

9:30 a.m.

[Mr. Kowalski in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, it's now 9:30. At least according to my watch it is, and I hope it's synchronized with everyone else's.

Welcome to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. In consultation with a number of you prior to Christmas, a designation was made of three days this week, and then it was ratcheted back to two days this week. Monday, January 25, and Tuesday, January 26, were set aside whether or not the committee will want to use that amount of time to deal with the agenda that we have, subject to what we'll be doing as we proceed.

Let me at the outset welcome a new member to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, Mr. Ed Gibbons. Mr. Gibbons replaces Ms Sue Olsen. I certainly would like to welcome you. I think you'll find your participation and your involvement in this committee to be unique, of interest, and, I have no doubt at all, deserving of the greatest attention that you would want to give to it.

This committee is rather unique in the way it functions in the province of Alberta as compared to the way it functions in other jurisdictions in Canada. In most other jurisdictions the Members' Services Committee is referred to as the Board of Internal Economy. Traditionally in the province of Alberta this committee has always met in public. It has never met behind closed doors, so to speak, and only in very unique circumstances will we ever have an in-camera discussion. In addition to that, we have our participation recorded in *Hansard*, and everything is minuted. There's only one other jurisdiction that now meets in public like us, and that's Saskatchewan. That's a relatively new move in that regard. It makes it unique, it makes it special, it makes it very transparent, and it makes it very, very open as a result of the approach that we've taken in the province of Alberta. Of course, the purpose of the Members' Services Committee is primarily to advocate for the interests of members and then to do several additional items as well.

We have an agenda. Might I ask the members to review the agenda and either provide some suggestions for modifications in the agenda or we'll ask for approval.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move that we approve the agenda but that the order of presentation be amended to reflect that the LAO budget estimates would be the last item. So we would move up items 6(b) and 7 prior to the presentation of the budget estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. SLOAN: Just one other, perhaps, addition to the agenda. In reviewing the minutes from the last meeting, Ms Barrett had asked to have an item added to the agenda of the next meeting, and that is not incorporated in this agenda as it is before us today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Which item was that?

MRS. SLOAN: Whether member disclosure should come under the purview of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

THE CHAIRMAN: I recall a discussion on that, but I've had nothing from Ms Barrett requesting that it be put on this agenda today. Ms Barrett did provide correspondence, and we have item 6(b)(ii) with respect to something that Ms Barrett had provided information on. But I have no further request from her with respect to that matter, and she's not here today. If you want to have the matter added, we can have it added, but she won't be here to speak to it.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess the intent is to not lose the item.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, that's not a problem. Perhaps we can deal with it, then, when we deal with Business Arising from the Minutes, item 4.

Okay. At the moment we have a request made that the agenda be modified. After item 5 we would deal with 6(b) and then 7. That's the intent, Mr. Renner?

MR. RENNER: That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Everybody agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Then the approval of the minutes of Monday, October 5, 1998, number 3.

Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Yes. I have three areas to identify for potential amendment under 6(a) on the second page of the minutes under New Business, the request for funding reallocation from the Legislative Assembly budget by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. While the minutes reflect the proposal that was put forward, they do not reflect the action that was taken. My recollection was that that funding was not provided, but the minutes are not clear with respect to that item.

THE CHAIRMAN: On 6(a)?

MRS. SLOAN: On 6(a).

THE CHAIRMAN: That matter was dealt with at the meeting we had after we reconvened at noon, if my memory serves me correctly. Information was provided, as I recall, by Mr. Wickman saying that this matter would have been withdrawn.

MRS. SLOAN: So I'm wondering if that should not be incorporated in the minutes, that the item was withdrawn.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh. Fair game. I would like to update you, though, as to what has transpired since then.

MRS. SLOAN: I think it would be a truer reflection of the discussion if the withdrawn aspect of that was incorporated, and if something has changed since then, that would be reflected in today's minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's correct. There's no difficulty modifying those minutes to say that.

Just as an update to you, then, in terms of what has transpired since that time. I received correspondence from the chairman of the committee indicating that the chairman and the deputy chairman have reviewed this matter and the request was being submitted to me to see whether or not we could find funds within existing budgets to allow one member of that particular committee to attend this meeting in Australia. We found such and provided information back to the chairman of the committee and the deputy chairman, and the deputy chairman will be attending that conference. Okay? Does that clarify that then?

MRS. SLOAN: It does.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Your next item.

MRS. SLOAN: Under 7(c), Member Compensation. It doesn't appear that the main motion that was moved has been incorporated in the minutes. The amendment proposed by Ms Olsen to the main motion is there, but the main motion is not. If I recall, just for the purposes of facilitating it, I believe Mr. Renner moved the main motion on that matter, and then it was subsequently amended by my colleague Ms Olsen.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll check the actual *Hansard* on that one. Line 98.46 indicates that "All Committee members spoke on Mr. Renner's main motion as amended, the question was put, and the motion was . . ."

Okay. While that's being checked in the actual *Hansard*, the third point.

MRS. SLOAN: My third point was really, I guess, a comment with respect to how the minutes are compiled. Also, in the same section, 7(c), I noted that comments that arose originating from Ms Barrett were incorporated. However, there were other comments made within the context of that debate that have not been incorporated. So I was seeking some clarification about the purview of some comments being included and some comments not being included and how that's determined.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's a fair question. That is determined essentially by the secretary of the committee, and I know what you're saying in terms of the subjectivity, perhaps, of some members being identified and others not. The purpose of minutes is to come to the gist of the whole situation. Points well made. Minutes can be expanded to include all of that. Of course we have recorded *Hansard* that would go hand in hand with the minutes, but essentially the minutes might be clarified in the future to just reflect the action by way of motions and amendments to motions rather than comments, other than those which would seek major clarification. In this case I can only suggest that the secretary in question saw that as a question needing clarification and a response was given rather than a subjective point with respect to the subject that was before the committee. But we will check the transcripts. Perhaps we'll be able to do that in the lunch hour.

9:40

MRS. SLOAN: That's satisfactory. Thank you.

MR. DOERKSEN: On this subject, might I ask what the point is of having minutes when everything is recorded in *Hansard* anyway?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the minutes I guess are the traditional way of having us get the decision the same way. In the Legislative Assembly you may very well have a *Hansard*, but there's still a vote taken, and the votes are recorded as part of the historical record.

MR. DOERKSEN: And recorded in *Hansard* too.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed. Absolutely agreed. Yes. There again I suppose one could eliminate a lot of paper if one moved in a certain direction.

Additional comments or questions arising out of the minutes?
Then may I have a motion for the approval of the minutes?

MR. RENNER: I move that we approve the minutes subject to the amendment in section 7(c) as noted by Mrs. Sloan.

THE CHAIRMAN: All agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Business Arising from the Minutes. Well, there's certainly one item we've identified in here, and that's Report on Designation of Smoking Rooms. All members will recall that Bill 47, the Protection from Second-hand Smoke in Public Buildings Amendment Act, 1998, was approved by the Legislative Assembly. As I recall the process that occurred before, a committee was to have been established and some consultation was to have taken place with respect to the implementation of this particular bill prior to Christmas. As I had not received a report from the subcommittee, I undertook consultations with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services with respect to one aspect of this particular bill.

Perhaps just a review of the contents of the bill. While it was amended substantially in the fall of 1998, the amended act came into force on January 1 of 1999, and jurisdiction in the bill over the Legislature Building or the Legislative Assembly Office is divided under section 3 of the act. Under subsection (4) the Members Services' Committee

may designate rooms for smoking in those portions of the Legislature Building or its precincts under the authority of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly Office.

I generally agreed that the jurisdiction of the Assembly -- that is, coming under the office of the Speaker -- includes the Chamber, the galleries, and the lounges proximate to the Chamber.

I've had some discussions with several members of the subcommittee, and as I recall, 98.24 in our previous minutes should indicate the following:

The Chairman reminded Members that, at the Committee's November 12, 1997 meeting, a subcommittee was struck to deal with the issue of designation of smoking rooms in the Legislature Building. Mr. Renner agreed to meet with Ms Barrett and a representative of the Official Opposition caucus to discuss options.

Well, we had a discussion on that, then, at the last meeting. The bottom line was that I had discussions with those individuals who came to talk to me about that but then undertook some, my own, with respect to what we should do, particularly for those rooms that come under the jurisdiction of the Speaker; i.e., I guess in this case you can extend that to almost the Members' Services Committee. The jurisdiction that has been established for the Speaker is the Chamber itself, the Confederation Room, this room, the other room where the opposition sits on the other side, the lounge behind us, and the patio, I guess, extending out from the lounge.

I spent some time with officials from the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services, and I anticipate that this committee in the majority -- and again I'm taking a little bit of leverage here on my own part -- would probably suggest that, one, the Chamber be a nonsmoking environment; two, that this room be a nonsmoking environment; that the room designated on the other side of the Chamber for the opposition be a nonsmoking environment; and that the lounge be a nonsmoking environment.

Then we went on a little overview tour of this particular building to try and ascertain where there might be an environment for smokers. There is a room on the fifth floor, and I've undertaken discussions with Public Works, Supply and Services to designate that as a smoking area for Members of the Legislative Assembly. It's easy to conform that room to the designated smoking area guidelines that we currently have, and it's in close proximity to the members' lounge and both facilities that we have. It would be room 511. It's close to our lounges and has easy access to the south stairwell and the fifth floor rotunda. It's about 54 square metres in size, and it's not a great difficulty for any modifications to be made there to deal with exhaust and the like. In fact, Public Works, Supply and Services has retained one of the consultants to basically take a look at that and come back to me with preliminary details by early February 1999. That basically is the approach that we can take with respect to this.

This act, however, for the benefit of Members' Services, provides jurisdiction for the minister, any minister, to make certain designations and certain suggestions with respect to those offices which may be ministerial. It is silent, however, as to who has jurisdiction over members' offices. One has to be a little cautious, I think, with respect to this, because the question of parliamentary privilege may find its way into this discussion as well. It's probably the last one that one would want exercised by the Speaker with respect to this. At this point in time, to my knowledge there is no proposal concerning members' offices with respect to that.

There are a number of alternatives with respect to this whole matter. One, this committee may choose to undertake any decision that it wants to make with respect to members' offices, or it may delegate that. At this point in time I will stop, because that's where we are in terms of the background.

In terms of the administration of this bill, there are some allocations provided to the minister. In this case it would be the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. He may undertake to do those things that he wants in those confines under the jurisdiction. I would strongly suggest that subject to of course whatever thoughts the members here in this committee would have, one of the solutions in dealing with the Chamber, this room, the room where the opposition gathers, and the lounge is to basically deal with the bill in the way it's identified and designate room 511 as a designated smoking area for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

At this point in time I will stop and throw it open to members of the committee.

MR. RENNER: Just clarification, Mr. Chairman. Do we need to include in any motion the designation of the rooms you referred to as nonsmoking areas? Do I understand that correctly?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. If I understand this bill correctly, every room is nonsmoking unless there is a designation of something to be smoking. So really it's not so much to have a motion with respect to this, but we basically say that 511 would be a smoking area.

MR. RENNER: That would be my understanding as well. I would like to move that

the chairman proceed with the designation of room 511 as a designated smoking area and that related improvements required to that room be implemented.

MRS. SLOAN: Just a question. Is it within this committee's purview to approve undertaking actions when we have no estimate of the budget or the anticipated renovations that would be required?

9:50

THE CHAIRMAN: They would be very, very modest. There's hardly anything that will have to be done. Public Works, Supply and Services pay for it. We've already negotiated that with them.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess in discussing this proposal with particularly one member of our caucus who is a smoker, the question that arose was: what would make this any more convenient or accessible than the area that is adjacent to the cafeteria in the basement? In essence, as far as travel time, it would take the same amount of time to go there as it would to go up to 511. I guess, in reality, both members of the other two parties would have accessible rooms within their purview to use that would be closer than 511. I'm thinking of ministers' offices, et cetera. Our member's greatest concern was that if it is decided that this is to proceed, programmed sound should be incorporated so that the Chamber proceedings can be heard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, that will all be done.

MRS. SLOAN: In that area?

THE CHAIRMAN: It will be a lounge of the normal type that we would have. With respect to the system, it would be wired. It would be for all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess my question, though, is: what would justify the expenditure to make that room when, in essence, the cafeteria or the area beneath the rotunda is smoking? Basically, it's relatively the same distance to get to that area as it would be to get to 511.

THE CHAIRMAN: The basic reason that I would advocate is the privacy privilege of members, that members have an opportunity to gather in privacy in the same way that the same policy is extended right now not only to this room, the Confederation Room, for government members, but it's extended to the members of the opposition in the room they have on the other side. These are not rooms that are open to the public. These are not rooms where people can just simply walk in and meet. You have that privacy provided to members of the opposition the way that this is provided to members of the government.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay.

MR. RENNER: I just want to confirm. It's my understanding that room 511 would be immediately at the top of the stairs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Two floors up.

MR. RENNER: Behind us. So it's relatively convenient. You do have two flights of stairs, but it is just straight up the stairs and you're there.

THE CHAIRMAN: There are several accesses to it.

MRS. SLOAN: Do we have any idea of what the projected costs are?

THE CHAIRMAN: In fact, the instruction that I gave to Public Works, Supply and Services is to keep them down to a very bare minimum. Perhaps if we need an exhaust system, we'll just open the window.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Other questions with respect to this?
We have a motion from Mr. Renner. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; carried.

There is the question that has to deal with one matter of it. The question of dealing with members' offices is one that I would strongly urge the committee members to take a look at. Perhaps some additional consultation might occur on this matter to see how we want to deal with that.

MR. RENNER: Just some clarification. You indicated in your summary remarks that it was your understanding that members' offices were not included within the purview of this bill.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I must say that the act is silent over who has jurisdiction. That's not the same as to say that they're not included.

MR. RENNER: Well, would a motion be in order that would give the power to designate members' offices to each individual member?

THE CHAIRMAN: In essence, it would be in order.

My suggestion would be that if an office then is to be designated a smoking office, there might very well be some requirement, depending on which office it is -- now, there are 64 offices. Some may have better exhaust systems in their offices than others, and if a room that had a very poor physical location or physical presence were to be designated a smoking room by that particular member, there may be some requirements under the act that would require some additional work to be done to it, and then Public Works, Supply and Services would have to be involved. That's one of those things that is there, but overall, with respect to your original question, I have no difficulty. I just state that as a bit of a caution; that's all.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I have some difficulty with the whole issue. At least in our caucus it's no smoking, period. To allow individual MLAs to smoke in their office is going to pose some difficulty for staff that may be very sensitive to smoke, because they do have to go into the offices, and nonsmokers may have trouble, may be very sensitive to smoke. Even going by an office could be a hazard to them. I find it difficult that you would give MLAs the privilege of determining whether they could smoke in their office or not, yet the staff wouldn't have that same opportunity. I think the designated rooms, as is being done, should be sufficient, and it shouldn't go beyond that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I hope we're not going to go into a whole debate again on Bill 47 in the committee. I'm just dealing with the practicality now that the Legislature has passed a bill, and if it didn't have Members' Services mentioned in here, we wouldn't be having this discussion.

MR. GIBBONS: Reading through the minutes of the last few years, I see that there's supposed to be a committee struck by Rob Renner, and I see nothing of a report.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, no. These minutes basically refer to a committee of 1997, and the minutes we talked about here then dealt with 1998. During that time some certain things have transpired, and in fact Ms Barrett became the committee chairperson.

MR. GIBBONS: Then that brings something else to light. What are we going to be doing in the next while? Are we going to be waiting for the committee report?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. We've dealt with one matter already. The act is in place. In essence, right now under the provisions of the act everything is nonsmoking other than that which may be designated as smoking. So the only question is how the members -- because this is a committee for members -- might want to deal with this. It's not a major, significant issue. It's just one that we have to deal with. So my suggestion was that you might want to have some more consultation on this, and we'll deal with it later. That was my suggestion. The other one was that you can make a decision.

MRS. SLOAN: My preference would be to have some more discussion about it to see if we can come up with a consistent approach.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I'll move that the matter be tabled to allow representatives of each caucus to go back to their caucus, hold some discussion, and then come back with

some indication as to the preferences of the three respective caucuses.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are we generally agreed on that? The issue is dealing with members' offices. That's the only issue that's outstanding.

Okay. Thank you very, very much.

Under Old Business, number 5, Update on Legislative Assembly Committee Rooms. We've carried this matter for some period of time. In 1998 I was just very, very pleased with the responses of the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Two requests were made of him for certain modifications to Legislative Assembly offices, and we're very, very pleased what did happen. I just wanted to publicly make that statement.

10:00

Now, in addition to that, an on-again, off-again discussion with respect to the need for committee rooms. When committees meet, they'll generally meet in this particular building. From time to time there may be an opportunity over at the Annex or another particular building. Included in the item that we've got in your booklet in here are some comments arising out of the February 25, 1998, meeting which the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services attended. I guess it was a subcommittee meeting, and there was some discussion with respect to certain rooms.

I just bring that to your attention here, because unless there is great hesitation from members of the committee, it would be my intent now to undertake some further discussions with the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services and basically ask him, now that the Department of Education has relocated itself from the 11th floor in the Annex building, to take a look at the possibility of constructing some committee rooms in the Annex. They would be committee rooms where budget committees could meet, public meetings could be held and would be available to members. The appropriate equipment would be in there. When you have the budget discussions in here -- and sometimes you're up in room 512, and then there are pillars there and there's movement and modification and what have you, and it may not be quite as good. I would also ask him to take a look, as technology is important to us, at the possibility of seeing whether or not videoconferencing equipment might be located in one of those particular rooms, which would allow this new innovative approach to meeting of people and committees and the like.

I note as well that

the 1995/1996 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission noted the "... Members of the Legislative Assembly in rural electoral divisions ought to receive the resources they require to effectively represent their constituents."

They suggested that access to a videoconference facility might be one aspect of that as well. As well, we might also take a look at having him build into that all the necessary equipment for transcription services and the like. That's just simply an update.

Now, if there are strong feelings from members of the Members' Services Committee that the meeting rooms that are currently in the building are quite suitable and okay, that's okay with me. I just think that as we go into the future, in terms of the comments that members have made and if there's going to be a continuance of holding meetings outside of the Chamber for certain aspects of the budget and other things on a pretty regular basis, then in essence there should be an opportune opportunity for the greatest degree of efficiency and effectiveness with respect to this. I'm just providing this as an update for you. If there's strong reservation, again, about doing that and if you tell me that no members would ever want to go over to the Annex to go to a committee room there, then it would be a foolish move on our part to do that, and I would just back off.

MR. RENNER: I have no problem with you proceeding with discussions with the minister. I guess my understanding is that this would be the jurisdiction of the minister of public works, and if the minister can accommodate such a project within his budget, I think it would be reasonable to expect that there would be some liaison with Leg. Assembly. But ultimately it's really a decision of the minister of public works, not this committee, as I understand it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Agreed. The minister of public works would not do any of this unless he was requested to do it. I would make the request to him, but then if I were to find out that all the committee members thought this was a stupid idea and nobody wanted to go over and hold a meeting there, then my only point is: why I am doing it? So if there are no strong reservations about it, I will continue to proceed and keep you informed as we go along.

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I say to go ahead, proceed. I go over there all the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, good. You're closer to home. Thank you very much, Mr. Doerksen.

That was simply an update.

On (b) there was a question asked -- and I believe it was Mrs. Sloan, if I recall correctly -- at the last Members' Services Meeting to have information provided on LAO recruitments and long-term disability numbers in 1998-99, so I've asked our human resource director, Mrs. Scarlett, to provide some information. Cheryl, if you join us here at the table, you might just take us through the briefing note that you have in there. This was for information in response to a question raised by a member.

