Chairman, that should there then be an operational shortfall, this committee will meet to make that allocation?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah. What we'll have to do is just guess at a certain time to see what the projections will be. First of all, we'll say, "Okay, no more telephone calls in February and March; no more travel in February and March; use your travel points in February and March." That sort of thing.

MR. WICKMAN: Just cancel the spring session. That'll do it.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's right. Okay. We'll advise all the Members of the Legislative Assembly in April that they should be really, really prudent: don't come to Edmonton for a meeting.

MR. JACQUES: Mr. Chairman, along the similar lines of discussion earlier, it would be appreciated if after our deliberations, in the ensuing days or weeks, we could get a copy of the comparable information for '96-97 that's on the sheet.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, you certainly can. As a matter of fact, perhaps we'll do some comparatives for a lot of these things and give you some long-term things for an upcoming Members' Services meeting.

MS BARRETT: I didn't get any response from anybody at the table about the issue of contemplating how demographics could be thrown into the mix for constituency budgets. Do I have any volunteers?

MR. WICKMAN: Throw Rutherford in there, and I might be game.

MS BARRETT: I'm not talking about having a negative impact; I'm talking about . . .

MR. WICKMAN: Pam, you're asking us to single out high ridings. We all have similar problems.

MS BARRETT: I'm not so sure. I think the demographics would – but that's what I'm saying, you know: could we get a couple of people to have a look at this with me?

MR. WICKMAN: You can come down to my riding and talk to the workers' compensation people and tell me there's not a caseload.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I know about that. Don't worry about that.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, just on something Ms Barrett said. I represent a very well-educated constituency, and trust me; they keep me on my toes as well as your very poor people. So I think you have to look at the whole realm of things. I mean, I have probably a very, very political, astute constituency that wants information that takes us a great deal of time to try and find, and as Mr. Wickman said, the WCB thing. So I really don't want to get into this rich/poor thing. I'm sure Mrs. Sloan has things that tie her down in her constituency.

MS BARRETT: I think my point is quite demonstrated by the fact

that there are a number of constituencies where the funding that's allocated isn't spent. I mean, obviously we could have a look and see why, what factors there are that are determining why, you know, a third of the constituencies are spending less than 70 percent of their allocation. Do you know what I'm saying?

MRS. FORSYTH: If I may answer that. For the last three years I've given money back only because of the fact that I've been very fiscally conservative on my spending. I have decided at this point in time that instead of doing two mailers to the constituents on information, I can do three. So I think it's how you look at it, where you decide to spend the money. I really don't want to get into if someone spends a hundred percent and another spends . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Look, I don't want this committee to get into that business. Every member is equal in this Legislative Assembly. It is his or her right to have a budget to deal with their constituents and the people of Alberta. If a member chooses not to spend a hundred percent, that's his or her right and there shouldn't be a judgment factor associated with it. If there is, then I think we're going way beyond. The job of this committee is to provide service to MLAs. If they choose not to use it, that's their choice.

MR. HERARD: I guess the point that I would like to make is that that particular factor is not part of the discussion with respect to the formula that we have before us today, so the budget that we're looking at does not take that into account. Therefore, I don't think it's in order to try and make it be part of that particular formula at this point, because I'm sure we would need to have some research done with respect to that and how it would affect the formula. I don't think we as a committee can come to that conclusion today; therefore, I don't think it's relevant today.

MS BARRETT: I'm not asking that. I'll tell you what I will do then. I will do some research and I will make it a submission.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have consensus, then, for the subtotal of \$13,070,223 as listed on the green sheet.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We've now spent some 10 hours dealing in very minute detail with some X millions of dollars. We now come to another segment called government members' services, which is one line, Official Opposition members' services, and New Democrat opposition members' services. I take it somebody from each of the caucuses wants to present their budget in line-by-line detail so we can go through to see exactly what manpower costs are, mailing costs are, MLA costs, and have them prepared openly and publicly. Am I wrong? Ten hours and \$280,000 in no minutes. Am I wrong? Who would like to move then that . . .

MR. WICKMAN: How about all three of them? How about that?

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman has a motion to move all three caucuses as identified for a subtotal of \$3,191,494.

MRS. FORSYTH: I'll second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconded by Mrs. Forsyth. Anybody want to call the motion, or do you want to have discussion?

MR. HERARD: Being that the information is quite sketchy in this area, and being new to this committee, has there ever been a time in

the past when these particular budgets have gone into deficit?

THE CHAIRMAN: Not to my knowledge.

MS BARRETT: It's not allowed.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MRS. SLOAN: I have a question with respect to the government members. Is there no leader's allowance, or is it not reported?

