

[Chairman: Mr. Stiles]

[8:30 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll call the committee to order, please.

The first matter to be dealt with this morning is Bill Pr. 9, which is the Jewish Community Centre. I believe the representatives for each of the interested parties are here. I believe everyone who is here today was here previously. Mr. Frost, you were not here previously.

MR. FROST: That's correct. Also, Alderman Percy Wickman has yet to appear. We're expecting him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is he going to be here?

MR. FROST: We hope so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want us to wait for him for a few moments?

MR. FROST: We'd appreciate that, if possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very well.

If those of you who were here previously would kindly consider yourselves still under oath from your previous appearance, I'll ask Mr. Clegg to swear the — Mr. Frost, if you're going to give anything in the nature of evidence . . . You don't believe you will? Very well. Mr. Clegg, would you swear Mr. Wickman, please?

[Mr. Wickman was sworn in]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The purpose in having you here again is that no conclusion was arrived at because the city of Edmonton had requested we not deal with this particular Bill until the city's ad hoc committee on culture had had an opportunity to make its recommendations to the city. Accordingly, we left the Bill on the Order Paper over the summer, and we now have it before us so members of our committee can determine what in fact has happened in the intervening period. So the meeting is open for members of the committee to ask questions of the representatives of either the Jewish Centre or the city of Edmonton.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to have the city explain what progress they've made in this matter since last spring. I think it would be better to do that and ask questions for clarification later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Frost, perhaps you would like to. It's not necessary to stand; if you're more comfortable sitting, that's fine.

MR. FROST: Mr. Chairman, I believe you have received the letter from the mayor in which it was explained that the citizen ad hoc committee on culture, which was considering the tax exemption request of the Jewish Community Centre, has yet to come forth to city council with its report. With me today is Alderman Percy Wickman, who is the head of this committee, as well as Mr. Alex Szczechina, who is the city's grants co-ordinator. The request of the city today, as set forth in Mayor Decore's letter, is that this matter again be put over until the ad hoc

committee on culture can make its report. Either Mr. Wickman or Mr. Szczechina is here to elaborate on that, but that is the request of the city today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Frost.

MR. THOMPSON: I'd like the elaboration, Mr. Chairman.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, the task force has been under way for a number of months now. Draft policy statements, that have not been made public at this time, have been prepared for both the arts and multicultural components. In due course this policy matter of subsidy levels and such to various cultural community centres will be addressed. I can't be specific as to what that particular date may be. In the interim, about six or eight months ago the executive committee of Edmonton city council passed a resolution that exempted or waived any penalties that had occurred as a result of back taxes, not only for the Jewish Community Centre but four other cultural centres, and at the same time passed a resolution that no more penalties would occur until this matter is resolved. So those five ethnic centres I referred to can obtain interest from any surplus funds they have and at the same time not pay their property taxes or leasing arrangements. So they are not under any undue financial hardship at this time.

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, last spring when we dealt with this matter on May 2, I understood that the city said: we really don't understand where we're at here; will you give us some extra time to make some suggestions, bring forth some proposals. In a couple of days that will be six months ago, and we come back and hear the same story we heard before. Obviously we have to deal with this matter one way or the other, or it will die on the Order Paper. In fact I'm surprised to have the city come back at the present time and reiterate their stand of six months ago.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, to pick up from the Member for Cardston, it's been six months, and I'd like to address my question to Mr. Parker. I'd like to find out from you, sir, what kind of communication has occurred between the Jewish Community Centre and the city of Edmonton in an attempt to resolve this issue.

MR. PARKER: Perhaps Mr. Levine could best answer that, seeing as he's had most direct contact with the city from our side in the last half-year.

MR. LEVINE: Following our appearance before this body in the spring, at which the city indicated they were reviewing this as well as other matters, we made inquiries in early July to the executive assistant in the aldermanic offices to find out the terms of reference of the committee which Alderman Wickman chairs: whether its scope would in fact deal with this issue, when it was going to report, whether it was seeking input from bodies such as ourselves. We were informed that it would probably be a matter of months before it reported, and we were expecting to hear more formally via a report to council in

September or October that in fact they had concluded their recommendations. So our first initiative took place in the summer, wherein we found out what the committee was doing and whether or not they were going to deal with this matter.