MRS. SCARLETT: What you have in your binder is some basic information we have relative to statistics based on the 1998 year: 1998 commencements and terminations through our pay system. That reflects people actually coming and going in the various forums in which we pay people. There are some numbers there which reflect the number of people that we commenced on the system and the number of people that we took off the system.

Specific information relative to Legislative Assembly Office related to recruitment. We ran 19 competitions last year, and there is a breakdown there in terms of the number of people interviewed and, of that, people hired. Some are permanent positions, with the majority of them for our sessional and wage cover-off positions within *Hansard*, pages, and visitor services guides. Within caucus and constituency, those offices conduct their own recruitment processes, and we would assist them when asked. But I do have the numbers related to LAO specifically.

The other component was related to the amount of extended absences, primarily as a result of either illness or accident. We have gathered some statistics. Basically, there were 10 employees from across our organization that we assisted in terms of the processes because they were off for an extended period due to illness or accident. The bottom line there is when you add up all the hours involved in terms of their lost time. We're looking at 2.17 staff years in terms of absence. If you took your actual salaries attached to those people, we're talking about \$58,000.

The second page just gives you a current breakdown of staff complement, the number of people we have on the pay system at this point in time for those basic groups. At the bottom, in terms of percentages for turnover we took the numbers that are referred to here on a summary basis by the different breakdowns against the actual number of people that are on the pay system just to give you an idea.

MRS. SLOAN: Excellent. Very informative information.

I'm wondering. The extended illness: can you give us some indication of what types of illnesses or injuries are included within that category?

MRS. SCARLETT: Relative to illness leave within the Leg. Assembly available to all of our employees in caucus, constituency, and LAO, there are two components. There's a short-term illness, which is up to 10 days, for day-to-day types of illnesses. Then there's what we refer to as extended illness. That would be something of a longer term nature, where someone was off for a period of normally more than three days in any period. Those can be of a nature of any different kind of illness.

MRS. SLOAN: I guess what I'm seeking, Mr. Chairman, is: are there any trends with respect to that category?

MRS. SCARLETT: In terms of types of illnesses?

MRS. SLOAN: Uh-huh.

MRS. SCARLETT: No. It really was all across the board this year with respect to the people that we assisted.

MRS. SLOAN: Is this relatively close to the average that it is every year, or is this significantly higher or lower, or are you aware?

MRS. SCARLETT: In our experience, to compare to the previous year, this was higher. There were more employees that were off as a result of different types of illnesses and injury, but again there was no particular pattern so that we could draw any kind of reason why.

MRS. SLOAN: One final question, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the accidents, when something occurs and an employee is injured, is there a process that is activated within LAO to identify measures that can be taken to prevent that type of accident from happening again?

MRS. SCARLETT: Most definitely. We work very closely with WCB in terms of identifying. They are interested in what caused the accident. We are interested in ensuring that our employees are provided with a safe work environment, and together the two of us work in terms of what may have been done, what perhaps could be done in the future. In some cases there are suggestions that we could follow up on. In other cases it's things beyond our control. A lot of our accidents this year were related to weather, slipping on ice and those types of things, unfortunately.

MRS. SLOAN: I would respectfully suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this type of information be incorporated on an annual basis, perhaps in the report from the human resource component of the LAO. I think it's of interest to members, both specifically and generally, in terms of recruitment and illness and injury types of information and what the associated costs are.

10:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Please remember, hon. members, that there are three different groupings that come under this. One is those who are employees under the Legislative Assembly Office, which we take absolute responsibility for. Then there are employees who come out of the caucus offices, and while they are employees of the Legislative Assembly Office, we have not quite as much involvement with them. The third grouping, of course, is those who are in constituency offices, which, while they also come under the purview of the Legislative Assembly Office, we also have lesser involvement with. You know, if somebody has a constituency office out there and one of the purviews or mandates of the constituency

office administrator is to shovel the snow every morning, that might be a condition of employment, and that particular MLA would have that particular person. If they slip and fall, it's not the same standard that we might be applying here, where we would have public service people doing it. So the figures will be available, but the interpretation of them is very important.

Okay. Anything else on that matter? Thank you very much.

Then we'll move to ask for the modification of the agenda, to item 6(b). The first item is one called Spousal Travel. Again, it's simply a bit of information that I had received from an hon. member asking for consideration of spousal travel on the agenda for our next meeting, and I very much appreciate receiving that. This is important, that concerns of members be addressed by the committee.

There also is an information item that is in addition to Mr. Herard's memo which is basically statistical information. Perhaps, Mr. Herard, before I invite you to make a comment, if I just made a comment on the background information, would that be appropriate?

MR. HERARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, sir. This business of spousal travel basically occurred a number of years ago; 1983 was the first time when the Members' Services order provided for the payment of

reasonable traveling and living [allowances] of the spouse or guest of a Member who accompanies the Member to a function related to the Member's public or official business, subject to the following conditions:

- (i) the function in each case must be held within Alberta and the expense must relate to traveling and living [expenses] within Alberta;
- (ii) no expense may be claimed or paid under this clause in respect of more than 4 functions in any one fiscal year.

Then in 1991 that order was amended, and it became:

Reasonable traveling and living expenses of the spouse, family member or guest of a Member who accompanies a Member to or joins a Member in Edmonton or, providing the trip is related to the Members' public or official business, any part of the Province subject to the following conditions.

There was a further modification to move the four functions a year to six round trips in one fiscal year. That was in 1991.

Then on April 1, 1994, this order was repealed. In the previous two years in which the program did work, I generally set aside \$25,000 per annum under the Legislative Assembly Office budget. The usage in 1992-93 was that 28 members utilized 89 trips at a cost of \$22,284. In fiscal year 1993-94 20 members utilized 49 trips at a cost of \$24,269. That's essentially statistical hardcore information with respect to this background.

So, Mr. Herard, if you wish to speak on this matter.

MR. HERARD: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for providing the background information with respect to this issue. You're certainly correct that on April 1, 1994, the spousal travel order was repealed. I certainly did not agree with that at the time. I was also a very new MLA, and I did not fully understand the effects that that action would have with respect to the overall duties of elected people and the amount of time away from families that our duties demand.

Since that time I've had a lot of conversations with colleagues with respect to the difficulties that the repeal of this order has caused. In general terms, there's a feeling that the message that was transmitted by doing that was one of alienation with respect to our spouses, a feeling of having being dropped from the team and from the partnership that exists to allow members, all members, to perform their duties. Especially when one experiences, as one's time in this business goes on, the amount of time that you are away from families, then it becomes more important.

I believe that spouses are important as partners of elected members, and I think it's clear that there's been a significant decrease in the participation of spouses at various functions. I don't think it's just a matter of cost; it's also one of convenience. You know, our spouses have lives too. In many cases they could not attend functions because they couldn't stay for a whole week, for example, when traveling with the MLA or minister in question. They have to return to children, to jobs, to volunteer activities, and so on. So I think the repeal of this spousal travel order was a mistake.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, you've pointed out that in terms of cost, it's not a big thing with respect to the utilization in 1992, '93, and '94. I think it sends a very poor message with respect to the value of families in this province, with respect to not having this sort of accommodation with respect to the partners who play such a huge and important role in our lives. And we seem to lose a few every year. It's a tough job.

So, Mr. Chairman, what I am proposing is that the order of 1994 be overturned and that the order that was amended April 1, 1991, be reinstated with the exception that the total number of round trips be subjected to four instead of six. So the motion would be

to restore the wording that was in effect on April 1, 1991, with the exception of four round trips instead of six.

That would be my submission.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're making a motion as well, Mr. Herard?

MR. HERARD: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We now have a motion before the committee. Comments, discussion?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I agree wholeheartedly with the member's comments about spouses and their role, supportive and psychologically, with respect to members in this Assembly. I was not a member when this policy was in place previously. The one concern that I would express is that I have concerns about the wording, because my interpretation of the wording -- and take this with a grain of salt or with a grain of humour -- is that a member could effectively entertain a spouse and a mistress six times a year by the wording that is in effect in the 1991 motion. A female member could do similar. That is not the intent. I don't want to imply that that's the intent you're trying to propose this morning, but I think that in fact the wording would allow for a very liberal interpretation. So that would not be something that I would want to be seen to be advocating, Mr. Chairman, and I'm not sure whether or not the member proposing the reinstatement of this motion has any alternative wording, given that discussion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's an interesting nuance with respect to this. Let's just take a look at the wording; okay? The wording says, "Reasonable traveling and living allowance expenses of the spouse." I think there's no misunderstanding about what the word "spouse" means. Is that correct?

10:20

MRS. SLOAN: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: "Family member." There are some members who would be widowers or widows who may have a child, son or daughter. I don't think there's any interpretation of that; is there? "Or guest." Certainly there are some members, again, who are widows or widowers or who've never been married, so if they were to have a guest, a friend, that's what that would apply to.

I've never in my wildest imagination -- and I do fantasize from

time to time -- ever come to the conclusion that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview came to. I'm not sure that I would have ever -- well, I'll stop right there. I just gave the interpretation.

Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The answer to your question is: no, I have not contemplated a different wording primarily because in my limited experience -- and perhaps someone around the table could provide more insight than I can with this. I don't think it was ever a problem in the past when it was in effect and worded this way. So it's always easier to start with what you had with respect to something that worked. No, I did not contemplate it in the way that you have as well.

I'm not sure what would satisfy you with respect to a wording change. Personally, I think that the comments of the chairman with respect to the people who are elected to this Assembly having situations that he described with respect to being single or married or widowed or whatever -- I think the wording takes care of that. I would simply say that in the absence of anyone who has seen a problem with this, I would continue to think that the wording is appropriate.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Chairman, the member has raised a very good point, one that I would support in principle. I do also think that if you were to work within the confines of what the legal definition would be, the wording I think does pose some potential problems, such that I would read it that a guest could be a member of my constituency board, which I do not think would be in the spirit of the motion that the member is suggesting. So I would suggest, if the member is agreeable to it, that we could table this. It's an item that's come up rather quickly. We haven't had a chance to discuss it, I think, within our respective caucuses, which might be appropriate to do, to come up with some wording that might be acceptable for further consideration at our next meeting.

MRS. SLOAN: One suggestion I would make is that perhaps the wording should imply that expenses will be covered for individuals who have a legal relationship of some sort with the member, and I'm not disputing that there might be special circumstances. I guess where the taxpayers would scrutinize is -- I don't think there's any question or even a perception of this being misused if the wording is specifically that there's a legal relationship, be it family member, fiancée, mother, father, et cetera. If we are suggesting that this be taken back to caucus, I think the term "guest" is very broad. It could be open to a variety of applications, and that is the point I was trying to raise.

I have to say as an aside that I find it completely unbelievable that none of the men on this committee have ever thought of that application. However, as the hon. member just said, I think that it could be applied in a partisan way as well, and that's not something that I would want to be advocating for reinstatement.

So I guess the direction that we would require in terms of taking it back to our caucus is: what exactly would the wording be that we would be asking for approval?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, in my opinion, I don't believe there's any need to table it. The member has made a valid case, and it would be easy for somebody like me from Edmonton to say that it's not necessary, because my spouse probably gets to see more of me than she'd like to. For rural members, of course, it's a different situation, and there are occasions where it's nice to have your partner in life accompany you: a swearing-in ceremony, the opening of the session, and so on and so forth.

I don't want to be put in a position where I'm guessing at the legal definition of "guest." I prefer to see it liberal. There are

circumstances where there may not be some form of legal attachment to a particular relationship. I think we've got to respect that. We're all responsible adults, and I think we conduct ourselves accordingly. If we don't, then we get tripped up in some other fashion. I don't see any need to pursue that particular question about the morality of members and such. I'm comfortable with the previous wording. It worked before, and I think it can continue to work.

THE CHAIRMAN: Please remember that the 1983 provision said, "Reasonable traveling and living expenses of the spouse or guest of a Member." That was in effect for nine years. Then in 1991 it was modified to add "family member." I served on this committee for, well, 10, 12, 14 years, I guess, and I don't ever recall there ever being an issue that was ever a cause for concern for the administrators in the LAO. I just asked the Clerk if to his knowledge there was ever an issue of any kind from anybody, and the answer to that was no.

The Members' Services Committee can do whatever it wants to do, but it's been well tested, well evaluated and never any, any, any difficulty with this stuff. If you want to defer it, that's great. Well, you can make whatever decision you want. I just want you to know the background. There's never been a concern with the implementation of this.

There was great debate on this before, and the only thing that happened -- "spouse or guest" existed since 1983, and then "family member" was added in 1991. To our knowledge, no one has ever, ever abused it. If they did, it's up to the individual member, not the Members' Service Committee, I think, to take the heat on that.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree. I don't think there is a real problem with the wording. I think all members would use common sense. The indications are that they did in the past, and I don't see any reason why they wouldn't in the future.

My concern is more with a policy issue, not who but whether or not we should institute this change in policy. For that reason, I would feel more comfortable having an opportunity to discuss it with other members of my caucus. So I would like to move that

this item be tabled until the next meeting so that there can be further consultation with respect to caucuses.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have a tabling motion, which is not debatable. All those in favour of tabling?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; it's tabled.

Mr. Herard's motion with respect to this will remain on the table as part of the record.

10:30

Item 6(b)(ii), the allocation formula for human resource market adjustment. There's a page of information with respect to that. I'm advised that Dr. Pannu would like to come and speak to the Members' Services Committee. I guess he's just returning to Alberta, and he would probably be able to come this afternoon. So if it would be okay, can we just defer that item until later? It's basically information as much as anything else. Dr. Pannu will appear before the committee.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Then we'll move to 7, New Business. One of the items that we

have before us is the overall Legislature security and security with respect to members, offices, files, and everything else. I thought it would be appropriate that we ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to give us an overview in terms of some of his experiences with security.

I indicated at the beginning of this meeting that this was an open committee and a transparent committee and that there are very, very few reasons for going in camera. This is not one of them, in my view, in terms of the direction I provided to the Sergeant-at-Arms. So I'm going to ask him to appear before the committee and give us an overview and then invite all members to have a free discussion with respect to this. The one caveat I've given to the Sergeant-at-Arms is that he should not get too particular with certain files that are not already public.

MR. HODGSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought I'd begin with a brief outline of my responsibilities and then deal with the security arrangements, a brief description of the Security Co-ordination Committee, and some discussion on significant security-related incidents.

To begin, my responsibilities, as most of you know, are outlined in part in Standing Order 105(1), and to quote briefly from that Standing Order:

- (c) preserve order in and ensure the security of the galleries and lobbies of the Assembly . . .
- (e) arrest and confine all persons ordered by the Assembly to be taken into custody . . .
- (g) be responsible for the safekeeping of the Mace and of the furniture and fittings of the Assembly.

I give effect to the Speaker's direction as well as providing personal security advice to the Speaker and close protection to him, should it be required. I provide advice on office and personal security to members and constituency office staff, and most of you would be familiar with this by virtue of my annual visits to your offices. I maintain a liaison with the RCM Police, the Edmonton Police Service, the military, and other police security and intelligence agencies. I assist in the protection of the rights of the Assembly insofar as the execution of warrants and service of legal documents within the precincts as concerned.

Security arrangements are fairly straightforward. The Legislative Assembly security staff that I manage are 13 in number. They are all ex-Edmonton Police Service. Their mission is to protect life and property and to maintain the peace and order within the galleries and lobbies.

The Department of Justice protection services are managed by the director of security operations, who ultimately reports to the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General. They are charged with the security and safety of the Legislature Building, excluding the Chamber, the galleries, and the lobbies. They also look after the Legislature Grounds, the Annex, and the Government Centre, including the pedway. The Department of Justice protection services monitor constituency office alarms and panic alarms within the government site, and that includes within the precincts here on behalf of the Legislative Assembly Office. As well, the Department of Justice protection services administer the security access card system, and this includes maintaining a repository of all security access card and alarm system activity records.

Public Works, Supply and Services maintain and operate the Legislature Building, the Annex, the pedway, and all government buildings, and this includes the cost of installation and maintenance of all security and alarm systems. Of course, the Edmonton Police Service would likely be involved in the response to any major incident that would occur on the government site here.

The Security Co-ordination Committee recognizes the integrated nature of security services here. This committee operates under terms of reference developed by the ceremonial security services branch of the LAO and agreed to by the Department of Justice and

the Attorney General. The objective of this committee is to ensure that the security services provided within the Legislature envelope and constituency offices are integrated, complete, and well planned, and to ensure the continuity of the business of government.

The chair of this committee is held in rotation between the director of security operations for the Department of Justice protection services and myself. The PWSS area manager of Government Centre and the facilities managers from the Annex and the Legislature Building are also committee members. Depending on the agenda and the issue, the Clerk and the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Attorney General and various ADMs from that department and/or a rep from the Edmonton Police Service may also be in attendance. We meet monthly to discuss security issues.

To move on to some significant security-related incidents over the past year. The issue relating to Pamela Paul. All are aware, I think, of the situation involving Pamela Paul and her ex-husband. There were extensive and ongoing discussions involving officials of the Department of Justice and the Attorney General, the Edmonton Police Service, officials of the Legislative Assembly Office, and the MLA most directly involved, given the extremely serious nature of the threat. These discussions resulted in contingency plans that were a mix of technical, physical, and personal security arrangements designed to ensure that Ms Paul was able to discharge her responsibilities as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and, further, to protect those persons who might be put at risk by virtue of where they work; that is, the Annex and the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency office. Many of these contingencies remain in place. Some have been altered by mutual agreement. Now, in the short term George Paul continues to meet the terms and conditions of his parole.

Thefts within the Legislature Annex. MLAs with offices in the Annex may be aware that prior to the new year there were a number of petty thefts that occurred on various floors in the Annex. An investigation done resulted in an employee of Initial Security, formerly Metropol, under contract to the Department of Justice and the Attorney General, being charged with theft. This person has admitted to the particulars of the charge involving the possession and theft of certain items from the second floor of the Annex but has denied being involved in the theft of other numerous items on other floors in the Annex. For your information, Initial/Metropol employees undergo screening and testing that in part involves a check with the Canadian police information centre records and fingerprint indices. In this case both of these tests proved negative in terms of this individual.

Disappearance of files from the Liberal caucus. Three Liberal MLAs reported that a sensitive file was missing from their offices in December. A thorough search of their respective offices failed to turn up these missing files. All files contained confidential caucus analysis of a bill and notes that the individual members had made on the bill. Questioned by myself, the individual charged in connection with the previously mentioned theft from the second floor denied any interest in or knowledge of the missing files. Based on my conversation with him, I consider his statement credible. This matter was discussed with the Department of Justice protection services, but so far as I'm aware, it hasn't been investigated by them. I have given advice to the Liberal caucus via the chief of staff as to recommendations relating to security on the second and third floors, and the investigation file on this incident remains open.

Finally, I would comment briefly on the installation of proximity security access card readers within the government site. This project is largely complete and should be finished within the next week. In the Annex there are plans to install proximity security access card readers on B1 and the 12th floor, with priorities on other floors to follow.

That concludes my report.

MR. WICKMAN: Just one question to Brian in terms of constituency offices. Discussions in our caucus fairly recently somehow got into security and such, and I was quite concerned when it was pointed out that in our caucus in addition to myself only one other member does not have an alarm system in their constituency office. I've never considered it that much of a concern. Brian, do you have any indication or stats as to how many incidents of alarm may have occurred in constituency offices in, let's say, the last year?

MR. HODGSON: Are you talking about activation of panic alarms or intrusion alarms?

MR. WICKMAN: Intrusion, theft, reason for concern.