THE CHAIRMAN: The leader is a member of Executive Council, a member of the government. His budget comes under his office, which is in the general revenue fund. This is one of those anomalies. The government one is based only on X number of members, 43 in this case. There are 63 elected members on the government side minus 18, 19.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is the Speaker even included in that?

THE CHAIRMAN: The Speaker is not included in this one either.

MR. RENNER: No. It's 18 ministers, the Premier, and the Speaker that are excluded.

THE CHAIRMAN: So that's how they arrive at that. The poor Speaker. You've already devastated his budget, so he doesn't even get this thing. That's that.

We have a motion, which is seconded. Should I call the question?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So that covers all of that.

Then we come to 13, special funding requirements.

MS BARRETT: There's nothing in there.

THE CHAIRMAN: There's nothing in there.

Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps just to verify this, we're looking at the green sheet. We've already agreed to a subtotal of \$5,508,502 for the LAO, a subtotal for MLA administration of \$13,070,223, and a subtotal for the various caucuses including vacant electoral divisions of \$3,191,494. So you get total expenditures there of \$21,770,219. Then there are some other adjustments to go down the page to the grand total of \$21,687,659. Could I have a motion for such?

MR. RENNER: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner moved. Mr. Coutts seconded. I'll call the question. All those in favour?

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, sorry. Did I miss something? Your last figure – mine reads \$21,636,659.

MS BARRETT: No, you've got to turn the page.

MR. DOERKSEN: Got you. I withdraw that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question is called. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we will work on this, and between

now and the time these estimates would be in the Legislative Assembly, there may be circumstances coming about. As an example, we will work within the confines that we've got in here for the envelope figures, but circumstances may change.

Let me give you an example. I'll just take you to the one that says: government members' services, Official Opposition services, and New Democratic caucus services. Well, while we're sitting here on this particular day, those are the numbers we would use, but if something were to happen with the makeup distribution between now and then, then we would modify those things. That's the kind of flexibility.

That having been said and done, Mr. Clerk, you said that arising out of all this we needed a Members' Services order? Would you explain that, please?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. In terms of adjusting the constituency office allowance by the \$710 per member, we need a motion to amend a constituency services order to increase that amount from \$39,462 to \$40,172. That's \$710 per member.

MR. DOERKSEN: I would so move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Doerksen.

MS BARRETT: I'll second.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett. Is there something further we needed with that? I'll call the question. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: So that covers that.

Everything else has been done. Is there anything else arising out of this meeting for Members' Services orders or anything else?

We have thus, ladies and gentlemen, gone through all items on the agenda. There was nothing identified when we did the approval of the agenda for new business in the event that there was some additional business hon. members wanted to raise, but we've now been here for three days. Okay.

The date of the next meeting: can we leave that one on the basis of the call of the chair in consultation with the deputy chairman, depending on whatever circumstances might arise?

1:42

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, could you give us an indication of what you'd be aiming for?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. I'm assuming that the Legislature will be reconvened in about the second week of February.

MS OLSEN: Well, you know what happens when you assume.

MR. WICKMAN: No. I think he's right on this one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So I would try and anticipate something about two weeks before then, but I would consult. So probably around February 1 or something, give or take a few days either way, if there are updated things. The intent would be essentially not to really call the committee when the Legislature is sitting, but there may be circumstances where that would have to be done.

Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: It's on another issue if you're done. I'm just wondering: I understand that the issue around bringing the portraits of the

Famous Five upstairs has been brought forward. I'm not sure whether that's the business of the Members' Services Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: No.

MS OLSEN: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I did bring it up. It has nothing to do with Members' Services Committee. I had a number of MLAs and former MLAs consult with me with respect to that, and I've had a discussion with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. What we want to do is respond to the need, the require, the request. I've asked one hon. member to come back to me with, one, a verification that there is only one existing set of so-called original pictures – I'm told that there may be two, so first of all we'll ascertain where they are – and, secondly, to look at perhaps the fifth floor and the gallery, which may be as good a place as any. There's not much stuff up there.

MS BARRETT: You're talking about the Tyler paintings?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. If, you know, we can have access to them.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, you can.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I don't know that. That's hearsay.

MS BARRETT: I do. I just saw her a few weeks ago, and she told me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, fine. Anyway, that's just one of those issues that comes and goes.

MS OLSEN: Thank you.

MR. HERARD: Mr. Chairman, I seem to recall comments of yours earlier at one of the meetings indicating that you might wish to go in camera for discussion of certain items.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would love to do that if the committee feels it appropriate. It would have the time. Okay? Thank you.

May we then ask everybody to leave, depart, other than the Clerk and Mr. Jung if you don't mind.

[The committee met in camera from 1:49 p.m. to 2:03 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The committee now being reconvened, do we have a motion to adjourn?

MS BARRETT: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Have a good Christmas.

[The committee adjourned at 2:04 p.m.]