Approximately a month ago, we made further contact with the mayor's office in an effort to put our position to him. We were informed that the mayor would prefer, as he wrote to this body, not to deal with this issue until this committee that Alderman Wickman referred to has moved its recommendations forward. As a consequence, we have made an effort to communicate with the city to deal with our particular case. We find ourselves included as part of the overall cultural and arts policy review the city is undertaking. Other than the mayor's letter, we have had no more news as to exactly when this committee is going to report and when its recommendations are going to be tabled to a body that will make them public.

MR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary, if I could, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask Mr. Levine to give us a quick past history. How long has it been since you had that initial communication with the city of Edmonton about this issue?

MR. LEVINE: As we indicated when we were before you previously, it was in the spring of 1983, it may have been May or June, that the Bill respecting the Calgary Jewish Community Centre — pardon me; I don't know the legal terminology — was approved or promulgated. Following immediately on the heels of that initiative, we contacted the city, spoke to various people over the summer, and in fact had our matter dealt with by the council that was in place during the month of September 1983. Here it is almost 15 months later, and we are still essentially tabled.

MR. PARKER: I might just add that Mr. Levine's comments apply only to the most recent chapter in our dealing with the city. My involvement goes back to an application for exemption that the Jewish Community Centre made to the Local Authorities Board under the Municipal Tax Exemption Act, which was vigorously opposed by the city of Edmonton in 1980. I've had ongoing contact with the city for over four years now, and I believe some of the directors of the centre had been discussing the matter with the city prior to my involvement. So the city has had this on its plate for a total of more than four years now.

MR. PAPROSKI: Just to summarize: to say the least, Mr. Chairman, I'm distressed by this inaction.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification in my own mind and for the record, I'd like to ask Alderman Wickman, who is the chairman of this committee: has this ad hoc committee met at all since May 2? If it hasn't met, when will it meet? If it meets, when will it have a final recommendation ready? When that final recommendation is ready, when will that recommendation be taken to either city council or executive council? When that report reaches executive council, city council, or whoever will make that decision, how binding will that report or recommendation be to that body? And finally,

when will that body — executive council or city council — make a decision so that we in this Assembly can take further action?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I must first of all point out that I take some exception to the comments that have been made. We're dealing with a volunteer body. We've gone during some summer months when activities do tend to slow down. We had a meeting as recently as two weeks ago and, as I said earlier, we have prepared a draft policy on that particular component of the cultural task force that has been prepared.

We're talking in terms of a major undertaking, a comprehensive blueprint for cultural activities within the city of Edmonton, and I'm not prepared to rush blindly into a comprehensive blueprint. Again, I have to say that I anticipate that we will not have that blueprint in place or adopted any earlier than early 1985. That's my best guess. If this Assembly feels it has to make a decision — and I can appreciate your position — I would say that that decision would be to reject the application. As far as I'm concerned, we're talking in terms of the right of a municipality to determine tax exemptions, loss of revenue. Mr. Chairman, we're talking in terms of dozens of similar situations that one may be faced with. I must remind the Assembly that the Edmonton city council, unlike Calgary, has not passed a resolution asking for this exemption within provincial legislation.

MR. PAPROSKI: Alderman Wickman, I'm sorry you take umbrage with our comments. I would like some further clarification on this volunteer body you're referring to. Could you tell us who will be making this decision and what this voluntary ad hoc citizens' group dealing with culture is? Is this all volunteers? Is it comprised of some aldermen as well? What is this committee?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, first of all, I apologize if you misunderstood that my comments referred to your comments. I was referring to the comments relating to the issue of time by the representatives of the Jewish Community Centre.

Your question as to the actual makeup of the task force — there are 10 members on the task force. Five members represent the arts component, various artistic activities within the city of Edmonton; the other five members represent various ethnic communities, the total ethnic community, within the city of Edmonton, along with me as chairman.

MR. PAPROSKI: Let me backtrack a minute, Mr. Chairman. The citizens of Alberta have the right to approach the Legislature of Alberta with respect to a private Bill. I believe this organization has been diligent in their endeavours to try to have some action by someone to alleviate a major concern. They approached this body, we discussed it, and we did everything in our power to try to assist the city in dealing with this over a five- or six-month period. Our concern, Alderman Wickman, is that perhaps this particular organization, which has taken the initiative to approach us this way, could have been dealt with in a little different manner. When you talk to me about the volunteer component of a committee like that, I understand but I wonder if there has been discussion in this committee about the Jewish Com-

munity Centre specifically?