MR. HODGSON: I think there were two break-ins at constituency offices last year. In terms of panic alarms, I think there was one activation of a panic alarm. In terms of false alarms, I couldn't count. I don't have enough fingers, and there aren't enough fingers and toes and people in this room to tally up the number.

10:40

MR. WICKMAN: But only three instances that would be considered legitimate or serious?

MR. HODGSON: Yeah.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank our Sergeant-at-Arms for his report. One thing I was wondering about, though, in the delivery of that report. I find it a little disturbing that there would be personal information with respect to specific MLAs and the difficulties that may or may not continue to exist in their lives with respect to things rather than a general account of security measures that have been undertaken. I find that reference to specific people and whether or not their spouses are in compliance with a restraining order is not something that I would expect at this committee, and I guess that's my only concern here. I do appreciate the content of the report, but I do have a problem with that one little part.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard, I appreciate your comments. Everything that the Sergeant-at-Arms said is public information -- everything -- and provided by the hon. member after repeated requests from the Speaker and others to not provide it to the public. Numerous overtures were made to the hon. member not to talk about the situation, including requests from her leader not to do it, and they were all rejected. So it is in the public domain, and from that perspective I can't forestall the discussion. I think we have to be transparent and open.

MR. HERARD: Yeah. Thank you.

MR. RENNER: Just a question on the new proximity security cards. How long do you anticipate it to be necessary to carry two cards? When is it safe to throw away the old card before we run into an old reader somewhere?

MR. HODGSON: Can I get back to you this afternoon? Certainly within the site here, within the building, I understand that proximity card readers are being installed within the next week or so, but I can't comment on parking lots. If you would leave it with me, I'll certainly get back.

MR. RENNER: Yeah. That was my main concern: parking lots.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sergeant-at-Arms, thank you very much.

Hon. members, the message that should go back to all hon. members is that security is a major concern. It continues to be a major concern. Another aspect of course is security that would not be discussed here today, and that would be other threatening messages, that would have been provided to members and the like, but all members know what I'm talking about. It's something of constant vigilance that members have to be aware of and take appropriate actions with respect to.

Okay. We've now dealt with all items other than -- we said that after the lunch break we would try and get a minute to review with respect to the point Mrs. Sloan made, and we would look forward to Dr. Pannu joining us for item 6(b)(ii). So now we'll return to our agenda, and we will enter it at point 6(a), but I wonder if perhaps a 10-minute break might be appropriate as well.

MR. RENNER: I wouldn't disagree with that. Just for clarification, just to avoid any possible embarrassment when Dr. Pannu does come this afternoon. My understanding is that since Ms Barrett is the official ND representative on this committee, Dr. Pannu is certainly within his rights, as is any MLA, to come and present to the committee and participate in discussion but will not be entitled to vote, should anything arrive at a vote.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's absolutely correct. Dr. Pannu, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly -- if they wish to appear before the committee, we would always accept such a request from them, subject to the committee turning them down, but I don't think in this case this committee, knowing the personalities here, would want to do that, especially on this particular kind of issue. So Dr. Pannu will come in to give his views with respect to this, and we'll just continue. There will be no further involvement from Dr. Pannu.

So are you in favour of a break? How about 12 minutes? That takes us to 11 o'clock. Is that okay?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then we'll come back, do the overview on the budget.

[The committee adjourned from 10:45 a.m. to 11 a.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, perhaps we might reconvene.

You have a second binder, a black-coloured one, and it has on it Estimates, Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 1999-2000. If I can take you to page 1, I'll be brief, with some overview comments, and then we'll just start going through it section by section. The suggestion would be that we have an opportunity to do an overview and questions as we go through but then not deal with any specific matters until the conclusion of the overview.

If you take a look at page 1, 1999-2000 Legislative Assembly budget, perhaps I could just spend a couple of minutes with respect to this overview. This budget for the operation of the Legislative Assembly was developed within the context of the overall mandate of the Legislative Assembly and the strategic goals established for the Legislative Assembly Office. The goals are in attachment 1, and I'll come back to that in a few minutes from now.

This budget proposed for the LAO for the fiscal year coming up for the most part reflects a request for funding for adjustments implemented and projected for members' indemnities and allowances based on decisions made at the October 5, 1998, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services and for those implemented and projected for Legislative Assembly staff

consistent with those implemented and planned for in the Alberta public service. Of the total proposed increase of \$2,535,246, over 83 percent, or \$2,115,861, is directly related to these two factors.

With respect to members' indemnities and allowances, the total increase in indemnities and allowances of \$545,354 is being budgeted on the basis of decisions made at the last meeting of the Members' Services Committee. This is based on the return of the 5 percent reduction in salaries as of October 1, 1998, plus an adjustment due April 1, 1999. This adjustment is to be based on the percentage change in the average weekly earnings for Alberta as reported by the Statistics Canada survey of employment, payrolls, and hours for the immediately preceding calendar year. The estimate budget used for budget purposes is 2.5 percent, based on the change in this statistic as of October 1998 and projecting this trend to year-end. There is an attachment, number 2, with respect to this in the book, which, again, I'll come back to in a minute or two.

As proposed in the October 5, 1998, Members' Services Committee meeting regarding the transition allowance, additional funding in the amount of \$1,040,740 is provided for the first year of a two-year plan to accrue funds in order to pay out this allowance after the next election. Funding is also provided for increases in constituency and communications allowances.

The next section deals with public service salary adjustments. The human resources budget for 1999-2000 is based on projected salary costs for 1998-99 plus anticipated market and normal merit adjustments to be implemented in 1999-2000. Assumptions used reflect adjustments implemented and anticipated in the Alberta public service for opted-out and excluded and management personnel. As part of the province's three-year fiscal plan, dollars have been allocated to the Legislative Assembly to provide a contingency fund to assist -- not to cover all but to assist -- in addressing the costs related to public service salary settlements. This funding is not intended to cover the total cost of salary settlements in 1999-2000 but only to assist the Assembly in meeting manpower costs. For the purposes of this budget the funds allocated for this purpose for the 1999-2000 fiscal year have been distributed to the caucuses, constituency offices, and the LAO on the same basis as last year's allocation.

We've identified several emergent issues. Other than budgeting for projected salary and related benefit increases, the office is requesting funds to deal with a number of emergent issues. The first relates to the extreme workload experienced by the bills and Journals clerk, who is responsible for production of the Votes and Proceedings and the Order Paper while the House is in session and responsible for the production of the *Journals* outside of the House. Funds are being requested to provide additional support for this role. It's my understanding we have one individual here, and that individual experienced something upwards of 500 hours of overtime in this current fiscal year.

The second relates to an urgent need for the Legislature Library to be able to provide significantly increased support to members and staff with respect to access to and utilization of electronic materials through acquiring the services of a digital services librarian. At present the Legislature Library is lagging significantly behind other parliaments in the provision of electronic library services. In the era of the digital economy this puts our private members at a significant disadvantage in relation to having the most current information available to them in carrying out their roles. Again, we have additional information with respect to this matter as well.

The year 2005 will see the celebration of Alberta's centennial. In preparation for that event the Legislative Assembly Office wishes to initiate a number of projects interpreting the history of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The first project is the development of a permanent exhibit which will provide a record of all members elected to the Assembly since 1905, and I'll have some

additional comments to make with respect to that as we go forward.

The next section deals with attachment 1, the LAO strategic goals, and those goals are all identified. Number one is to assist the Speaker in fulfilling the duties of office. To meet and exceed the service expectations of members: that's the standard that we want to have, to meet the expectations and to exceed that service where we can. To assist members in carrying out their roles as legislators within the parliamentary system in Alberta. To respond to increased demands for technology-related services from members, staff, and the public. To increase public awareness of the Legislative Assembly within Alberta's democratic parliamentary system through information and outreach programs. To continue to maintain the separation of powers among the Legislative Assembly, the executive, and the judiciary. To ensure that the Legislative Assembly Office provides quality services in an increasingly competitive environment.

To provide leadership in fostering increasing interparliamentary co-operation through participation in national and international parliamentary forums and exchange programs. To promote the products, services, and achievements of the Legislative Assembly Office to members, staff, and the public. To foster and recognize leadership and teamwork within the Legislative Assembly Office. To ensure the continuing development of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Legislative Assembly Office workforce. To promote the involvement of employees in the ongoing development of the Legislative Assembly Office. And this year we've added a new one: to develop plans for special centennial events and projects. Of course, our major centennial is not 2000 but 2005, and we're a few years away.

I would like to say at the outset, hon. members, that morale, morale with respect to the people who serve us and work with us and for us in consort with the goals that we want as elected parliamentarians, is very important to me. I would like to state very publicly that I'm very, very pleased with the progress that has been made during this year and will continue to be made not only this year but in the future in ensuring that morale continues to increase and is at a good high level and standard. In that regard I specifically want to acknowledge the leadership role provided by Dr. David McNeil in assisting with respect to that. There have been some very, very positive changes that have occurred in this fiscal year.

When we discussed the budget with this particular body last year, I think it is safe to say that there was a rather significant bit of stress and tension among members with respect particularly to the technology side of their jobs and the manpower-related concerns with respect to responses to the systems they had in their offices, the various kinds of computer systems and things like that. A great deal of effort and attention was given in our budget last year to dealing with that, and I'm rather pleased with the progress that has been made. The same degree of stress and the same degree of tension does not exist now, one year after the fact. Bill Gano and the people associated with him I think heard what the concerns were and responded in a positive way, but also with the help of the Members' Services Committee by providing some additional resources last year to meet that. That is significant.

We were also able this year to modify the offices in the Legislative Assembly area. That was done in co-operation with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services, and that has also been very, very positive.

We are getting -- and this will come out as we go through all of this -- increased attention from the public in visiting the Legislative Assembly Office. I'll just give you a couple of examples. Our visitor services people, who are very, very gifted in terms of their ability to understand various languages and to deal with visitors, are really being taxed, and they're responding in a very magnificent way. On July 1 of 1998 we did something that had never been done

before: we opened up the Legislative Assembly in the afternoon for people to actually walk on the floors of the Legislative Assembly. On July 1, between the hours of 1 and 5 in the afternoon, 6,000 citizens walked on the carpet of the Legislative Assembly for the first time ever. That was just a herculean approach from citizens and the countless numbers of visitors that continued to come with respect to this.

Many tour operators and tour guides have the Legislature Building as part of their overall approach to visitations, and you've seen the improvements that have occurred in the pedway. For those of you who have not had an opportunity to perhaps visit the interpretative shop and the areas close to the interpretative shop, you will now see two mock little legislative parliaments there. Dr. Gary Garrison and the people associated with him have taken some really positive initiatives there. I think they've been inundated with school groups and from more than just the Edmonton area, which is very, very good. There are increasing numbers of school groups that come from quite far distances in the province of Alberta, and that's very significant and that's very, very important. Collectively I know I've mentioned a few names. I'll mention others as we go through the whole thing. All in all, I think this has been a fairly good year in moving forward in this regard, and I certainly hope that we'll be in a position to continue that momentum into the future.

11:10

On the next page in your briefing book is attachment 2, which refers to the average weekly earnings table. When we had our discussions last fall with respect to this particular item, decisions were made by the Members' Services Committee, and I indicated that in terms of budgeting and the estimates in this book, there had to be an assumption of a certain formula. The formula we used would be that the year-to-year change would be 2.5 percent for budgeting purposes. These numbers are basically what you see in here.

If you just look at the left-hand column, you see January, you see 1997, and then you see 1998. You see differences and you see statistics and you see numbers in there. We don't know at this point in time what the last two months will show. As this budget will kick in April 1 of 1999, we feel pretty confident that the numbers that we have in here for the percentages for the budget allocations, based on the Members' Services decision, will be just about right on.

Now, of course if it's less, then that means we will just refine the budget and administer it to the lesser amount, because that's the only way we could do it. If it's higher than the 2.5 percent, well, then we're going to have to have another visitation sometime as we go through the year. I don't think at the moment that is going to be a problem. The least responsible thing would have been to perhaps, say, build in a 4 percent adjustment factor here if our best estimation was that it might be no more than 2.458 or 2.5 or something like that. So it's as realistic as we hope to get.

At this point I'm going to ask Dr. McNeil to add just a few more comments with respect to that table.

DR. McNEIL: These numbers that you see here come from Statistics Canada, from that particular report that's referred to in the order. It's our expectation that by April 1 we will have November's and December's complete and be able to compute the average weekly earnings for '98 and make that comparison. So the comparison is the average for '97 for the average weekly earnings. They're in the average for 1998 in the average weekly earnings. What that does is it balances the fluctuation so that the number that we finally use is a realistic overall view of the changes between '97 and 1998.

MR. HERARD: Just for clarification. The table doesn't say so, but I would assume that these are the average weekly earnings in

Alberta.

DR. McNEIL: Correct. Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's always the assumption.

Okay. Then the overview on the estimates summary. The next section, page 1 of 1, is the Estimate Comparison by Center Code. There's nothing missing from this. Everything that was built in by the Members' Services Committee is included in here. As of the printing of this particular document several days ago, there were no additional requests made by additional members or caucuses over and above what is included in this document.

If you look at the first section, they are ones dealing specifically with the Legislative Assembly and are broken down to the financial management administrative services, the human resource services branch, the Speaker's office, the public information branch, the Legislature Library, House services, information systems, and legislative committees. As we go through this, I'll ask an individual to briefly join us for some additional comments with respect to each of these, and you can see the basic bottom line adjustments in there.

Then the next section dealing with MLA administration. You can see again the figures and the changes that have occurred in there.

Then we have the next section dealing with government member services, Official Opposition services, New Democrat caucus services, and of course we have no independent members and no vacant electoral division. You can see those things going all the way down.

Then we have an offset of some amounts of revenue that are engendered by the Legislative Assembly Office.

So in a nutshell that's basically what it is.

Flip over to the next one, if you wish: Legislative Assembly, financial management and administrative services area and branch. We have an overview that is included in there with respect to what is being looked at, and I'm going to ask Jacqueline Breault to join us. I take it, hon. members, that we would go through each of these sections and questions will be asked, and then we'll come back to it after the whole overview has been done. So, Jacque, in a nutshell the overview is there. Perhaps you might want to just take us through it.

MS BREault: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This year the financial management and administrative services branch requests an increase of \$31,963. It comes in two areas, both the human resource area and the operational area.

Relative to HR, it will include increases to cover merit and market adjustments as per the general direction of the Legislative Assembly Office and the attendant adjustments to employer contributions.

I'm very proud that a number of my staff are taking advantage of training and educational opportunities. There are some minimal increases in that area relative to tuition and opportunities for them.

As well we are transferring one staff position to the human resource services area. We share responsibilities for reconciliations of financial information even as it refers to human resource type expenditures, so it was thought it would be best to have that position in the HR area, but it will be somebody that we will be working with through my staff as well. I believe Cheryl Scarlett will be discussing that in her estimates.

In terms of operational, the biggest part of our increase is relative to some photocopy equipment that we're responsible for on the 8th and 9th floors of the Legislature Annex building. A number of branches use that equipment, and it has come to a point where we think it would be efficient to address the fact that they're older machines and that there's new technology available that we can use to hopefully make all the branches more efficient and more cost-effective in terms of our photocopying needs.

Otherwise, there are some slight increases in telecommunications relative to our cellular phone service. We have one cell phone service that we share amongst the branch, and if there was a conference or a meeting where other branches of the Assembly needed to borrow a phone, they have made use of it.

As well, we have small increases in supplies. Newspapers, which were under supplies, I've broken out as a separate category.

So that's essentially my branch in a nutshell.

MR. DOERKSEN: Just a question on the math, if I might. You've asked for \$14,400 basically on the human resource side of the expenses; okay? You're going through the \$355,565 estimate of '98-99. If I add the \$14,400 to that, we come up with your estimate of \$369,965. So everything computes so far; right? But I don't see where you've decreased the \$30,000 that you've transferred out.

MS BREAUT: We've moved the position. Relative to last year's adjustments to do with HR, the money that was allocated to FMAS was indeed needed to cover all the expenses of the staff. We did not fill a position that we received last year, so while the position is moving to HR -- and we anticipate that the salary associated with it would be \$30,000 -- the funds allocated to FMAS last year were used in full to cover the full complement of staff.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Jacqueline.

Then we'll move on to 2, human resource services. This one a brief overview. Cheryl, if you wish.

11:20

MRS. SCARLETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The budget for human resource services this year basically reflects, as Ms Breaut indicated, a transfer of one position, so \$30,000, over to human resource services so that we can address the payroll accounting reconciliation components. The increase is only in the human resource expense in terms of variance, so the majority is the \$30,000. The balance, in terms of the difference then still needed, reflects the amount required to cover normal merit increases for the staff and the anticipated market adjustments for the staff in the 1999-2000 year. In terms of operational expenses there's no change at all in this control group, the status quo.

MR. DOERKSEN: This is probably going to come up in other ones too, so we might as well go at it right now. Not go at it, but can you explain on the record what is merit and what is market adjustment?

MRS. SCARLETT: All the staff of the LAO are hired pursuant to the Public Service Act. As such, they are in classified positions, and those classified positions have established salary scales and ranges that go with them. On a year-to-year basis there are several steps within those salary scales, and if the person has been a satisfactory performer, they are eligible to move up in that scale. Normally there are six to eight steps within that scale. So that would be what we refer to as a merit increase, and those are established pursuant to the classifications and the Public Service Act that we're in.

Now, in addition to that, on the same basis of those classifications that we're in, if there are adjustments by the public service in terms of an overall, across-the-board adjustment upwards as a result of market factors, then the whole scale itself would move up by whatever amount has been deemed appropriate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Or down, as occurred a number of years ago.

MRS. SCARLETT: Correct.

MR. HERARD: Just for clarification, and thank you for that,

because I think that clarifies it, certainly for me. What was the market adjustment that was chosen in your budget situation here?

MRS. SCARLETT: The market adjustment, just to go back, for 1998-99 was 2.25 percent. The market adjustment anticipated for the following year, '99-2000, is a 2 percent market adjustment.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Mrs. Scarlett.

The Speaker's office. Who wants to speak to that, the annual bloodletting? What you've got here is the requested budget for the Speaker. Again, you can see that basically there are two brief explanations in there. Essentially what I've tried to do is come, finally, to a completely transparent budget that basically realistically deals with the costs of operating a particular budget. You recall the discussion I had with you last year. You recall the requests I made of you last year. You recall the decisions that were made with respect to that last year. So what you've got in here are basically two segments. One is the human resource expenses, and as is outlined later in this particular document, you will see that the human resource expense package is slightly less in the year 1999-2000 than in the year 1998-1999. There is, however, one reduction in there, and that's payments to Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Sometime in the past -- I'm not sure when and I'm not sure really why -- included in payments to Members of the Legislative Assembly was not only the salary adjustment given to the Speaker, which is the number you see there for the year 1999-2000, but also the salary adjustments for the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees. Those were moved out of there because I think that comes under House administration in the same way that whips' salaries and everybody else's salaries come out of House administration. So that number is basically the same. However, there have been increases under the management side and the employer contributions and everything else to more realistically cover what the actual operation is.

There are three people who work in my office. There is one Ms Bev Alenius, there is one Ms Susan Purdie, and then there is one Sylvia Thoma, and that's my staff. There's no one else, and there's no additional staff requested, no additional staff required. Periodically, from time to time there may be a young STEP student or something else that will come in to help.

The second section dealing with this particular budget is the operational side and the operational expenses. There have been some adjustments made in there, again to try and realistically cover what the anticipated costs are. Such things as postage and freight, telecommunications, labour services, and office administration and supplies are now becoming more realistic. In addition to that, there are two items in there where one adjustment -- the 1998-99 estimate for travel is being held exactly the same as it was. Looking to the future, you'll see in the forecast that there's probably not going to be what the budget allocated to me this year, because I had the opportunity this year that for the two places that I did have to go, my expenses were covered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of London, England. When I sat on a certain international executive committee of the CPA, those expenses and those travel costs were covered out of London. That term is now over. I no longer attend those for the executive committee of the CPA, and there's no reason -- as an example, the next meeting that they're having is a board meeting in the spring of 1999. My term is over, so I won't be going, needless to say. So we're realistically looking at maintaining the same thing in there.

The hosting one. I'm requesting a realistic adjustment with respect to this. What has happened with the office of the Speaker --

and this a positive one I think -- is that there are numerous requests that come here now to do some certain things. They come from another part of this building where the individual in question cannot be the host if it was the Prime Minister of Romania, which was a major dinner here, or the foreign minister of China. Those requests come, and they're done on behalf of not only the government but, in this case, always on behalf of the Legislative Assembly. When that happens, we do it. As an example, we had the international volunteer convention in Edmonton last year, and the board there requested that we host a nice little evening for all of the executive committee members. We selected as the venue the library of this particular building. The 40 or 50 or 60 people that came were just given some hot finger foods and the like, but it was a great venue that they really responded to.

Every time you do that, you're looking at \$300, \$400, \$500, \$600, \$700, \$800. Sometime next month, I think, we're going to have just a modest little reception in the Speaker's suite for the 100th anniversary of the police commission from Medicine Hat. Those are positive things and those are good things we've done on behalf of others, but try and be realistic with respect to this.

So when you look at the bottom line, you see it moving from \$285,520 to \$307,106, recognizing that there were two transfers out of some \$30,000 for the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees in there. Again, attempting to be completely transparent and open with respect to this budget.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, you introduced three persons in your office.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. DOERKSEN: And I note that your complement is three and a half. Am I to assume that you're the half a person?

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know why that's there. Why does it say three and a half? I'm sorry. Bill?

MR. GANO: STEP students.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay. You got it. The STEP student I talked about. No. I want you to know I should be two and a half.

MR. DOERKSEN: Just a little light moment from me, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: You made your point. I introduced it as my annual bloodletting.

MR. DOERKSEN: I do have two questions, if I may. Could you explain the earnings for management, where the actuals will increase from \$63,000 to \$116,000? And the second question I have would be whether, in view of your comment on hosting, you've ever had to decline a hosting event to date because of budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: First of all, I'm going to ask the Clerk to respond to your first question.

11:30

DR. McNEIL: That difference reflects in effect a reclassification of the role from nonmanagement to management. That's why the expenditure in '98-99 was budgeted under earnings, not management, where it should have been. It's now under "Earnings-Management," so that's the job. You've got two management roles there and then a nonmanagement role, so that's the difference there.

THE CHAIRMAN: The second one has to do with . . .

MR. DOERKSEN: You made a few comments about hosting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. There have been occasions whereby individuals have asked me to host. My position has always been that if we are going to host on behalf of either a member, an agency, or the government, the hosting I would do would be in this Legislative Assembly. It would not be outside of the Legislative Assembly unless the government was a partner and a participant in it.

As an example, when the Prime Minister from Romania was over here, that was done at Government House, done in consort with the government and the protocol office. There have been several occasions where some groups have asked me to do some things and the numbers were so big that I simply declined because there was no way we could accommodate it here in this Legislature, in the Legislative Assembly. I've used the library, which by the way is a great venue for any hon. member or minister to consider using. It's a tremendous venue to just have an event, or the Speaker's suite.

One of the alternatives was to have the international volunteer group use -- if you go to the north side of this building, where you see the interpretive centre, just in there is the big hallway where people walk. But you can bring tables in there and you can have a dinner if you wish, and you've got the best view in the whole world. In the wintertime you can see the lights; you can see the Legislature Building. In the summertime you can see the ponds; you can see the water and everything else. In fact, that was one place that we were looking at just having a caterer come in and do a modest barbecue. There are some great venues in and around the building that one can use and keep the costs really quite reduced.

MRS. SLOAN: What would be the percentage of hostings that would be offered on behalf of the government and the percentage offered on behalf of private members or the Official Opposition?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hosting that would be in here would be offered on behalf of the office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. It would not be paid for by the government. I said that I would host in partnership with the government. I've also suggested to the members of the opposition that if there's something they wanted hosted, I would be happy to use the Speaker's suite or something else if it was a nonpolitical event, a positive provincewide organization of something.

Members will see that there are lots of invitations into the Speaker's suite these days where ministers and other members are asked to introduce provincewide organizations. It could be whatever the volunteer week is or whatever the cause of a particular week is. You've seen these people introduced, but sometimes you bring them over and offer them coffee and a few other things, and it costs a few bucks.

MRS. SLOAN: Just a supplemental on that. Is the procedure respecting the neutrality of the office, then, on all of those occasions and to have members of all parties present or at least invited?

THE CHAIRMAN: In the case of the Speaker hosting, yes, that is. In the case of the government hosting, that's the choice of the government. In the case of the opposition hosting, that's the choice of the opposition.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. So if the request to host comes from the government, are you implying, then, that while the host is the Speaker, the bill is paid for by the government?

THE CHAIRMAN: In the case of the Prime Minister of Romania,

yes, that's absolutely correct. In the case of the foreign minister of China, which is the second highest ranking dignitary from the People's Republic of China, when the foreign minister was here, a state dinner was held in Calgary. This happens all the time, and the Premier in this case asked me to host it.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm not imputing any sort of false . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: No. The protocol people are involved in this. There's a protocol department.

MRS. SLOAN: I'm curious about how everything . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: When we hosted the parliament of parliaments, all Members of the Legislative Assembly were invited to that. Perhaps 15 or 18 came, and representatives from the various parties were asked to speak.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You explained that a lot of the increases in the budget this year are as the result of being more realistic with respect to what it actually costs.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. HERARD: Now, in the areas of office administration and supplies and other labour and services -- that one, for example, has moved from \$1,500 to \$4,600. I'd like to understand that one a little more as well as the office administration and supplies.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you look at two things. One, the estimate had \$4,665. We think the more realistic thing would be \$7,800, and we think more realistically it's going to be \$12,000. Just the sheer volume of the things that we do in responding to mail-outs, requests, and the like causes that. Susan, do you want to add something to this?

MRS. PURDIE: I guess my experience, Mr. Chairman, having worked with three different Speakers -- the office is much fuller and much busier. We partake in many more activities than we ever have before. It seems like maybe a large increase, but it truly is where we are at today. We have a much broader input and requests coming in to us that we have to respond to. Just the matter of paper in itself, letterhead and memo paper and envelopes and all those kinds of office situations that would come under that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard, let me just give some examples. No previous Speaker to my knowledge has ever, ever sent a letter to 83 -- well, there are more than 83 -- people who are part of the Legislative Assembly organization, who had never, ever received a piece of correspondence from the Speaker before, and they are your constituency secretaries. Never. Never had before. I do two mail-outs a year to bring them up to date. Now, this is not to subjugate anything that the hon. member is doing, but I've never received a greater amount of feedback from anybody. Now, you can say, "Okay; that's fine; so that's 12 sheets of paper twice a year times 83," but it all amounts to a buck, a buck and a quarter. So that's \$300 that we're talking about, you know, for this particular budget. We're not talking about herculean dollars in there. Every former member gets a letter from the Speaker twice a year with an overview. The widows: that's part of what the Speaker looks after as well, the people who have been left over from the past. That's all

part of this. Now, it's not something that is high profile, but it's just part of the ongoing kind of process with respect to this.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: No new letterhead has been created; no new letterhead has been designed; no new letterhead has been bought.

MR. DOERKSEN: Seven eight zero.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, yeah, 780, but everyone is going to have that problem.

Mrs. Sloan. Oh, sorry. Mr. Renner before.

MR. RENNER: Thank you. I listened intently to your explanation on the item with respect to travel. My understanding was that the reason why your travel forecast is lower than the budget is because of the position that you held, so the overarching organization paid for travel costs to attend various meetings. That made perfectly good sense to me. Then you said that you won't have that position next year, so they won't be paying your expenses. But then you went on to say that you won't be attending the meetings. So if you don't attend the meetings, then presumably it won't cost \$20,000. I don't understand where the difference is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, okay. That's fine. Again, in trying to be brief here -- I guess one shouldn't be brief.

There were also some other things that one could not attend because one didn't have the time last year to attend, but I certainly anticipate that perhaps now the time will be there, in addition to the fact, as you'll recall, that last year we also joined one other organization. The Speaker became the president of that particular branch, and that's the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie. That's a new responsibility that the Legislative Assembly has. We hosted this particular meeting in 1998-99 here in Alberta but will not now for probably six or seven or eight years. So there will be an additional place if one chooses to go. One also chose not to go last year to the arrangement that we have with the American states, the National Conference of State Legislatures. I asked three MLAs to go. I didn't go. I sent three MLAs instead. Certainly the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is the person who represents the Legislative Assembly. I didn't go last year. I might go this year, depending on the scheduling and the like. There are other activities like that. This year it depends of course where the presiding officers have their annual convention and the like.

11:40

MRS. SLOAN: A couple of comments with respect to just the categories identified. I would like to voice some support for there being a category for public relations, and perhaps hosting is a component of public relations. I can certainly speak from the experience of particularly the Speaker's initiatives with respect to schools in my constituency. A number of the new initiatives surrounding one program, come to our House, for which the Speaker's office sent posters, the Christmas activities with respect to the gingerbread house competition, et cetera, were extremely positively received. I believe, in fact, that Edmonton-Riverview had the highest participation in the Christmas activities. It seems to me, for the purposes of the budget, that the Speaker has provided evidence of some very good work with respect to public relations on behalf of the Members of this Legislative Assembly.

I guess what I would suggest is that the category of hosting be broadened to incorporate public relations activities such as those I've raised, a bit of a curb within the last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. Thank you. There's always a difficulty with all these words; they all have meaning. I appreciate what you're saying.

Additional questions?

MR. GIBBONS: Just an additional comment. If you think what Linda was saying is different than what it is, I'm thanking you, too, for what all your office has done, because I'm looking at redoing my budget for next year because of the amount of schools that are coming in for pictures. I mean, I've been promoting, but I think it really must be coming from somewhere else too.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll come to this when we go through part of the overview again.

You've already heard me make some positive comments. There has been a dramatic, dramatic, dramatic increase in positive response from citizens who do come to this particular building I think, and I really encourage all members to take advantage of it. There are a lot of people that come to this particular building from great distances in Alberta. We want to make it user friendly, and we want to make it very, very entertaining for them and for the kids and everybody else. Now, some people might say: "Well, this is kind of tacky." But no. I think it's very important because it's part of an outreach thing.

An example, if you want to see the difference, is what happened in Saskatchewan a number of years ago, whereby a certain government and certain members of the government got into some trouble and there had been, like, 16 or 18 or 20 of them found guilty of a whole series of things. The biggest priority that they gave for their government was to increase the public relations on the honourable side of what a member is. They've got one of the highest budgets I've ever seen allocated to anybody in terms of exactly that, in terms of trying to get the feeling back that these people are honourable, that they're not all in jail, and that sort of thing.

It's a positive thing, and I'd just encourage all members to take advantage of it, because those little kids go back there with all kinds of nice little stories for a long time. I know it's difficult for some groups to come, but I think it's a very, very small investment for a great return.

We also have now, I think, four or five parliaments going on in addition to our parliament. We just had the University of Alberta parliament here in the last couple of weeks. On the weekend we'll have the new one, Mr. Speaker's Parliament, which, by the way, will be paid for by the Royal Canadian Legion. They'll be providing us with a grant of \$25,000 to do it. It will not come out of my budget; we've negotiated a contract with them to do that. They will be selecting these students from across the province along with a number of teachers. So thank you very much.

Anything more? Mrs. Sloan, on that item?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, it's actually -- and I hesitated -- the mock legislature. I recognize it's encompassed over both the public information component of the budget and to some degree there has been corporate sponsorships sought for that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, some.

MRS. SLOAN: I would like to state for the record that I think that should become a core program funded by LAO and that it should become an integral part of the programs that are offered by the Assembly. I have had the occasion to directly accompany classes to that and have been extremely impressed with the level of education and practical insight the students receive from participating in that program. I know that it's in high demand. I guess, looking at the

budget, it is not an allocated budget item. I am voicing my support that at some point in the future that be given consideration as a budget item.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think, Mrs. Sloan -- you said the mock legislature?

MRS. SLOAN: Uh-huh.

THE CHAIRMAN: The two little ones that we've got inside? That is core. Sorry; that is core. I was thinking of other parliaments.

MRS. SLOAN: So where is it reflected?

THE CHAIRMAN: In the next section. It's not a one-liner. I mean, this is all part of a whole series of programs that we provide.

We'll go to the next one, if you wish, the public information branch, and Dr. Gary Garrison. He's had a very, very busy year with his people. I want to just draw your attention again. In here, there are a number of things that are ongoing. The one segment in here that might kick out has to do with other labour and services.

Gary, before I ask you to participate, I just want to draw to the attention of the members here that under other labour and services there's a request in there for an additional \$130,000. It's broken down: \$3,000 for the interpretative centre maintenance -- again, we've been told by public works that we have to do something -- \$3,000 for the new mock legislature replica ceremonial uniforms to be worn; \$15,000 for school group photos. Remember, you as members only pay half of the cost of the group photo. The rest is paid for by the Legislative Assembly Office now, and this is a request because of the increased costs of them. This is a request here for an additional \$15,000 to meet that.

Gary, can you point out how much it costs us completely for school photos?

DR. GARRISON: For school photos the budget right now is \$19,000. So this would make a total of \$34,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Then we've got the \$1,800 and the \$6,700. However, here's the \$100,000 that I talked about earlier this morning in terms of historical enhancements to the Legislature Building in preparation for the centennial. I'll ask Dr. Garrison to talk about the rest of it, but I'm going to come back to this one because I think I want all members to be aware of what we'd like to see happen as we go to 2005.

Dr. Garrison, please, an overview of this, other than the centennial project.

DR. GARRISON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As in other areas, under human resources there's provision for anticipated merit and market adjustments.

The ones that are over and above those regular, anticipated amounts are indicated by the bullets: \$7,500 reflects a general reclassification we had done of all the visitor services full-time positions in the last year. Because of a lot of changes that have taken place in that area over the last couple of years, we felt it very important to reclassify those positions to make sure that the people were being paid at the proper level. So a lot of research was done on that, and this is how we ended up.

An amount of \$8,300 is indicated for a proposed increase in hours for tour guides to help cover the increase in visitation by the public as well as the dramatic increase in bookings for school groups.

Employer contributions of \$2,500 basically flows out of that.

11:50

Then allowances and supplements. The chairman mentioned earlier the 6,000 people we had here on Canada Day. The Canadian Capital Cities Organization is an organization of people representing all the capital cities across the country. We were invited to send a representative to this organization's annual meeting this year, which just happened to be in Edmonton, so we didn't have to pay for travel. That was nice. One of the things that's happening with this organization is that in co-operation with the National Capital Commission they're developing a number of initiatives which will strengthen connections among the provinces all across the country. Our membership in that has meant that Alberta has had a voice in this, and we will continue to have a voice and continue to build on the success we've had so far in the Canada Day event.

On the next page under operational there's a \$3,000 increase there. It's a little bit complicated, I guess. No funds for travel required for the Visitor Services Conference because we're hosting it in 1999. The conference of the Canadian Capital Cities Organization is scheduled for Iqaluit, so we've had to budget for that.

As well, flowing out of a visit by I believe it was six people from the state parliament of Mpumalanga in South Africa in November, I was invited to spend some time there as part of a secondment, which would be co-funded, I believe, by CIDA, which is where they got some of their funding for the visit that enabled them to come here. One of the benefits to us of my being able to go there, if the committee approves this, is that I would also be able to participate in the Commonwealth *Hansard* Editors Association meeting, which occurs every three years. That's being held in South Africa this year.

The next item down, office equipment rental. This is again directly related to the increased number of school bookings. The chairman basically summarized the import of the increase suggested under other labour and services. Well, maybe I should just mention the one that really didn't get touched. Most of those relate to increased bookings, except for the centennial item. The one regarding the printing costs increase basically is a reflection of the costs that we've incurred, our experience for 1998.

Under hosting, as I mentioned, there's money there for hosting the annual Visitor Services Conference. We hosted the first one here about 10 years ago, and now it's our turn again.

Office/administrative supplies. Again, the need for replacing visitor services staff uniforms. There's a need to replace them more quickly because of more bookings.

We're requesting a \$3,000 increase in advertising, again as part of our outreach initiative. Our advertising budget is relatively small to begin with, and using the small amount of money as a lever, we're able to keep increasing our visitation year to year in a highly competitive market.

We're anticipating a very modest increase in revenues from the gift shop: \$2,000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary, that item should be bracketed; should it not? That's not additional expense. That's a revenue increase.

DR. GARRISON: Exactly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Just a couple of comments with respect to the centennial. In 2005 we will have the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta; in other words, the parliament of Alberta. That's a very, very significant event. We've got absolutely nothing in here looking at 2000, the millennium. We don't view that to be a major item for us, but the 2005 one is an opportunity for us to look back over the last hundred years of the parliament in Alberta.

What I've done in the last year is looked at what other provinces have done when they've looked at their centennials and their

celebrations and the like and viewed a number of parliaments not only in Canada but in the United States and in other jurisdictions in the world. Whenever I've been to such a place, I've always had an opportunity to go and visit, to look at what the Assembly looks like, what the services in the Assembly are, what the services are to members. My humble opinion is that if you want to view other Legislatures to see what history means and what has happened in terms of the commemoration of the history of the members, then Alberta unfortunately, I think, lags dramatically behind.

As an example, if you were to walk up and down this building here and try to find any notification of the members who served in a particular Legislature, you'd be hard pressed to find any recognition other than a very tarnished photo that you might find on the main floor as you got towards the west end of this particular building. In other words, your grandchildren or somebody else who comes in here 20 years from now and says, "Who the heck was a member?" will never find any notification of it. There are portraits certainly of the Premiers, the Lieutenant Governors, the Speakers, but nothing for anybody else.

If you ever visited Queen's Park in Ontario, where their history goes back some 300 years, they have really what I think is -- as a matter of fact, I know of no better place anywhere -- a great commemoration of all the various Legislatures in the history of Ontario, where they have really very, very significant, tastefully done, consistently made plaques that go back nearly 300 years that cover and identify all of the members who've served in a particular Legislature.

We're now in the 24th Legislature in the province of Alberta. In essence, if we were to go to 2005, we would need 25 Legislatures to recognize and commemorate. One of a whole series of projects that I'd like to see done is to basically begin that process in the next fiscal year. Not everything can be done in one particular year, but you do it over three, four, five years, and you work towards 2005. One of those first ones would be to have at least a name recognition of the various people who served in the 24 Legislatures we've had in Alberta since 1905.

In addition to that, I think we have to do a very major upgrading in terms of the pictures and the other monuments that we might have in this particular building to commemorate some of the key achievements as we go towards the 100th anniversary, and in terms of the biographies of former members, have them co-ordinated and assembled. If you wanted to find out who represented your constituency four times ago, I daresay you might have some research to do. The information is very, very scattered, and I want to work in concert with the Chief Electoral Officer, who published a great book a few years ago in terms of the history of all the elections in the province of Alberta. That should certainly be updated and created, and we're talking to several hon. members who've come up with some great ideas with CD-ROMs, something that may be interactive and the like.