MR. WICKMAN: Certainly there has, Mr. Paproski. I myself took two resolutions to the executive committee. I met with Mayor Decore prior to those two resolutions, asking for his support, and he gave me his support. Those are the resolutions I referred to earlier. The one resolution that I specifically requested was to amend our method of leasing arrangements with the cultural centres I referred to. My preference at that time was to reduce taxation levels to a residential rate, which would have reduced them to half. That portion was tabled within the executive committee until the overall cultural policy is dealt with. The second resolution, the waiving of penalties to the Jewish Community Centre to the tune of \$45,000, if I recall correctly, was approved by the executive committee — that is an immediate financial benefit — plus any other penalties until this matter is resolved, which will amount to thousands of dollars as well. I think that's an indication of good faith by the executive committee to try to resolve these difficulties, and recognition of the difficulties that many of the cultural centres within the city of Edmonton are facing.

MR. SZWENDER: I didn't have a chance to ask a supplementary on my previous question. Regarding the binding nature of the ad hoc committee's report, which will be presented to executive council when it is completed, could Alderman Wickman give us some indication of how binding that report will be on the executive council in making a final decision on whether they accept this blueprint, as you phrased it? Or will they reject it, and we'll still be in the same position we've been in for two years?

MR. WICKMAN: It is not binding on the executive committee or on city council. The blueprint will go to the executive committee, but from there it will go to council. I must say that we have a mayor in the city of Edmonton who has stated on many occasions that multiculturalism is a priority. He has recognized the difficulties of cultural centres, and I think we have to accept a certain amount of good faith. I am confident that under the direction of Mayor Decore we will in fact see this matter resolved. I am confident that under his guidance we will see firm commitments made to cultural activities within the city of Edmonton. But there are no guarantees that city council will accept the blueprint.

MR. PAPROSKI: Alderman Wickman, you've spent a lot of time discussing the whole component of multiculturalism and culture. The Jewish Community Centre has presented the view that although the Jewish component and culture is a part of this particular facility, in many ways it is indeed an extremely unique composition of recreational, leisure, and cultural activities. I remember asking a question in the spring about what other organizations have similar types of concerns and what other facilities and organizations could be added to a type of organization similar to this. When you talk about four or five other areas or other organizations, I wonder if you could enunciate for me those particular organizations you're referring to.

MR. WICKMAN: Those that are specifically included

in the resolution I referred to, Mr. Chairman, sir, include the Dutch Canadian Club, the Italian club, the Sikh club, and the Hindu society. Since that time Mayor Decore has added the Ukrainian club; they have been in touch with him. I understand there may be representation made by other cultural clubs such as the German society. But the four that I mentioned that were specifically dealt with in the resolution, along with the Jewish Community Centre, are those four in the northwest part of the city. Representatives of those organizations have stated to me that if there is an exemption for the Jewish Community Centre, they will in fact seek the same type of exemption. I would expect they would, and if I were in their situation, I would do the same thing.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, to Alderman Wickman. Do you not regard this centre as being somewhat different from some of those you've mentioned, specifically with respect to recreational facilities? The Jewish Community Centre has opened its doors to the entire community of the city of Edmonton, not just for cultural facilities, not just for the use of a hall, but for this whole component: gymnasium, swimming pool, a connection between the swimming pool and the YMCA, a weight room, et cetera. Surely that is a unique and different component compared to the others. As I mentioned in the spring, if those other organizations had a hall or a structure that encompassed all these things the Jewish Community Centre has, perhaps they should be entitled to that as well.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, there are certain aspects of the Jewish Community Centre that may be unique from the four that I referred to, but I must remind you that the application is for total exemption. Secondly, there are certain aspects of the other four cultural centres which may be unique in relationship to the Jewish Community Centre. The Sikh's community centre, for example: there are certain portions that are for worship purposes; other portions are for social activities. I've been to the Dutch community club a number of times. I'm not a member of the Dutch community, but they've opened the doors to persons like me who want to attend and take part in their social activities. I think each centre has certain activities that they can say are unique to their own particular culture.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, I just want to reiterate comments that were made in the past. When you look at organizations like the YMCA and the YWCA, I believe that the Jewish Community Centre component is comparable to those particular organizations, and I just don't know whether I could say that about the other organizations you referred to.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Chairman, could I comment on some of Mr. Wickman's remarks? I'm referring to Laurence Decore's letter of March 30, 1984, to you, Mr. Chairman. The letter refers to the Hindu cultural society of Alberta, the Sikh society, the Dutch Canadian Club, and the Italian Cultural Society, and indicates that payment of lease fees be waived. In connection with the Jewish Community Centre, it talks about the penalties on the outstanding property taxes being waived. To my knowledge,

the JCC is different from those other organizations in that it owns land and buildings. The principal portion of the taxes is continuing to mount at a rate in excess of \$50,000 per annum, quite aside from penalties and the date that those moneys have to be paid. As we mentioned earlier, the JCC is open to people of all faiths. In fact it appears to the directors that the athletic facilities are used more by members outside the Jewish community than by members within the Jewish community. Of course the JCC does have portions that are used for worship and portions that are used for social programs, et cetera.

I would just repeat what we said earlier and what the hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway indicated: that the JCC is like a YMCA or YWCA in everything but name, whereas these other organizations are not.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, again to Alderman Wickman with respect to that previous reply to the question of the Member for Edmonton Kingsway. Has the ad hoc committee then considered giving partial exemption to the Jewish Community Centre with respect to separating the worship, social, or cultural aspects of the community centre from the recreational facilities, which would be much more adaptable to the city of Edmonton at large compared to the other activities which may be more restricted to the interests of the Jewish community? Has that consideration been given?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, sir, the task force has not looked at the individual cultural centres in detail. The feeling of the members of that component of the task force is that they would like to see the taxes totally waived. They would like to see the financial leasing arrangements totally waived. However, I'm not in agreement with that particular concept. I feel there are grounds for some level of taxation, some level of leasing arrangements, but at a much lower level than we are presently asking them to encounter. There is a reasonable level of taxation and rental subsidies, where that applies. But that has to be determined upon the unique circumstances of the individual community centres. It has to be determined by the municipality that is closer to those particular community centres and that is more in touch on a day-to-day basis with the activities of those centres.

MR. SZWENDER: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the difficulties we're having in finding a resolution here in Edmonton, will the ad hoc committee then look at the Calgary resolution and how they were able to arrive at granting the exemption to the Jewish community centre in that city? Will you endeavour to look at the comparison as to why Calgary council was able to come to grips with this question much more readily?

MR. WICKMAN: In due course, Mr. Chairman, the task force will certainly look at that particular resolution. They can make a recommendation to the Edmonton city council on that. But the Edmonton city council would have to approve such a resolution if it were to be forwarded to this Legislative Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if I might ask a question,

Mr. Wickman or Mr. Szczechina. Are you aware of any of the four organizations that you referred to having a swimming pool?

MR. WICKMAN: None of the four has a swimming pool.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do they have any kind of athletic program?

MR. WICKMAN: I know the Italian cultural centre has an athletic program. They're either in the process or they've completed the addition with the gymnasium facilities and such. The other two centres I referred to don't have athletic facilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Which was the one you said has built an addition?

MR. WICKMAN: The Italian community centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do they have a membership program similar to the Jewish Community Centre, in the sense that they have a family membership, a daily activity schedule, and programming?

MR. WICKMAN: They have to have a somewhat similar program. All those centres I referred to have made application in the past and have received dollars through the MCR program. As a result of that, there are certain criteria they have to live with.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering whether or not there's an awful lot of expenditure on the part of the city with regard to the Jewish Community Centre. In short, is there a lot of road maintenance, power bills — not power and gas so much; in the utility world, I guess that's there. Who supplies their water, and how do they handle the sewerage and so forth? In short, how much is the city involved with the expenditure of operating the community club?

MR. SZCZECINA: May I answer that question? On perhaps the Jewish Community Centre is in a better position to answer it. They are not applicants for cash grants from the city of Edmonton. They applied a couple of years ago, and their application was put on hold, pending the circumstances that surround the ad hoc committee report. Other than that, they receive the same services as any other organization or facility in the city with regard to city services. It naturally follows that they should pay their share of those.

MR. ALGER: Further to that, Mr. Chairman, from the Jewish Community Centre's side of things, I wonder what their membership is. Is it low enough to make it pretty reasonable for all their members to join this club? Does it take away from any of the other clubs in the city in that respect? In short, is the membership likely to be high because the fee is low? Is there any danger of that? I'm asking if there's any competitiveness within your club as opposed to, say, the Royal Glenora, from a family club attitude.

MR. LEVINE: There's no initiation fee in the sense that you might find in some of the other private clubs

in the city. In that sense, the Jewish Community Centre doesn't represent itself as a private institution. The competitiveness is probably felt more in the athletic arena than in the pocketbook.