These are all just ideas that can be developed as we go into the future. Not everything is to be done in one year. We can't do everything in one year, and it will be subject to a lot of consultation with MLAs. The closer we get to 2005, the more ideas hon. members will have about all of this.

British Columbia just did theirs. Is it the 100th? No, not the 100th; the 125th in British Columbia. They did a whole series of things in terms of the history of their Assembly, commemorating the importance of the history of the Assembly, including passing a special bill to do with former MLAs, which I found rather interesting and quite unique. Yukon just did an anniversary this year. It's the 100th anniversary of the gold rush. They designated another public holiday on a particular day of the year, passed a particular special act of parliament to commemorate all of that.

I'm not suggesting that this is going to happen in Alberta. All I'm

saying is that if we want the people to be proud of what this parliament is all about, we, first of all, have to be proud of it, and first of all, we have to know who we are. They're just some thoughts for suggestions as we go forward into the future, and that's the reason for that, the first of a number of requests over the next five or six years, not all to be done at one time.

Any questions with respect to the Public Information Branch?

MR. WICKMAN: Just two, Mr. Chairman. On the school photos, which I find to be of tremendous value and benefit, particularly for a riding like mine where virtually every school participates. Understandably, in the increase here, the additional increase of \$15,000, only a small portion of that would cover the actual price increase. The other is the increase in the number of bookings. Other than the grade 6 students, who traditionally are involved in the school photos, what other types of groups are now participating that weren't before?

THE CHAIRMAN: I think basically there are just different grades. They may not necessarily all be grade 6. I had a group the other day from Fort Assiniboine of grade 9s and grade 10s.

MR. WICKMAN: But in terms of the roughly \$13,500 to accommodate the significant increase in the number of bookings, are they the same type of bookings but just increased considerably?

12:00

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary, I think that's the bottom line; right? Just volume.

DR. GARRISON: Yeah. Basically it's the volume.

THE CHAIRMAN: No new different types.

DR. GARRISON: A couple of reasons are, of course, that we've got two new programs. They're new as of November of '97. One is the mock legislature program, which is the main one, and that's the grade 6 market primarily, although other grades are using it. The other one is called POW. It's an environmental program, and it's designed for grade 4.

MR. WICKMAN: The other question deals, Mr. Chairman, with the \$100,000. I don't have any objection to what you're saying. In fact, I think we do have to prepare because it is an extremely significant event. I gather that this \$100,000 is sort of like a blanket amount, without the budget detailing where the dollars specifically go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, yes and no, because this is the first opportunity I've had to advise the Members' Services Committee of what I want to strongly recommend as being very, very important. I also said, number two, that not everything can be done in one year. We've got to be very realistic about that. One can sit back and one can plan and have 4,000 meetings and then come back with a book and say, "Here's X millions of dollars required to do all this stuff." Well, I don't think that's realistic. I think that like everything else you just build the stuff over a number of years, and as you reach towards it, you'll find additional ideas.

So the first one is the commemorative one of all the Legislatures. That's more than just a wild guess. That's the result of consultation with people in Public Works, Supply and Services who have been involved in the building of these things in the past and have also done a walkabout in the building to see where some of these things can be done. So that's pretty firm. I'm saying that as we go along, there will be a lot of other ideas, and one can get a lot firmer thoughts with respect to that.

As an example, a year ago I started involvement and discussion with some people on some interactive CD-ROMs that would actually see a Member of the Legislative Assembly pop up. You kicked in there and you said: okay; I want to have a discussion. You as the member would kick out on the CD-ROM, but the cost given to me to pursue it was something like \$150,000. It would have been done with the development of a CD-ROM company here in the city of Edmonton which has a great international reputation. I just shelved that, saying that we don't have the money, and it's not an idea. But that's not to say that the cost won't go down, that the technology will not improve, and the idea will become a good item. Then when I feel comfortable with that, I'll either come back to recommend it or one of you will come forward with some ideas.

If we don't spend the money, the money comes back. It will be earmarked specifically for these kinds of projects. As an example, if we move with brass plaques but they can't be delivered by the 31st of March in a particular year, the money isn't spent, but it may be one week later, so it comes under the next year's budget kind of thing.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Coming back to the mock legislature, if we have an overall expenditure item for that particular program, what percentage of the expenditure is funded by corporate sponsorship?

THE CHAIRMAN: None. I'm sorry. There are other parliaments that do have some support, like I said, but not the mock legislature. There is no corporate sponsorship there that I'm aware of. Am I wrong on that one?

DR. GARRISON: No. You're correct.

I think you're confusing this with the museum school tour project. You and I were down there as part of the group from your constituency who was here and saw the mock legislature occurring as part of the museum school tour project. I assume everybody is aware of it.

Just briefly, this museum school tour project is something that's been going on in different forms in Calgary for several years. It's a project that's basically been designed and developed by the Alberta Museums Association. Jackie Edwards went down to Calgary a year and a half or so ago to see it put on, and we were chosen as one of the two or three sites in Edmonton where there would be a pilot project run. The pilot project got funding from the Museums Association, and we were able to have four school groups come. Three of them have come so far. One more is due to come in March. There is a possibility of extending that pilot project to include four more while we are looking for corporate funding to continue the project. The ones that are now going in Calgary have corporate funding. They've always had corporate funding. That's been one of the basic principles of it.

The idea is that the sponsor would pay for the upgrading of space so it could be used as a classroom. The school group that would come here would basically have this classroom as their home base for the week. They could go from here, as your group did. They'd go to city hall. They'd go to McKay Avenue school. They'd go to various other places in the vicinity, but they'd spend the bulk of their time around here getting to know the people around here and learning exactly what goes on around here. They'd interview various MLAs, staff people, electricians, caretakers, security people, whatever, so that they could get a sense of the total community that's involved here in the Legislature and how it works and how, of

course, all this is designed to help support the parliamentary work that the members do.

So when you talk about corporate sponsorship, I believe that's what you're addressing. There is no money in the budget proposed for this program simply because it's designed for corporate sponsorship, and that's what we're pursuing.

MRS. SLOAN: But the reality is that if fate would have it and there wasn't a corporate sponsor, that project would end or it would be offered in, I guess, a less . . .

DR. GARRISON: Well, if there is no corporate sponsorship, I don't see how it could be offered.

MRS. SLOAN: If I may. I thank you for clarifying, I guess, the difference between the mock legislature and that particular project. I was speaking in relation to the project.

In my opinion, in my interactions with the school group that came -- they did spend a week, and this would be something that wouldn't have to be restricted to Edmonton schools. That type of initiative to me is worthy of more consideration by this committee because, as I indicated, the practical application and knowledge that the students were able to acquire through that week in terms of their understanding of democracy in my experience does not compare to any other process or programs.

I recognize that it's not encompassed in the estimates as they're presented today. Obviously the recruitment of corporate sponsorship will go on, and I'll be speaking in support of that, but I believe it should be a core program offered by LAO.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; we'll take a look at it.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Herard?

MR. HERARD: Yeah. Just maybe to finish, if there are no other questions of this particular branch. In the five years or more that I've been here, I've never had a school group come, unfortunately, to the Legislature, so I wasn't really informed until today as to how the group photos are dealt with. I see a 10 percent increase there in the cost of those photos, and I'm wondering if the selection of a service provider with respect to photos is a competitive thing. Are the prices in line with the market with respect to this?

THE CHAIRMAN: The answer to that question is yes, yes, and we review that on almost an annual basis.

MR. HERARD: Okay.

My last one deals with the \$100,000 to cover historical enhancements. Certainly I recognize, having visited a number of Legislatures across the country, that there are many, many ideas that surface as you go through and try to absorb the history of the Legislatures in the various provinces. I guess the problem I have with this particular presentation today is that normally when one is asked to approve an expenditure, it's the result of a number of years of work. In other words, we're used to dealing with three-year business plans, and in that context things change over time. But in this committee we're not dealing with three-year business plans, so these things surface, as in this case, with very little detail as to how the money is to be spent. If I would have a suggestion, it's that perhaps this committee consider going to a three-year business plan process, where one would have an appreciation of the history as well as the future with respect to expenditures of this nature. It's hard to say, you know, that we'll approve a \$100,000 expenditure without

really any idea of how it will be spent.

So those would be my comments, Mr. Chairman.

12:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I appreciate that. It's also true, though, that no other debate in the budget goes line by line in this either. This is the only place in this whole system where you've got a line-by-line one. No hon. member would stand in the Legislative Assembly and see this kind of detail or information. Perhaps the other side of the argument is that it's happening, but you just don't know that it's happening. We're very, very transparent here.

Why don't we take a break? It's 12 minutes after. Do you want to reconvene at 1 o'clock?

MR. DOERKSEN: Yeah, we can do that, Mr. Chairman, but before we lose the moment here, this is another light moment for me, if you can permit this. Two in one morning I know is pretty hard. We're talking about the mock Legislature, and I have to say that is a wonderful venue and a great program.

Now, the two cheapest things we ever got for our kids to enjoy for their playtime: one was a sandbox, and the other was dress-up clothes in the basement. We still have boxes and boxes of old dress-up clothes; the kids can go down, dress up, and their imagination just runs wild. Talking about the mock Legislature just kind of reminded me of that.

I think that's such a valuable program, and I appreciate the fact that that's been implemented. I've been down there with some of the school kids, too, and it's great.

Thank you for permitting that little aside, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that very much. Sometimes it gets a little taxing because there are so many positive things happening with insignificant amounts of money.

Anyhow, let's take a break. Be back at 1 o'clock, and we'll finish with this section in here. To anybody who wants to talk to me further about the historical enhancements, I'd be happy to give you my best shot at it when we come back.

There's also a memo here from Dr. Pannu, and we'll deal with the other item when we come back.

[The committee adjourned from 12:13 p.m. to 1 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. members, we certainly do have a quorum, so let us proceed. We're going to just finish off what we were dealing with this morning, and that was the public information branch. I don't know if there were additional questions that hon. members wanted to make with respect to that. Anyone?

Then thank you very much, Dr. Garrison.

MR. RENNER: I talked with Dr. Garrison just briefly prior, just informally. He said that he had a sheet with information on the gift shop itself, and I didn't know if he had distributed that.

DR. GARRISON: Yeah, I do have copies here for everybody. Did you want me to go over it or just pass them around?

MR. RENNER: No. If you can just pass it out.

DR. GARRISON: Okay. Sure.

MR. RENNER: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: What does the sheet show?

DR. GARRISON: It's a gift shop report. It shows retail sales, MLA

sales, net income.

THE CHAIRMAN: What's the bottom line for the net income?

DR. GARRISON: Net income: \$12,278.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the situation with the gift shop, like everything else you're involved in, one can debate the merits of whether a gift shop is important or not. One thing is that it's a great little gift shop. What is missing, though, is location, location, location. So I've had some initial discussions with, again, the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, and we'll deal with that at a future time, to see if we can find a better location for it.

Anything additional, then, on that matter that Dr. Garrison had before us before we adjourned for lunch? Okay. Thank you very much.

There were two things left over from this morning that we said we would come back to. The first one: Mrs. Sloan's matter about the minutes. You know what? You are absolutely right on. None of us caught the fact that in our briefing book pages 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13 of the minutes of the last meeting were not included. They only xeroxed one side of the pages. So we've had circulated for you the real minutes, pages 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. If you want to look to 7(c), we do have Mr. Renner's motion in there. In fact, it's 98.42, and it is under Mr. Renner's name: "Moved by Mr. Renner that Members' Services . . ." et cetera, et cetera, and the amendment carried. Thank you very much. That's an error, so I apologize for that.

The second item. We said that we were going to deal with a request through a memo that came from Ms Barrett. I indicated to you this morning that Dr. Pannu would be joining us to deal with this matter.

Welcome, Raj. I understand you have just returned, so we appreciate that you're probably very, very tired. The matter that you raised I'd like you to share with the committee, and then the committee will consider it as it goes through its agenda this afternoon. So why don't you bring us up to date. You sent us a memo. Do you want to go over the memo?

DR. PANNU: Briefly, Mr. Chairman. With your permission, first I'd say good afternoon to everyone and wish them happy New Year. It's late, but it's never too late to do this sort of thing.

Yes, it is true that I did return last night around 7 o'clock after a rather long journey, which was supposed to take no more than 20 hours of flying, but having to wait for eight hours for a connection at London airport and before that about five hours at Delhi made it a very, very long journey for my wife and myself. Surprisingly enough -- I guess it's the anticipation of this meeting and the expected pleasant company I've just joined -- I think I'm awake and fairly energetic up to this point.

Mr. Chairman, you mentioned Ms Barrett's letter to you of October 23, in which I think there is the general issue of the manner in which the budget of our caucus is determined and the effect of it on our ability to pay our staff as provided by the guidelines with respect to necessary pay increases to maintain the level at which people are paid, at least, if not to give them a little more than what they received last year.

Our budget faces a particular problem. First of all, the manner in which the budget is determined I guess is something that I need to briefly talk about. I'm new to this process, so please correct me if I'm misunderstanding. As I understand, there are two portions to the budget. One part comes from members' allowance rates, and the second part comes from the funds allocated to the party leader's office. In our case, since there are only two members, our members' allowance in total is more or less half, not exactly but more or less half, of what we get under the leader's office amount.

Since the increases to our budgets as they have been determined mean increases only to the members' allowance portion of our budget, that means that if the percentage increase is 2 percent or 2.5 percent or, as proposed for 1999-2000, close to 3 percent, I understand, it translates in our case to no more than a 1 percent increase in our overall budget, which then means that we are unable to pay our staff at the rate which I think we as a committee anticipate we should increase the payouts to our staff. This has resulted, of course, in our inability to maintain the real value of what we pay our staff. I was referring here to what we started paying them two years ago and what we're paying them next year. So if the present system continues, in the case of my caucus we'll be paying our staff less next year, and we paid them less this year in terms of real value of what they get paid than what they started out with roughly two years ago.

This arrangement of budgeting doesn't affect the government caucus in the same way as it affects my caucus and, I presume, the way it affects the Official Opposition's budget, although the relative impact on the Official Opposition budget is less severe than is the case with our caucus because our caucus is very small and the members' allowance portion constitutes a very small portion of the overall budget.

So my request to the committee is twofold. One is that a special allowance be made for the current year so that we are able to pay our staff the amount that will translate into at least a 2 percent increase in their annual salary for next year. The second part of my request is that starting with the new budget that we're considering, I understand, at this meeting, the basis on which budget increases are determined be changed in the following way: that whatever percentage increase we seek to make and agree to make to the budgets should be made with a reference to the total amount in the budget rather than just one portion of it, which is represented by the members' allowance. So these are my two requests: one, that a special allowance be made for this year in order for us to pay our staff in ways which are equitable and comparable with perhaps the manner in which staffs are paid for the other two caucuses and, secondly, that we change the manner in which we determine the increases, starting next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Do any hon. members wish to seek additional information?

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask if I was clear in making the points, if the issues are clear to us.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're clear to me.

Mr. Wickman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, yeah. The points are clear that Raj has raised. I do have some comments to make that go beyond his documentation by talking in terms of the constituency budgets and the caucus budgets and the impact it does have on staff in comparison to other Legislative Assembly staff. However, I just feel that it's more appropriate to deal specifically with those items when we deal with those respective portions of the budget rather than do it at this time in isolation. But, Raj, your point is well taken, and yeah, we do have to address it.

MR. DOERKSEN: A similar comment, Mr. Chairman. I don't know when you want to do this, but if we could flip to tab 10 in our estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: My thought would be that we should continue

the process we have. We indicated Dr. Pannu wanted to come in early in the afternoon, so we had him come in early in the afternoon. We have the information, and he's certainly welcome to remain with us for the remainder of the afternoon until we get to that point, because there are additional points that should be made as well. Would that be okay?

DR. PANNU: That'd be fine, Mr. Chairman. I'll stay until I start falling asleep. If I don't fall asleep, then I'd like to stay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

Let us continue to move on, then, in terms of where we have arrived. The next item we have is the Legislature Library. I'd like to welcome Sandra Perry here very, very briefly. Sandra is the new Librarian. She joined us in the fall after we had a public competition. I'd had some additional overview comments early this morning. Sandra, would you just briefly take us through the section that you have in here.

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. The main emphasis of the library budget, as you can see from my overview, for the 1999-2000 fiscal year is on electronic information services. The core of this emphasis is a request for a digital services librarian. A large number of the library's goals depend on the approval of this position.

Two major trends in the wider world have converged to make access to information more complex. These trends are the information age and the global village. So information becomes more necessary for today's decision-makers, and of course, Members of the Legislative Assembly are our prime decision-makers within this province. Timely access to accurate global information, such as government reports from other jurisdictions, requires electronic access to services such as commercial databases and the Internet.

With the restraint over the past number of years in the collection budget along with rapid price inflation and deteriorating exchange rates, we've been unable to buy all the publications we did in the past. We can compensate for that somewhat by replacing ownership with access, but to do that, we need to develop effective access mechanisms. We can do that only with the specialized expertise in electronic access that we have proposed in this position of digital services librarian. The position also allows us to meet the increased expectations for breadth of coverage and timeliness of response which have come with advances in available technology and the global village mentality.

For at least 10 years now the Legislature Library has experienced significant cutbacks. This has reduced its ability to access and deliver electronic services, which are a standard resource for libraries in the 1990s. The library is falling considerably behind other Canadian Legislature Libraries, and you have a chart, which is listed as appendix 2 in the information that you've been provided with, which will show you the rank of the Alberta Legislature Library as compared to other Legislature Libraries across Canada.

The time has come when the library must catch up if it's to remain a relevant resource for the members. The role, then, that the digital services librarian would play is: additional training for staff; assessment of commercial on-line databases, CD-ROM databases; the Internet as a resource; participation and assessment of the current library services for cost efficiency and effectiveness - should we be doing things differently? -- assessment of specific areas of the collection to determine where electronic resources would be more appropriate; development and upkeep of a library Internet site which would deliver updating services to the members' desktops and provide hotlinks to web sites which are the most relevant for the members' needs; assessment of the preservation needs of the

library's unique historical collections with a view to digitization, should that prove to be appropriate and cost-effective; liaison with information system services to provide an ongoing assessment of the library's technology need; and training for members who have an interest in doing some of their own searching.

There are other necessary components of the improvement in electronic services pointed out to you in this overview. Networking of our CD-ROM products is one of these. Membership in the Alberta Library was requested last year, but funding wasn't provided to allow us to meet that membership. Membership in the Alberta Library would reduce pricing for network licensing agreements for some electronic products. Additional conferences and courses for staff: these are also related to training and new technologies. We're looking at additional binding for materials because now we download a lot of materials electronically.

Other increases are driven by market forces. Inflation in publishing is running at 10.28 percent. Exchange rates: we've had an 11.7 percent increase over the last year. These are decreasing our spending power, and they're making considerable inroads into our text and serials collections.

What the 1999-2000 estimates express are the very real needs of the library to bring it into the 1990s. What is presented in these documents is in many ways the equivalent of a consultant's report, because I have just recently joined the LAO from another library system, one in which these needs were met some time ago. There is nothing here that constitutes a frill or something that would be nice to have. These requests are the components of a very basic service in the 1990s.

As you're aware, the time period for which we're budgeting moves us into a new millennium, and the position requested must be able to assist members and staff in coping with the requirements of this new information age with its resultant pressure on members to have access to current information from all around the globe. A library which is capable of making the best use of technology and having information resources at its disposal will provide a very valuable service to the members in assuring that they always have the information they need to do their jobs effectively.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Appendix 2 that Ms Perry has provided for us shows a recent survey of Canadian parliamentary libraries, and all members will recall the discussion we had on this item last year as well. So we'll now throw it open to any questions that hon. members might wish to raise for additional information or clarification.

MR. HERARD: Well, first of all, my experience with the library has always been a very pleasurable experience and always one of great service, and I wanted to say that. In fact, that probably applies to every division of the Legislative Assembly.

I certainly agree that we have to get into a digital services librarian mentality, because we're not very far away from the 21st century, and we do know that electronic communication is playing a bigger and bigger part in our lives. In fact, I daresay that I probably get as many E-mails today as I do pieces of correspondence, and that has really changed even in the last year. So I would certainly support this request to bring us into that age.

One thing I wanted more information on. I know that Community Development and other departments have been involved in this Alberta Library thing. Part of that was really some funding to provide access to a provincewide library network. In the development of that, I think part of it was to look at the use of the existing AGNPAC as a backbone to provide that service wherever that backbone exists in the province. Are you saying that you're not on that network now or that there wasn't any funding provided with

that last year? I'm trying to understand what happened there.

1:20

MS PERRY: The \$5,000 that covers the membership wasn't able to be taken out of the amount of budget that was approved for last year. What membership in the Alberta Library allows us to do, as you suggest, is to be linked in with other libraries. The network is primarily for public and university libraries across the province, and that's where the funding has gone, but there is no reason to exclude government or special libraries like the Legislature Library from this network. There would be various price breaks for us being part of this Alberta Library. It also gives us a seat on the board and allows us to discuss how this network would develop across the province. MR. HERARD: If I might, Mr. Chairman, just further to that. Do you know whether or not there's been any attempt to work with Community Development on this with regards to access to the network itself? I think I heard you say that this was primarily sort of a membership fee versus an actual connection to the physical network. I'm quite sure that Community Development would. If they have not considered this library as one of the key libraries in the province, they certainly should. I'm just wondering if you've tried that approach.

MS PERRY: I have met with them, and we assumed from that meeting that a seat on the board is going to provide access to whatever resources are available out of the Alberta Library, including access to any kind of networking and basic primary access to the other clients in terms of interlibrary loan and that sort of thing.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you for a very comprehensive report. One question with respect to the position for the digital services librarian. I assume that you did do some market comparisons as to the salary for that position, and I'm wondering about the \$66,000 that's allocated under the second component of the human resource expenditures. Does the component for that position also include the potential advertising, recruitment, and related expenses that would be incurred to secure someone?

MS PERRY: No. Basically what I have included in there is \$41,000 approximately in salary. My market research was based on a previous position that I had in Alberta Justice. I had just this sort of librarian, and of course you need to add in \$6,000 approximately for benefits as well. So about \$47,500 in total for the librarian.

MRS. SLOAN: So the necessary recruitment, if perhaps we wanted to look beyond Alberta for this type of person, would have to be incorporated into some other category of the budget.

MS PERRY: We also do manage to do quite a bit of advertising for free these days, especially for librarians, on things like the Foothills Jobline, which is a job line out of Calgary, and that does give us national coverage.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: David, you wanted to add something?

DR. McNEIL: Just in terms of advertising for positions in the LAO. Those funds would come from the human resource branch budget. We cover that expense across the whole Legislature.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: There are no questions in this area?

MR. RENNER: Just more for information. I'm inquisitive. The additional funding for CD-ROM was to provide multisite licences to allow the library to provide network access to already subscribed to CR-ROM products. Does that mean that I could call down to the library from my office and then you would send a file off a CD-ROM that we have in the library? I don't quite understand how that works.

MS PERRY: Hopefully something more convenient than that in the long run. Right now we have CD-ROM products that work on stand-alones. That's the arrangement that we have. We have a stand-alone licence for them, a one-machine licence. In the future what we would like to negotiate is a multisite licence whereby you would gain access through the library web site to this from your desktop so that you would be able, should you desire, to search that particular CD. Things like *Canadian Business & Current Affairs*, CBCA, that kind of thing, you could search that from your desktop.

MR. RENNER: So that means you'd have to take the CDs and put them into some kind of hard disc memory then. Otherwise, somebody has to physically take the CD and put it in the machine.

MS PERRY: Yes. Well, we can do that. Bill is probably better able to answer this technically than I am, but you can have CD towers which automatically switch, or the other possibility is to load them onto the hard drive of a server.

MR. RENNER: It's interesting. It never occurred to me that you could do that. The concept of CDs was so that the producer could prevent that kind of thing from happening.

MS PERRY: Now a multisite licence is becoming more and more common.

THE CHAIRMAN: Additional questions on the library?
Mr. Herard?

MR. HERARD: Yeah, just on that last point. I understand the licensing situation, but are your CPUs now currently networked between themselves? You're talking about networking and CD towering and so on, and I don't see really enough money to do that there.

MS PERRY: Yes, most of our computers are currently networked. We have one stand-alone machine in the library, which is there for walk-in use by the public, but the rest of the computers that we have are networked.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ms Perry.

The next item, House services. We'll ask Dr. McNeil for an overview on that one.

DR. McNEIL: Mr. Chairman, two components of increases projected in House services. The first is in the human resource area. The majority of the funding there relates to the normal market and merit adjustments for nonmanagement staff and management staff. We have to remember with respect to the managers that in 1998-99 there was, first of all, the restoration of a 3 percent merit adjustment that took place, which was unbudgeted, as well as a range adjustment of 4 percent, again which was unbudgeted. We based the '99-2000 budget on a 2 percent anticipated market adjustment and a 4 percent anticipated merit adjustment, which is the norm for both management and nonmanagement. That's where the numbers come

from, based on those assumptions. So of the total, approximately \$105,000 of that increase can be attributed to those market and merit increases and the additional cost of benefits.

The other funds. We're budgeting an amount of \$35,000 to provide for a person to provide backup services to a number of the functions in House services. The primary function that we're looking for support for is the bills and *Journals* clerk. In 1998-99 this individual incurred over 500 hours of sessional overtime as the result of having to work every hour of session and stay approximately one to two hours after session every day of session. Having to grant time off in lieu of overtime makes it difficult to complete the work of this role outside of session, because right now we're granting that individual about two days a week to compensate for that overtime. I have a very deep concern about the level of stress that's experienced in that position. In addition, there have been a number of other activities that have demanded support which we have had to scramble to provide. Our membership in the APF has resulted in increasing demands for support as well as now supporting the activities of the Alberta youth parliament. So that's the basis on which we're requesting additional funds. You can see the detailed explanation there.

1:30

We have an additional \$4,120 to cover the cost of Alberta's membership in the APF, which we joined last year and which we have to budget for this year. There's a change in the CPA costs of about \$5,000 just because of exchange rate increases and a 3 percent increase in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association membership.

Operational expenses. We're projecting an increase in travel as a result of the location of a number of conferences that members attend. Just a note: travel costs are budgeted on the basis of full-fare economy status and based on sending the number of persons normally invited from each jurisdiction to those particular events. We're also requesting increases in postage and office equipment costs reflecting actual usage. The increases we're requesting are offset by a decrease in labour and services as a result of not having to provide funding for the CPA seminar, which we hosted in 1998-99.

So that's the overview of House services.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just want to amplify one thing that Dr. McNeil said, and that is the terms of the participation that hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly might have in terms of attending some event or function during the year. I've insisted that the figure we put in here in terms of fares is full-fare economy status for budgeting purposes. Anybody who has traveled knows that there are 18 different kinds of rates you can get from a travel agent, but try and get the one you want at the time you want to go and you all of a sudden find out the 17 that don't exist. So in terms of being totally open, totally transparent, I think absolute fiscal management is to make sure that we put the correct fare in here, to budget it on that basis, full-fare economy status. If we have good, ample warning of three, four, or five months, we may be able to get a rate that's considerably reduced from that, and that simply means these dollars will not be expended. But from a budgeting point of view it's much better and more intelligent to budget from that perspective so we don't have the unfortunate situation that occurred even a year ago with one hon. member of the Assembly where there was total confusion. The hon. member was absolutely correct. Everything was done according to Hoyle, appropriate and everything else, but there was such a negative kind of an outplaying through media sources that it was an embarrassment to everybody, and that's wrong. So the principle here is full-fare economy status. It has a certain meaning in the airline industry, and given certain times when

you travel with advance warning, you can get better rates or you can get worse rates, depending what it is. But from a budgeting point of view that's the principle that I insisted be put in here.

MR. WICKMAN: My first question was going to relate to the substantial increase in the travel. You have answered that in that I interpret your remarks to say that it's very, very unlikely that we would spend \$129,000 in that we can anticipate at least some of the travel being done on the reduced fares, that are becoming so common.

THE CHAIRMAN: Correct, but please look at something else in there. The problem with looking at one line is that it's always taken out of context. I'm not suggesting you've done that. The travel one went up, but then we also reduced several others, the hosting one in this area. As an example, we no longer have to do the parliament of parliaments this year. That was the one thing we did last year. But if we want to send a group, we have to go the other way; we have to go out of the province. So there's an adjustment upwards in that one. It's all part of this whole package.

MR. WICKMAN: I realize that, Mr. Chairman, and that leads to my second question. When we talk in terms of the overall increase in a particular departmental budget here, this year for the first time since I've been on Members' Services we don't see the actual percentage increases over the previous year. If I recall correctly, in previous years it was always there. I look at these figures roughly, and I see an increase in this particular one of \$200,000. I do some mental calculation, and I say: well, that's over a 10 percent increase. As we go through, it's becoming more and more common. We're looking at figures like that. Just a percentage comparison to the previous year is lacking, so it does make it a bit more difficult to try and get a handle on the overall significance of the increases.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. The first paragraph in that section deals with \$155,000 of that.

MR. RENNER: I want to address the same issue. I concur with your comments regarding travel, and I think it probably is prudent to have some worst case scenarios when you're dealing with budget for travel. But I want to be sure that when individuals do travel, they are encouraged to seek some of the discounts.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not only are they encouraged; I meet with each and every one of them and ask them how they're going and why they're going that way.

MR. RENNER: And that's good.

THE CHAIRMAN: Each and every one. Sometimes they feel a little sensitive about that, but that's the way.

MR. RENNER: We were having a bit of a discussion at lunch. I travel a lot, flying back and forth to Medicine Hat, and I am able to get substantial discounts by booking in advance. As I was saying, the worst thing that can happen when you have an advance sale is that you have to upgrade it to full fare. No one should be afraid to book a discounted ticket because they don't like the restrictions that are on it. If the restrictions can't be accommodated, all they have to do is upgrade it to full fare, and then the restrictions are removed.

THE CHAIRMAN: And pay the difference, which is very significant.

MR. RENNER: Yes, but then the worst that you've done is you've

paid full fare.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's right, yes, under the rules we have, under this definition of full-fare economy, which is a separate definition for the air people as well. But it's just horrendous.

I'll also ask people if they have any travel points they want to use. I mean, that's right off the top when all that stuff is done. So it's not just a blanket kind of thing.

MR. DOERKSEN: I just wanted to ask a question on the human resource side. As I understand your proposal here, you're proposing to increase your complement by one to basically cover off the 500 hours.

DR. McNEIL: Well, no, it's not just covering off the 500 hours. Mrs. Kamuchik can comment on this further. There's been an extensive requirement for support for the APF as well as a number of other activities. We are looking for support for session, doing procedural research during session, administrative support to the youth parliament and the teachers' program, and our office at times is asked to provide cover-off support for other offices in the LAO. So we're talking about 1,600 to 1,700 hours in total, which is basically full-time support.

I don't know, Louise, whether you want to comment on the bills and *Journals* clerk.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: The bills and *Journals* clerk. The person that is now in that position typically comes in at about 8:30 in the morning and goes all day with hardly a break and will stay till at least an hour after session has ended. That's for all the preparation work that needs to be done for the Votes and the Order Paper and also lining up the *Journals*. The petitions that are tabled, the tablings that are coming in have increased I can't tell you how many times over the 1970s, '80s, to mid-80s typical session. She will also deal with requests from not only the staff but the media and the public for copies of many things, the numbering of sessional papers. I know for a fact that she's going all day with hardly a break. Of course she does excellent work; she's very conscientious. She feels absolutely horrible when she does make a tiny error -- and she's only human -- and that's usually because she's tired. She's just overworked. My concern is her health, of course, the stress that goes with session. Also, if something should happen to her, who would do the job? All of us are going with a full load. The work could be done, but we would have to piece the Order Paper and the *Journals* actually manually. She has macros. She has a great system that she's devised for herself. So we need someone trained as a backup in case something should happen to that person.

1:40

MR. DOERKSEN: Maybe a better question is: have you accommodated enough in your budget in terms of complement? I see there's certainly plenty of dollars, but the complement side isn't...

DR. McNEIL: We were asking for one.

MR. DOERKSEN: You've asked for one, so that covers off the 500 hours of overtime plus.

DR. McNEIL: Plus.

MR. DOERKSEN: But you've allowed \$190,000 to do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: No; \$35,000.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Then help me with how the \$190,000 total increase...

THE CHAIRMAN: There are 17 people in this area. Well, David, you go through it. The first paragraph describes -- go ahead.

DR. McNEIL: Of the \$155,000 increase in the human resources area, \$105,000 relates to market and merit adjustments for the managers and nonmanagers.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay.

DR. McNEIL: Those numbers actually reflect salaries that we're paying now plus anticipated based on, as I indicated earlier, 2 percent market adjustment, which may be underestimated, but if that's the case, then we'll have to absorb that somehow. Then a normal merit adjustment, which for nonmanagers is typically -- a normal increment is about 4.5 percent -- we'll say 4 percent, and a similar kind of merit adjustment for managers of 4 percent.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Well, I don't want to prolong it, but I'm working backwards, and I look at the actual amount you spent in '98-99 of \$886,000, going to one million and...

DR. McNEIL: That's the forecast. One of the factors that comes in here when you look at it is the fact that about \$200,000 of that is session related, so there's about \$30,000 or \$40,000 less. We won't expend our total budget in session-related costs because we won't sit as long in this fiscal year as we might in other years in terms of what we've budgeted for. So that's why the forecast is lower than the estimate for '98-99. In other years it may be right on. In an election year, for example, that forecast typically is much lower because we tend to sit fewer days in an election year. That's why on the surface it doesn't add up.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that's a very important point. You've got three columns in here. The forecast one is what we're anticipating going through to March 31. But remember that the principle of the estimate, which is the one that was in the budget approved last year, the \$921,000, is based on the recognition of sitting 85 days. Now, we counted up the days that we went this year, and because this new session in the spring is three weeks later than last year, there's a difference there of 12 days, 14 days. So we don't expect having to spend this much, and that's why the forecast is lower than the estimate. Of course, those dollars are returned. If they're not expended, they're not expended.

Okay. Additional comments or questions? Thank you very much.

Then we'll move on to information services and Bill Gano. This was a major item for discussion last year, and I made some comments earlier this morning with respect to that.

MR. GANO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, as was indicated this morning, things have improved considerably over the last year, and I do appreciate the support the committee gave to information systems last year. We're now at the point where our staffing level is appropriate for the support that's being asked for, and consequently the budget for 1999-2000 is basically a maintenance budget, a standpat budget. We have some increases in the human resources area again due to market and merit adjustments. There is a slight increase in operational expenses, specifically in the area of office equipment rental, just because we are beginning to encounter some older technology equipment and will have to upgrade it next year.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to repeat that I think, for the most part,

the major concerns that were issued -- although there's still a lagging one; is there not? That has to do with the equivalencies of salaries, but we're no different than anybody else in that area. We're exactly like everyone else, and it's just an industry thing, that in essence there's a shortage of people in this technology area. But, again, we are no different than anyone else. Everybody is facing that at this time.

Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In the last presentation we talked about libraries and getting into the 21st century. I certainly appreciate everything that's been done in the last few years to get us into the 21st century, and I certainly have to say that every time I've used the services of your department, it's always been very courteous, prompt, and very thorough.

I have a couple of questions with regards to the Internet and web sites and web pages. I've had a number of members question the need for some sort of a web site that would accommodate members with respect to having a particular page rather than having them scattered all over the universe on all sorts of different service providers and so on. Is that something that you see as coming in the future, or do you ever see a day where there might be that kind of a web site?

MR. GANO: Crystal ball.

MR. HERARD: Well, do you get a lot of requests or queries?

MR. GANO: We have more recently begun receiving requests for that type of service. We have not had a chance to sit down and set a policy on it. A couple of years ago I would have said no, but technology has now advanced to the point where members could be trained and produce their own web page, and we would then just have to load it on. There wouldn't be a whole lot of support required from the IS staff to provide that service. So, yes, it's something that we are starting to look at as a service that would be available to members if the demand were there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gano is very kind. He doesn't say what he and the Speaker have talked about, so I'll tell you some more additions to the story as well. That's one of the things we could look at in the future and one of the things we would look at under this so-called centennial thing. But, again, it's more than just simply that.

So here's where we are at the moment. A number of members have come to me and said: look, I need a web site; I want to do the web site. My response to them is: well, fine; go and pay for it. I've said that you can pay for it under your constituency office allocation if you wish, but here's the caution: you'd better make sure that everything in that web site is very neutral in terms of all the definitions of everything we do in this building. You can't advertise constituency fund-raisers and all the rest of that stuff if you want the taxpayers of the province of Alberta to pay for it.

I have a web site of my own that's paid for under my local constituency association. It has nothing to do with the Legislative Assembly. I hired an 18-year-old kid to do it. He did a heck of a job. It cost a couple of hundred bucks and then 50 bucks a month. It's paid for under totally unrelated sources. It's a great web site. It's updated periodically. That's another alternative as well.

If we want to do one for individual members under the system, they have to be very, very careful of what would be contained in it. Now, as time goes on and months go on, there'll be some new gizmo product that will be invented that will probably make it much easier, but at the moment that's where we're at, Mr. Herard.

MR. HERARD: Second question. I find it interesting that hardware

-- and let's talk about portables for example. As technology changes and the level of sophistication of the user changes along with it, there are times when you need to upgrade equipment. In my case, I've got two portables. The first one was purchased in 1993, and I'm not sure that anybody would want it today with respect to its capabilities. The second one is really quite a reasonably good machine, except that it won't do some of the graphics things, of course, that occur today on CD-ROMS and interactive video and all this sort of stuff. It would be a perfectly good laptop for another member who may not require that kind of sophistication, but I can't do anything about that. In other words, I can't transfer that equipment to the other MLA, who might be perfectly happy with it, in our current accounting system, so then it forces everybody to buy new all the time. I'm wondering what could be done to solve that problem.

1:50

MR. GANO: Yes, what you say is true. The way the current accounting system is set up there is no provision for transferring funds into a constituency budget, which would basically be what was required. So unless there's some direction from this committee to provide for that type of facility, we really don't have any options at this point.

Right now what we do is follow the government guidelines in terms of surplus equipment. When it's determined that a piece of equipment is no longer needed by that particular person, we bring it in. We try to determine if it could be used elsewhere, either by another member or by someone else within the LAO. If that's the case, then that would happen. The person turning that equipment in does not get any recognition for turning that equipment in, however. I think that's mainly what you're looking for.

MR. HERARD: Well, it's a situation where the other member that is looking for a piece of equipment is forced to buy something new, and in fact they could get into it for considerably less than what it would cost for a new one, plus the person who's upgrading would then have a credit towards the cost of that. So there are savings involved on both sides of it. I think if it's just a situation where we don't have the appropriate rules, then we should deal with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let me take a look at that, Mr. Herard. I don't see a problem with that at all. It's akin to your buying 10,000 pins you don't need and you want to turn them back to the Legislative Assembly and they find somebody else who wants the pins. I mean, they don't need a Members' Services order for that. I'll take a look at that.