The programming is such that members and non-members alike can participate in individual classes. For example, if there is a cultural, social, or fitness class that a particular resident of that area of Edmonton wants to attend, there's no prerequisite to pay the full annual family membership fee. They can come in for one class. There's somewhat of a premium attached to a nonmember for an individual class. The class may have been \$50 for a six-week session, and it may cost them \$65. But there's no requirement to pay the annual fee in order to partake in any of the activities.

MR. PARKER: In summary, I think I could just say that the fee structure of the JCC is very similar to that of the YMCA, both in terms of annual memberships and lesser memberships. It's a fraction of the cost of the Glenora, the Centre Club, and those other clubs that cater almost exclusively to the upper rungs on the socioeconomic ladder for annual costs that are several times what the YMCA and the JCC are.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Chairman, with regard to the YMCA, I notice that they have a partnership style of arrangement in that the Y helps them with the swimming pool, probably the lessons and so forth. I believe they pay an annual fee of \$12,000. I think they're going to raise it to \$18,000 in 1985. In the spirit of co-operation, I was rather wondering what that fee is charged for. Of course this isn't completely voluntary; therefore there must be some costs attached to the Y for working there. I wonder how they expended those. Is that mostly in the labour force?

MR. LEVINE: If I understand your question, the fee that the Y contributes is used in part to defray the cost of operating the pool.

MR. ALGER: I thought the Y was charging the centre. It presently calls for the centre to pay them \$12,000 a year, and you pay all the utilities and costs as well.

MR. PARKER: The Y of course has a long-established aquatic program that's operated on a greater economy of scale. The JCC was finding it relatively expensive to operate an aquatic program of equal calibre at one location. Therefore after a series of discussions, it was determined that the Y could operate the JCC aquatic program at a lower cost. We don't really expect members of the Y to be covering our costs, because they're paying a membership there and not here, so the JCC pays that cost. Of course that number can vary from year to year.

MR. ALGER: Of course. That's well explained, Chairman. Thank you very much.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, I have three quick questions to Mr. Levine or Mr. Parker. First of all, what are your numbers in terms of memberships presently?

MR. LEVINE: Can we get the accurate number and

deal with the second question first?

MR. PAPROSKI: Six months ago you talked about your deficit position. I am wondering if you could comment as to your present financial situation.

MR. LEVINE: Generally our financial situation has in fact not changed. We are still running at a considerable deficit. We have managed to increase our membership over the last six to seven months as a result of a major membership drive, the results of which have been beneficial and are slowly helping us deal with the deficit. Mr. Chairman, to the Member for Edmonton Kingsway, the deficit situation is generally where it was.

Our major costs, utilities and taxes, are not moving downward; they are almost constant. We've been doing our utmost to increase our membership, and in that sense we have been successful. I think we've attracted some 60 to 70 families as a result of the two major drives, one in the spring and one coinciding with the return to school and fall registration, which has gone a long way to helping us keep the doors open.

MR. PARKER: Regarding the number of members, our May 1, 1984, brief indicates that there were then approximately 1,800 members. That number would be quite similar if there were — Phil, did you mention 60 or some-odd new families that have joined?

MR. LEVINE: That's right.

MR. PARKER: It would still be more or less in that range. Our membership fees vary from \$105 per year to \$420 per year, depending on age and the number of family members. As I said before, it's similar to the fee structure of the YMCA in the city.

MR. LEVINE: Mr. Chairman, might I add one more point on that note; that is, as a policy the centre never turns away a prospective member on the basis of financial need. Given the economic downturn, we have found that there are many situations where someone who may have been paying the full rate, which I believe is approximately \$400 a year for a full family membership — we end up working out an arrangement with them where it will come down to \$200 or \$150 for the membership, because the particular family has found themselves in a situation in which they've had to curtail their expenditures for a year or two until their personal situation gets together. We do not say to people: we're very sorry; if you can't pay the full fee, you can't be a member of the centre. So while some of the membership numbers have gone up, the absolute dollars in terms of revenue are almost constant, if not dipping, because we have had to sit down with individual cases and find ourselves offering scholarships for a year or two until some people can get it together. In this economic climate, we've found that they need the centre even more; they need that facility. During the summer it becomes a place where they can take their children to swim at little or no cost. It becomes even more important that they be availed of having the opportunity for membership, and we don't turn people away on the basis of their ability to pay.