MR. HERARD: Thank you.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my question to Bill. It will be 10 years now, almost, that I've been here, and I still don't have a computer on my desk in my office at the Leg. A number of years ago when I first inquired, I was told that I'm sort of on a waiting list and that when one becomes available, I'll get it. I thought, Bill, we had a program that was going to over a period of time ensure that there were sufficient computers that each MLA would be able to have one on their desk at the Leg. here. As it is now, if I have to research information on, say, lotteries, I've got to get hold of the researcher in the area to access that information for me. Is there such a program under way?

MR. GANO: There is an allocation level for each caucus office that was set a number of years ago. It was based on the number of members in each caucus. That has not changed. There is a program, however, to ensure that equipment that we do own is upgraded and

remains as current as possible. That program currently is that, you know, there should be no piece of equipment in the Legislative Assembly or in the caucus or constituency offices that is older than three or four years. That's our current program.

MR. WICKMAN: But that doesn't answer my question. In terms of the allocation, you refer to that allocation as based on the computer needs of staff and MLAs. Of course, the staff have to have a higher priority because they do spend more time at their computers in their offices here. The bottom line is that there still is not a sufficient number of computers given so that each member of our caucus can have one on their desk. Some do and some don't. I'm still not clear as to how the determination is made as to which ones get them. The bottom line, Bill, is that there are not sufficient computers given to each caucus.

THE CHAIRMAN: If that's the case, no one from your caucus has advised me in the last year that's a problem, because I thought we had responded to most of those concerns by the spring of 1998. In addition to that, individual members can access their constituency office allocations to buy them. Most have done that. That's how they get their laptops.

David, do you want to add something?

DR. McNEIL: Yeah. It just goes back to the formula. The per member allocation of computer equipment is set by this committee and hasn't changed. So whatever that formula says, the caucus gets: the number of computers, the number of printers, and so on. Then it's up to the caucus to determine how that equipment is distributed. The way that would change is if this committee voted to change that per member allocation. That's what would do it.

MR. WICKMAN: Maybe at the appropriate time, not necessarily for this particular fiscal period but at a future Members' Services meeting, we could revisit that formula, because maybe the formula is outdated. Given the funds, I can go down and get a complete computer for \$1,000 now with everything I need that would do the purpose quite readily. I can go down to city hall and see that all of the aldermen, all of their assistants have elaborate computers on their desks. I just wonder why we're leaving ourselves behind in this particular field that is so vital in this day and age.

THE CHAIRMAN: Once again, one of the -- "difficulty" is not the word I want to use. We're going to come up with some other budgets before too long where all you're going to see is one line. We now spend as much time as you're going to spend in the Department of Health looking at a \$6 million budget. Before too long we're going to look at some multimillion dollar budgets with one line. I can't answer your question because you guys in your caucus could determine your own expenditures the way you want to. You've got a million-plus dollars. You want to buy computers? Everybody can have four computers, but it's all a matter of how you -- that's how this committee has arrived at that major decision in addition to the guidelines that we've had.

MR. WICKMAN: But, Mr. Chairman, those computers that are provided to the various caucuses are not part of the basic caucus budget. It's over and above. I'm saying that maybe that formula should be revisited at a future meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: There again I've already said what I wanted to say.

MRS. SLOAN: Just one point. Back to Mr. Herard's comments. Perhaps in considering a policy with respect to the purchase of used

equipment by members, there is some precedent where that has been denied. It might be useful for the chairman to consider that as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: I will. I've said that I would look at that.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to I guess reinforce what Percy just said with respect to access of members of the Legislature to computers. Having spent 28 years at a university, 20 of those 28 years I had a computer on my desk and did a fair bit of work through it. I find I feel quite handicapped, given our small caucus and small budget, now that I don't have access to that facility.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Additional comments in this area?

Okay. Thank you, Bill.

Louise Kamuchik on legislative committees. Louise, not to preempt what you're going to say, but basically in this area we've taken the submissions from the various committees and put them in here. Right?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: That's right. The budget estimates are prepared by the administrative assistants to committees after consultation with the chairmen, based on the projected activities of the various committees. These are the standing committees. When the budget estimates were prepared for the current year, it was in the fall of '97. We did not anticipate nor could we anticipate the establishment of two select special committees, namely the Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee and the FOIP committee. Neither will we know even now what may be established in the following current year's budget estimates.

Again, the estimates are prepared by the administrative assistants based on full attendance at committee meetings, based on maximum claimable expenses by the members. If a member or two cannot be there, of course they won't be claiming for their committee activity. We've also noticed that in past years the members did not always claim for their full travel expenditures. Now there seems to be an increase in members claiming the travel expenditures they're entitled to.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, if you look on page 1 of 3, right after the committees branch, you'll see two items in there. When we did the budget last spring, there were two items in there, of course, that were not budgeted for but came during the session. The first one was the Select Special Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Review Committee, which is forecast to expend \$58,000. We had no budgeting for that, so we had to go and strike a deal with the minister of a certain department, and I hope that before March 31 of this year we're going to have a cheque from that department of the government for \$41,478 to pay for those expenses. If not, then they're going to have to be found elsewhere in the budget that's currently being managed.

The other one was the Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee, and you can see the numbers in there. A similar kind of story. I guess my only plea here is -- there are two House leaders here in the room right now. If another such special committee is being calculated or formulated and it comes in after this committee has approved the budget, would you kindly also go beyond the writing of the phraseology of the reason for the committee and also find where the dollars are going to be allocated so we don't have to go and subject ourselves to this mental turmoil to try and find the dollars. The other alternative, I guess, was to advise the government that they needed a special warrant to pay for this, but that didn't seem to be the appropriate way.

These are simply submissions brought to us by the various committees. I've been advised by the chairman of the Leg. Offices Committee that tomorrow evening the Leg. Offices Committee will

start their review of the budgets of the four components associated with the Legislative Assembly Office; that is, the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, and the Ethics Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner. They're going to start looking at their budgets tomorrow, so we don't know what those dollars will be. Of course, they become part of the overall Legislative Assembly estimate in the end.

Mr. Coutts.

2:00

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking on that same page that you were just making some reference to, and I look at Public Accounts coming in with a budget. I was wondering if somebody can help me recollect: when did we start coming in with a budget here? It seems to me that in previous years we have had no budget for Public Accounts. When did that all start?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Actually, Mr. Chairman, the Public Accounts Committee had a small budget in the past to pay for the chairman's salary. For a number of years the previous chairman of the Public Accounts Committee did not travel to the national CCPAC conference, the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees. Therefore there were no travel expenses, so they always had a very small budget. Now the number of members who have been asked to travel to the public accounts annual conference -- this time it's in Quebec City. They're asking for an increase from three members to five, so that's why the increase in the estimates as well.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: And there was some travel this year as well. I believe several members went to Yellowknife; was it?

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Yellowknife. That's right. That's where the annual meeting was. Now it's in Quebec City, and of course it's a little more expensive to travel to Quebec City.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Additional questions with respect to these committees?

We have had no notification whatsoever -- that is, in the LAO -- about any additional committees. Of course, I'm sure the government would be making those arrangements in negotiations between the various House leaders. In the Speech from the Throne we would be advised later if there are additional ones, but at the moment we have no notice.

MRS. KAMUCHIK: Once the committee is established by the Assembly, that's when the budget is developed, based on their mandate.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

The next item has to do with MLA administration. Now, Jacqueline Breault, would you please join us again.

This is the MLA administration budget. This is the significant one, I guess, in terms of everything, but I want to make it very clear again that the only thing that's been put in here are the human resources allocations we've already talked about and then the adjustments that were made by this committee in the fall of 1998. This shows an adjustment overall going from \$13,140,242 to \$14,855,452 in terms of the estimates and includes by way of human resources expenses essentially those pertaining to the hon. members.

Jacqueline, do you have something further you want to add to this?

MS BREAUT: No, that is basically it. Any small adjustments to any of the operational expenses were either based on actuals or to ensure that all members could take advantage of a particular allowance if they so chose.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just before Mr. Wickman, on page 1 of 1, which is the last sheet in that section, we see the breakdown in terms of it all, and we can perhaps even forestall some of these questions. In the transition allowance that the Members' Services Committee agreed to, we put in an estimate over the next two fiscal years, setting aside dollars so that it doesn't all come out in one year, just setting it aside in anticipation that it could be based on up to 30 members -- that's just a guess from the experience of the past -- for what it would take to basically cover those transition allowances if they were to kick in at the fiscal year 2001.

Now, in addition to that, you could say: well, if everybody would go to a maximum of \$125,000 times 30, it would take \$3 million and something. Well, the fact of the matter is that we don't have 30 members in this Assembly who have 12 years of experience by the time 2001 kicks in. So it doesn't have to go to the maximum amount, and that's been allocated into that figure.

In the second one, the pay to Members of the Legislative Assembly, you can see those numbers. The third one is the operational expenses again. Then the members' services allowances, the constituency allowances. We basically have the increases to the members' services allowance dealt with. The communication allowance is based on a second formula and the promotional allowance based on another kind of formula as well, and the three of them are all put together. Those are essentially the things.

No staff-years. This is all administered under Jacquie. I mean, this is part of what she does. Under the first one we saw administration within the terms of manpower. Staff allocated specifically comes under her first budget.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my questions and a comment. Dealing with the members' services allowances as they apply to the constituency offices, we made adjustments, of course, to accommodate the reinstatement of an earlier reduction in the salary component for constituency staff and caucus staff and such. Also, there was an adjustment made, if I recall correctly, based on the latest population figures. That, from what I gather, represents the increase here of \$1,064 that's referred to. Now, when you look ahead to this fiscal period -- the administration, of course, have really no choice but to do what they've done here because we are masters of our own house -- there is no additional allowance, however, built in here for expected salary increases based on similar increases we would see as a result of settlements to union staff, if I'm correct.

MS BREAUT: The \$1,064 is our anticipated adjustment. The members' services allowances were adjusted by, I believe, \$530 at the October meeting. This \$1,064 is above that amount.

MR. WICKMAN: Above that. So this is an amount over and above the current?

MS BREAUT: Right.

MR. WICKMAN: And this amount is basically to reflect the anticipated increase in salaries for constituency staff?

MS BREAUT: Yes, based on the same rationale that was used at the October meeting.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you. That answered my question.

MR. DOERKSEN: I just want to talk a little bit about or discuss further the accounting for the transition allowance, because the transition allowance has been with us for some time, actually, and has never been accounted for in advance before. If you use the income tax rules, if I were to die before my term is expired, there's no liability. So how can you accrue for a liability that isn't due and payable until the time that it's due and payable?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, okay. It's a valid question. It has everything to do with how you want to be perceived.

We've always carried a small amount, anticipating that perhaps on an annual basis three members may no longer be with us. It doesn't mean they have to pass away. In fact, the way the transition allowances work is that if an hon. member died in office, they would not be eligible for the transition allowance, needless to say, but if an hon. member resigned, they would be eligible for the transition allowance. We can only guess as to how many members on an annual basis might resign, and you've got to carry some dollars in there. So this is very, very subjective.

I'm making this proposal to Members' Services for the members themselves. Do they want to arrive at the year 2000 and all of a sudden see the MLA administration portion go up an additional \$3 million in that one year? That would give you a 20, 25 percent increase, and then everybody out there would say that you got a 25 percent raise. Or do you want to put some in now and start accruing a fund and having it so that in fact you don't have that 25 percent increase coming forward? From a management point of view all we need to carry in here I think should be enough for three in anticipation. We're suggesting to you that we carry this in here on the basis that if there's more, those dollars are there to deal with the situation. If they're not, this goes right back -- right back -- to the Treasurer at the end of the year. These are going to be unexpended dollars at the end of the year, but this is just future planning and management so it doesn't become such a shocking thing in one year, basically. Did I answer the question?

2:10

MR. DOERKSEN: Well, yeah. But if you don't expend it, it disappears, and then you haven't really done anything.

THE CHAIRMAN: But we can also set it aside with a special arrangement with Alberta Treasury, who basically agree that this is a good concept.

MR. DOERKSEN: So you'd stick it in an investment account and collect interest on it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, under the rules that we have. David, you've been dealing with them.

DR. McNEIL: As every day or month goes by, there's a liability that's being accrued under this transition allowance. The proposal that was presented at the October meeting was to recognize this accrued liability in the budget on an annual basis so that the funds are accrued from year to year so that when it has to be paid out at an election for the majority -- but, you know, there could be one or two people a year who leave the Assembly for whatever reason -- those funds are available and that we actually reflect the accrual that's taking place. So that's what the proposal is. Unless at some point in time somebody wipes that Members' Services order off the map, that liability is accruing. I'm not an accountant, but that's, I think, good accounting practice to recognize those liabilities as they accrue.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is being totally transparent. The other option would be to have an unfunded liability in there.

Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thanks very much. I don't disagree that from a strict accounting point of view it would make sense to start to establish this accrual of expenses, but we don't and we never have -- at least I've never seen a balance sheet. As the chairman pointed out, historically any funds that were unexpended in this budget at the end of the year were lapsed and simply went back to Treasury. The only way you can make this proposal work is to establish a balance sheet, because these funds have to carry from one year to the next.

My concern is that it's all well and good to set up the fund -- and it's very true; I understand the logic saying that there might be 30 members that would be eligible -- but there's no way to crystal ball gaze and determine how many of those members might seek re-election and how many of them would be re-elected. So at best it's a wild guess.

We could set it up for this time and have this \$3 million pool there and find that we don't need to use any of it. Then for the next few years we're contributing nothing, and that's probably as much misinformation or misleading information than not creating it now.

We don't set up an accrual for what we know will be election costs in an election year, so I think to be consistent, what we should be doing is setting up a budget in the year that we anticipate it may be used. As in the past you may want to put a relatively modest figure in each year's budget to reflect those that may be used in the current year, but I would suggest that it would make more sense to have the actual budget in the year you anticipate that it'll be used. Just as we now put a budget in place, we anticipate that one or two members may resign, but by putting a budget in place for a million dollars, we don't anticipate that 20 or 30 members are going to resign. It's a matter of determining one way or the other, but from a purely logical point of view and a consistent point of view I would suggest it would make more sense to deal with these the same way we deal with election expenses.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, speaking logically, what the government members are advocating is that we accrue a deficit from now until 2000 and whenever the next election is. I can't speak for others, but I've certainly heard this government speak in terms of strong opposition to deficit budgeting and advocate as early as this morning yet again three-year business plans.

What is the premise of three-year business plans? The premise is to establish, predict, and prevent any unseen expenditures from creating a deficit. Maybe 30 is not a viable figure, but I think to sit here and say that we should not be making an allocation to cover the transitional allowance, for the government members it's a direct contradiction and hypocritical to the pillars of the whole platform that you've tried to incorporate in this province. In essence, completely out of our control when the next election happens, that transitional allowance may be used by choice by members resigning or by the virtue of the outcome of the election. Certainly that's how I read it. If it's not viewed as being something that can be incorporated, then this government is going directly back on its eliminating and not approving deficit budgeting. That is in fact exactly what you would be doing.

On another point. As one of the members who will have to incorporate a change of stationery and business cards this year because of the change in the telephone area code, I'm wondering, Jacqueline, whether or not any adjustment or additional allowance is being incorporated for those MLAs who will be impacted by that change.

MS BREault: Because part of the change could potentially be

taking place this year, there is a transition period for the 780 area code to take place; 403 I guess is available until at least May. We felt that the office supplies area as well as, I believe, the other labour and services, which is the part of the overprinting of specific information onto our standard letterhead stock or business card stock, was going to be able to take care of that. We have members all the time looking to restock their letterhead and business cards. They may move or have other reasons to change the information on their cards throughout the years. Now, it is true that this is one that's perhaps a bit more focused because of the area code change, but we think we'll be able to handle that within the current allocation because that is handled by the MLA administration budget versus the member's constituency office budget.

MRS. SLOAN: So do I interpret what you've said that basically our allowance won't be adjusted? If we have to change our stationery or our business cards, which those of us north of the 780 parallel will have to do, we will just have to incorporate it out of the allowance we're given. Is that the correct interpretation?

MS BREault: Members are entitled to take advantage of the MLA administration budget covering costs for letterhead and business cards for themselves. Now, if they had business cards for staff, that is something that is covered by the members' services allowance and is at the discretion of each member, but relative to each member my administrative officer and administrative assistant can make arrangements to have standard MLA letterhead -- which has the coat of arms of Alberta and any information relative to your name, your constituency office, your Legislature office -- processed. That is not charged against your members' services allowance. The MLA administration budget aside from that takes care of those sorts of expenses, and we feel that the amount budgeted should be able to take care of those types of expenses without problems. I don't know if I've answered your question enough.

2:20

MRS. SLOAN: Basically my point was: will I see my stationery budget reduced by reordering stationery? Not because I needed anything changed, except the area code had to be changed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if it's any convenience to anybody, what I intend on doing in the office of the Speaker is just simply taking 403 and writing over it 780, not ordering new letterhead till I use everything.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, my question relates to the postage allowance of \$750, even though the question I ask doesn't apply to me so much as the rural members, that have different needs than I do. Is it a problem for any of the members, the fact that they have to post those letters from this particular building instead of out of their constituency offices? The rural members, for example, would have to haul their mail from their constituency office to this main building to mail them to have it fall under that \$750 category. I'm wondering if maybe it's time we revisited that and made it a bit more loose so that those mailings would be allowed from the constituency office and not just from the Leg. Building. But if the rural members are content with the existing, I guess it's not going to bother me too much.

MR. COUTTS: Mr. Chairman, from my standpoint on that issue I haven't had any problem staying well within the budgets, and I send out a fair amount of mail. On the issue of taking things back and forth, you know, the courier service and all of that type of thing works very, very well, plus I travel back and forth once a week, so it's really not a problem. From my standpoint I don't see any need

to revisit that issue. It seems to be working well at this point in time.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you.

MS BREault: Just in addition. For the mailings that any members do make out of their constituency offices and which are covered under the members' services allowance, we propose a 2-cent increase to the base. It was originally 92 cents times the number of electors divided by 1.5. We're suggesting it be increased to .94 to make an adjustment for the 1 cent per letter adjustment that took place through Canada Post on January 1.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's always been our policy that we would modify this when those postal increases occurred, and that's what's built into this.

MS BREault: Yes. This is built in, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Additional questions in this area?

Hon. members, I want to get back to the transition allowance budgeting just to provide you with this background. When we had this matter dealt with last fall, under the transition allowance there was also a briefing note, an information item, that was attached to everybody's documentation. There was this following statement:

A more realistic way of budgeting for this expenditure would be to spread it out evenly over the years between elections. This is possible using accrual-based accounting. To make use of this the Legislative Assembly will budget \$1,150,000 [for two budget years]. In each year the budgeted amount will be expensed to an accrual account and in the election year, when the funds are required, the transition allowances will be paid from the accrued liability account.

Now, it's also true that this did not come to a vote. It was part of the background, so all I have had put into this budget here today for your consideration is in essence where we were at that time. It's clearly within the mandate of the committee to basically either follow that advice or guidance from the Speaker. I put it in at that time as a result of eight years' experience on Treasury Board. I've seen this happen time and time and time again, but if you don't want to do it, that's okay with me. I don't have a problem with it.

If we don't want to have a transition allowance for the item suggested in here, I would strongly recommend that we have at least \$375,000 carried on an annual basis in the event that three members, at the maximum, would leave us. You've still got to have the contingency for that to actually happen, and I'm just guessing three, because who knows what will happen? We've been very fortunate in the sense that people have not, but who knows what will happen in the future? But that's entirely a subjective thing. I strongly recommend the recommendation that I do have in the budget. It's there. I made it before, but that's entirely a member's decision as to what you want to do with it.

Additional questions on MLA administration? Gee, that was less time than it took to look at the Speaker's office.

MR. RENNER: I have one more. Just more clarification. I don't disagree with the concept of having the annual increment. What I don't see here and what I need to have some idea of is where these numbers are going to be recorded. We have historically never had a balance sheet. Are we now going to create a balance sheet? How will these numbers be dealt with? I didn't get an answer to my other question. What happens if we have the maximum accrued and no one changes? It's unlikely, but then do we not contribute? Once we have reached that maximum, are there no further contributions in subsequent years until it comes down? I just don't understand the mechanics of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Bill, on the balance sheet.

MR. GANO: We are currently in the process of creating a full set of financial statements, which will include a balance sheet. This is a recommendation from the Auditor General's office, and we are following that recommendation.

MR. RENNER: That will be in next year's . . .

MR. GANO: That will be in the annual report.

THE CHAIRMAN: Which will be tabled in the spring session.

MR. GANO: Part and parcel of the annual report.

THE CHAIRMAN: We've carried figures like that in previous annual reports. They are there. They come under the annual report of the Legislative Assembly Office.

MR. RENNER: But they're lapsed every year. We've never carried them from one year to the next. This is a substantial change.

THE CHAIRMAN: You mean carried an amount in a particular liability or contingency fund? No. This is true. This is true. With the spin-off accounting system that we've agreed to have with Alberta Treasury, this is simply one additional thing that is now possible to do. Again, I'm not uptight about it.

MR. RENNER: The government has, since I've been here, historically been on a cash basis, so this would be inconsistent with everything else that the government does. We got rid of all those revolving accounts, and this would be really reinstituting a revolving account.

MR. HERARD: No, it's not a revolving account.

MR. GANO: It's consistent with other recommendations from the Auditor General's office in terms of accrued liabilities for pensions and those types of things. This is being viewed as a similar type of situation, where we know we're going to have to pay this money out, as the Clerk indicated earlier. Week to week we are accruing that liability, and it's more consistent with accounting practices to have that liability reported and know that we are going to have to pay it out at some point.

MR. RENNER: I'm sure we'll have some further discussion. That eases me a little bit, to know that there is going to be this balance sheet, because without it we're accomplishing nothing. We would allow for it this year and allow for it next year, and then in the actual year we would have to pay it all out anyway.

THE CHAIRMAN: And if nobody left, there would be that balance in there. Yeah, absolutely correct. But it would be there instead of coming out.

MR. WICKMAN: We could always lose 30 Tories in frustration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's move on. Oh yeah, government members' services. Okay. Can I ask all the same questions that have been asked for the last four hours?

Okay. This is very simple. Again, the formula that we've used is the formula that's consistent with the next three budgets in terms of the basic thing, private members' allowance. The adjustments that we talked about earlier: \$45,175. Okay. The government has 44 members. So that's your figure. The forecast is there, forecast

because we have no way of knowing where the government caucus is at this point in time, because the tradition is that we would never ask the question. That forecast might be \$500,000 less than it actually is, but I don't know that. Anyway, the estimate is based on the future one.

The Official Opposition members' allowance is based on three components. Again, \$45,175 is the base. Included in the count of the 17 is the Leader of the Official Opposition. In the case of the government, only the government private members. In the case of the Official Opposition, it includes the Leader of the Official Opposition. Then there's an allowance in there under the leader's office allowance.

I've received no notification from anyone in the Official Opposition caucus about a request to have this thing looked at, changed, modified, or anything else, so I've gone with exactly the same number as the same thing for the Calgary caucus office. Again, to this point in time I've received no notification from the third party in the Assembly. So they get two times \$45,175 and then the leader's office allowance. No indication. Again, those numbers are exactly the same way forward. Members have all known for the last several months, in anticipation of this meeting, that they could make any submission that they wanted. I've received none in this regard, so we've built simply on the same formulas that we agreed to last fall.

That's what we have for those three budgets, and all in total that's where we're at. Do you want to just have a discussion on all three at the same time or just take them one at a time?

AN HON. MEMBER: All three.

THE CHAIRMAN: All three at the same time.

2:30

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, again our comment that we're masters of our own house, and any decision that has to be made in terms of the budget estimates for the three caucuses along with the constituency budgets of course has to be done by this committee. Staff can make recommendations, but they can't pass them. I look at these particular budgets, and I'm not quite sure what's happening in other components of legislative services. I see union contracts signed that allow for market increases. I see merit increases and such.

Our caucus staff -- and I'm sure the same is true of the government caucus staff and the New Democrat caucus staff -- are hardworking people. This is our opportunity to recognize that. We have gone through a number of very difficult years where we've asked them as staff people to hold the line. This follows up on Raj's point, that it is now appropriate to visit that aspect of it, as the other components have been visited by union agreements. We've got to make an adjustment in these caucuses to reflect some requirement to recognize our staff and to recognize that they're faced with increased costs.

So I would propose that it would be acceptable for the three caucuses to see an increase across the board of 3 percent. In my opinion that's reasonable. Then the caucus chief of staff could make a determination as to exactly how those dollars are spent, but the emphasis, in my point of view, would be to treat our staff fairly and reward them in accordance for the efforts they put out.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I guess this is an opportunity for me to make the point I made before but also add to what Percy has just said. In order to accomplish the quite laudable goal, the position that Percy put before us, we'll have to change the manner in which we determine these total amounts in the budgets they drew attention to earlier. If we simply continue to increase one portion of the overall

budget by whatever percentage we do, the consequences of that will be quite uneven across the staff components of the three parties. So if we agree that the net increase for our staff, each staff, should be to the tune of 3 percent, then we have to devise ways in which we can achieve it. The present manner in which the budget is done won't achieve that for us.

MR. DOERKSEN: Just to respond to the first comment about the increase for that budget. If I look at my numbers, there is a 3 percent increase built into that budget.

MR. WICKMAN: That's because you got one of our members. That's why you show an increase.

MR. DOERKSEN: No. I'm looking at the total.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. Per capita member allocation has risen in here. That figure, \$45,175 -- Dr. McNeil, correct me if I'm wrong -- is an increase of \$1,555 per member. That's built into it now. It's an increase of \$1,555.

MR. DOERKSEN: That's only to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford's comments. I think the 3 percent is in there.

As far as the New Democrat position, I guess I would have to remind them that the allowance per member is the same for each of the three caucuses, and I think this committee was very generous when they allocated 50 percent of the Official Opposition leader's budget for the New Democrat budget, which is not something that's required under anything that I am aware of. So there is a bit of history here in terms of the allocation we did make to your particular caucus.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I guess it is a point on which we as a committee do need to develop some consensus, and there's some clarification needed in light of the comments just made. It is true that since we've been recognized as the third party, the committee decided to give the leader of the third party an allowance which is half, I guess, of that of the Official Opposition party. That's precisely the problem. That, in a sense, creates a problem in terms of what we are able to pay to our staff. I'm not asking that somehow we should be given more as a third party just because we're a third party. But we employ people. These are Albertans. These are people who work as hard as your staff works, and they therefore deserve, in terms of remuneration, adjustments that are similar to those that your staff gets. That's the task before the committee: how do we accomplish this?

I'm sure you'll agree with me that people who work for the New Democrats deserve to be recognized in the same way as employees of a common enterprise, in the same way that their counterparts in the Conservative offices and in the Liberal offices are. That's my plea to you. We can play these games, if you like, in terms of saying: you guys got, you know, 50 percent of this and that. I'm saying: let's translate it into people who have children to feed, who have rents to pay. They're working for us full-time, and they're working very hard. So how do we compensate them? It's a question of fairness, a question of equity at the level of paying these people, while I recognize your generosity on this point.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just want a very factual point of view. I'm not going to get involved in this debate. Take a look at those three sheets where it said "private members allowance." This budget is based on \$45,175 per member as of April 1, 1999. In the current fiscal year we currently have \$43,620 per member, so this is being increased by \$1,555. If you take \$1,555 as a percentage of \$43,620, that should equate to 3.6 percent. That's just factual information.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, that addresses partially what I was saying, but I talked in terms of 3 percent across the board. You're talking in terms of an increase based on the members' allowance, but that same increase doesn't apply to the leaders' allowance in the two respective caucuses, which of course reflects salary components as well. Under the leaders' allowance some of that is paid out as salary. So what I was proposing was not just 3 percent in the members' allowance but 3 percent across the board in the caucus budgets and the same for the constituency offices.

Again, it only addresses the question of a salary increase for the staff and a postage increase. It doesn't reflect the fact that rents have gone up, that utilities have gone up, and that everything else has gone up. We've been on a freeze for four or five years, and it's time for a slight adjustment.

So my proposal is 3 percent across the board for each of the caucus budgets and also for each of the constituency budgets, which, I would venture to say, will be well below the average increase we see for the other components of the legislative services.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you putting that in the form of a motion?

MR. WICKMAN: Well, we'll deal with the caucus budgets at this time, and I'll make the motion that
caucus budgets increase by 3 percent across the board.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll invite hon. members to deal with this motion.

Mr. Wickman, I'd just use the example of the government members' one in here. Are you saying 3 percent over and above what is identified there?

MR. WICKMAN: No, no. Three percent over and above what last year's budget was, taking into consideration, mind you, factoring in that one of our members went over to the government side, which is going to have a reflection on that budget. Forgetting that, though, just increase it by the 3 percent. Of course, the government budget, as Raj has pointed out, is all private members' allowances, so they're not in that same kettle of fish that we are, where portions of the other two caucus budgets are related to aspects other than the members' allowance.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thank you. So we're still in discussion.

THE CHAIRMAN: There's a motion to move the caucus budgets 3 percent.

MR. RENNER: Well, obviously we're not going to support that, because as we just pointed out, we've already got 3.6. So why would we reduce it to 3? If you want to deal with the leaders' allowance, we need to deal with that as a separate item. The government members are not going to support taking what we have here as 3.6 and agree to making it 3. [interjection]

2:40

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, just a second. We have Mr. Renner. He still has the floor.

MR. RENNER: I'm just saying that I can't support that motion. But I am suggesting to Mr. Wickman that if he wants to deal with the leaders' allowance portion of his budget, he should address that separately.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, if you'll allow me, then, to

change my motion, I'll change my motion to an amendment in this budget to reflect the 3.6 across the board.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's already there.

MR. WICKMAN: No. It's only 3.6 for the member allowances. I think members are missing out on the point Raj has made. As long as you continue to go on the basis of only increasing the members' allowance and not the leaders' allowance, this disparity between the three caucuses is going to continue to increase.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wickman, I think everybody understands that. The difficulty here is you have a motion that just had to do with the caucus one, and I think you heard Mr. Renner say that if you wanted to deal with the other ones, we'll come back to that.

First of all, I want to make sure there's absolute clarification. The principle established by this committee has provided for the following allocations to each of the caucuses. The principle is that for the government caucus they would only count up the private members in the government caucus. In the Official Opposition caucus the count would include all of the members in the Official Opposition caucus, including the Leader of the Official Opposition, even though the Leader of the Official Opposition has a special office allocation, and in the case of the third party all of the members in the third party plus an allocation for the leader of the third party equal to 50 percent of the allocation offered to the Leader of the Opposition.

So just following through all of the decisions that we've made earlier, what you've got here is that we arrived at that figure for the allocation for the caucus as a whole. It happens that in the government caucus there are 44, and in the Official Opposition there are 17, counting the leader as well. It's the same allocation. Then the third one for the NDs. There are two members, so it's two times that.

Midway last year, when one member left one caucus and went to another caucus, there was an adjustment made. One caucus saw a reduction; the other caucus saw an increase. So that's how we arrived at that figure. There are no additional allocations made here for the government caucus or anybody in Executive Council or anyone else. That's their caucus budget separate. So there are three figures associated with the Official Opposition, and there are two figures associated with the NDP opposition, but the first figure in all three of them has to do with the members' allocation, which is the biggest allocation in terms of the caucus.

The tradition has always been the following as well. The caucus will determine how to expend those dollars. The Speaker has no knowledge of how those dollars are spent, nor does anyone else associated with the Legislative Assembly Office. Of all the money in the government caucus, in this current fiscal year \$1,876,000, if the government caucus pays one of the researchers 1 and a half million dollars, it is within their right to do it.

There's no salary range for any of these three caucuses. Whatever policy they make within the caucus, they can make. If in the NDP caucus they choose to spend all the money that the leader's office gets -- that doesn't include the leader's salary; that's not included in there. If they want to pay one person in the NDP office \$148,343, that's their right. It's not judged, not questioned. I can't compare it and never have compared it with the Legislative Assembly one, which we've discussed before. So I don't know what the mix is. I don't know what the allocation is, but it's always been your right to do it.

One other thing. I just want to make sure that everybody's got this on the table. Some caucuses in the past took a 5 percent reduction for their staff; some did not.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, just so we can conclude this matter. We don't need that particular first motion being built in there with the 3.6, so I'll withdraw that. But I'll make a subsequent motion that

the 3.6 percent increase also apply to the leader's allowance in the Official Opposition caucus budget and the third-party caucus budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So we've withdrawn the motion on the 3 percent on the caucus one, and the only motion on the table now is that

the Leader of the Opposition's office allowance and the leader of the third party's office allowance be increased by 3.6 percent.

That's the motion; right?

MR. WICKMAN: This will be an amendment to the documentation we have in front of us which already builds in the 3.6 percent for the private members' allowance. So if this amendment is passed, with the exception of the additional dollars for the Official Opposition Calgary office, the other two components would increase by the 3.6 percent.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. Renner's point was well taken, because the budgets are determined differently for the three caucuses, for the government caucus as distinct from the other two. So this new motion I think meets the legitimate concern or the observation that Mr. Renner made. The reason that there is no need for the government caucus to have a leader's office allowance is because the Executive Council budget covers those expenditures. That's the reason for it. I guess that's the rationale behind this.

Mr. Chairman, as you made the point, I guess you perhaps wanted to exaggerate the situation a bit to draw attention to the fact that we could pay perhaps \$148,000 to one member. I guess the point that you're trying to make is that it is within our own power as a caucus to pay nothing or very little to each of our staff members, but that clearly is an unrealistic situation. We've got to treat them as valued members of our team, just as their counterparts are dealt with by other caucuses.

So this 3.6 percent increase for the leader's portion of the budget, as proposed in this motion by Mr. Wickman, is an appropriate way of dealing with the problem. If we don't deal with it, it will certainly put us in an extremely difficult situation vis-à-vis our staff. How do you maintain morale? How do you attract anyone to come on staff? It's a bad precedent to set for people who work, for the work that we all do on behalf of the people of Alberta in this Assembly and in the LAO.

I appeal to you: please recognize this inequity, which was the result of I guess the way we built the budget, and deal with it. The best way to deal with it is, I suppose, by passing the motion, modified, that Mr. Wickman has proposed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jacques.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you. I've listened to the debate, and it's an interesting one because it gets into the whole area of individual caucus spending. My understanding is that caucus spending is caucus spending, that there is no accountability with regard to reporting that, from the number of people you employ to how much you pay them.

My understanding with regard to the government members private members' allowance is that, for example, Mr. Doerksen's legislative assistant is paid out of the caucus funds. I assume that the members of the opposition pay their members out of that. I understand our research staff is paid out of our caucus funds. So I'm having a really hard time distinguishing between what is the total accountability of a caucus allowance vis-à-vis the claim that the additional amounts

per leader's office allowance should then somehow be tied into the total dollars that are paid on a private members basis. If you get into that argument, then it gets into the whole kind of discussion on the basis of what caucus funds are used for and how they're used, because they're entirely and solely within the discretion of each caucus.

I'm very reluctant to start entering into justification on the basis of the number of individuals that a caucus employs and hence their average salaries or what that increase should be at any given time. So I would find it very difficult to support the motion, Mr. Chairman.

2:50

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence. The point that has just been made I think needs a bit of a comment. Nearly two years ago, under two years ago, when this committee made the decision to allocate the funds to the committee, we started from scratch. We all hired our people on the basis of what that money was because we -- the government caucus, the Liberal caucus, and the ND caucus -- all knew at that time the amount that we got in the first instance, two years ago. So we did make serious, careful decisions with respect to how many people we could afford to hire. We have not since increased their numbers. In fact if anything, we have had to cut back.

However, in the manner in which the budget gets increased every year, a 3.6 percent increase means that the total dollars that the government caucus received two years ago would increase by 3.6 percent. In the case of the New Democrat caucus, that 3.6 percent increase would apply only to one-third of the amount that it started out with. So progressively, as we move from the first year to the fourth year, assuming that this current Assembly stays in place for four years, we will have fallen behind, with respect to my budget, by at least 10 percent if not more.

So while we have the same staff that we had then and we're paying them no more than we paid them then, our budget isn't there to maintain it, so we'll have to cut back. Our effectiveness therefore as the third party, which in your wisdom you recognized as a third party, our ability to function as a third party, as a third voice for the people of Alberta in this Assembly, will be seriously constrained because the manner in which you increase the budgets means a reduction in our budget from year one to year four. So we are not being paid more than we did in the first year. It's just that the money that we see is quite substantially lower with every passing year if you maintain this present format. I request, therefore, that this motion, if passed, will help us correct that oversight. That's all I'm saying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Renner.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was my intention, once we had completed the analysis or the explanation of the budget, to request a recess so that I'd have a chance to discuss it with my colleagues at the table. I would suggest that perhaps we should discuss this motion as well. So could I request that the committee recess now until 3:30?

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. The intent would be that we would be rising at 4 o'clock.

MR. RENNER: Are we committed to rise at 4 o'clock?

THE CHAIRMAN: That was the time that was notified to all members, so I have no idea what everybody's schedule is.

MR. RENNER: Then I might suggest that we maybe recess until 9

o'clock tomorrow morning, because I don't think we're going to get much done in half an hour, either now or after we get back.

THE CHAIRMAN: The designated time was 9:30 tomorrow morning. Does that make a problem?

MR. RENNER: Yeah, 9:30.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, before the tabling motion is accepted then, Mr. Chairman, the other option we have, because we were scheduled to be here until 4 o'clock, is to simply table these components of the budgets and go back to some of the other components that we can deal with without that discussion you're referring to, Rob.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Chairman, we do need to consult -- I guess that's the point that Mr. Renner made -- with each other, and you need to consult with your members too.

MR. RENNER: Well, I'm not so much concerned about consulting with each other, but I certainly want to have a discussion with government colleagues.

MR. WICKMAN: But only on this portion of the budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, sorry. If we take a recess, anybody can talk to anybody about anything. I mean, you can't prohibit whom you're going to talk to.

Anyway, we've got a motion before us, a request made by Mr. Wickman for a 3.6 percent increase to the leader's office allowance for both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party. Under that motion 3.6 percent -- we've calculated that figure -- would move the leader's office allowance for the Official Opposition from \$296,685 to \$307,366, if our calculations are correct. In the case of the ND leader's office allowance, that would move it from \$148,343 to \$153,683, if my calculations are correct. That is what 3.6 percent would mean.

Now we have a suggestion that we adjourn, and if it's appropriate, then, for all members, we would reconvene tomorrow morning at 9:30. We basically had the overview, and the intent would be that perhaps for the first half hour we would just deal with questions and answers on this proposal, and then we would go through the methodical way of dealing with it. Would that be appropriate?

MR. RENNER: Well, members have had the opportunity for questions and answers, so I think it's time to make some decisions and make some recommendations to either accept or amend or reject.

MR. WICKMAN: I would like the opportunity to close debate when we resume discussion on this matter, however.

MR. RENNER: We're not tabling the motion. The committee is just rising. So when we resume, this motion is still on the table.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is still there; yeah.

Is that appropriate to everybody, that we rise now and then reconvene tomorrow morning at 9:30?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:56 p.m.]