MR. PAPROSKI: My last question deals with the

process you go through with respect to your board of directors. Could you enunciate for me how your board of directors gets elected, what the process is there, how long their terms are, et cetera?

MR. LEVINE: I can describe my own situation as a member of the board and the executive, but I can't recite the constitution verbatim. Unfortunately I'm not familiar with it.

Of course all members of the board serve on a volunteer basis, and we implore people to join the board to make their views known and to give the kind of guidance the centre needs. It is my understanding — and I stand to be corrected by Mr. Parker if he's familiar with the constitution — that we serve for an approximate two-year term. We have an executive committee structure wherein the board as a whole, which comprises approximately 18 to 20 members, meets approximately twice monthly. The executive committee, which is a tighter group of approximately 10 members, meets on a monthly basis.

I believe our situation is that we haven't had a lot of competition for office. Our problem has been getting people to volunteer the time and to make the commitment. Therefore we don't have sort of long, drawn-out electioneering for various positions. We have found ourselves in a situation where if someone wants to serve on the board, we have been able to find a committee or a piece of work for them to do, and they are more than welcome to serve. Formally, though, there is probably a structure whereby there would be elections and/or appointments.

MR. PARKER: I'll just add to that. As I mentioned in the spring, the JCC was incorporated under part 9 of the Companies Act, being a not-for-profit company. The articles don't put any parameters on who can run for the board. So it's not limited to people of the Jewish faith, and there aren't any other such limiting qualifications. To my knowledge, no one who has ever wanted to be on the board has been denied that opportunity.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Chairman, my point was that there is indeed a democratic process for election to that board or executive committee.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, in order to reach a resolution or partial resolution today, I think I'm going to need a little more information on the ad hoc committee which Alderman Wickman is chairing. First of all, I'd like to know if there is a formal name for this committee. Is it just called an ad hoc committee or an ad hoc committee on cultural policy? Is there a formal name that this committee can refer to in the future?

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, it's the mayor's task force on cultural activities. The membership and structure was ratified by the Edmonton city council approximately six months ago. At that particular time I was named chairman of the task force. Some of the individuals on that task force from the cultural component — for example, there's Krishan Joshee; I believe many of you are familiar with him. He's the chairman of that particular component. The acting chairman of the arts component is Tommy Banks, who I'm sure many of you are familiar with. That's the calibre of membership we have on that commit-

tee.

MR. SZWENDER: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Can we assume that the membership of this committee was chosen personally by the Mayor, and are there any members of the Jewish Community Centre on that ad hoc committee?

MR. WICKMAN: On the question of the make-up of the membership of the task force, based on input from the community, I took my recommendations to the mayor before the matter went to council.

On the second point, no, there is no one specifically representing the Jewish Community Centre. With the number of ethnic communities within Edmonton, it was impossible to have one member from each ethnic community.

Mr. Chairman, I might point out to Members of the Legislative Assembly that the mayor and I had an opportunity to meet with the Minister of Culture a couple of weeks ago. Before our comprehensive blueprint is made public, the Minister of Culture will be meeting with us, and we will be going over that policy with her even before it goes to city council.

MR. SZWENDER: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the comprehensive blueprint which the committee will eventually produce, I'm wondering if the direction of that blueprint will help us, if the matter is put over, to eventually resolve this type of issue, not on a case-by-case basis. Will the blueprint be a guideline this committee can make reference to, to help it in similar cases if they arise in the future? Basically I'm wondering if the blueprint is of a cultural-policy nature or if it is going to be more of a fiscal direction in terms of taxation policies that the city of Edmonton will apply to various cultural, recreational, and ethnic communities in the city of Edmonton.

MR. WICKMAN: On a primary basis, it will be of a more general nature, but on a secondary level, it will address more specifically the types of detailed questions you refer to. I think the end result in due time will be recognition of levels of subsidy that will satisfy most cultural centres within the city of Edmonton. It would certainly reduce any pressure that any level of government may feel is necessary to provide further subsidies. It may not be total exemption of all property taxation and all leasing arrangements, but I think there will be tremendous benefit to the cultural centres within the city of Edmonton.

MR. SZWENDER: A final supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Without trying to put any time-constraint pressures on Alderman Wickman, I'm just wondering when is the earliest we could expect this report, if we did defer the decision of the committee on this matter.

MR. WICKMAN: I had anticipated taking the report to the December meeting of city council. That appears unlikely. It appears it will be January, possibly February. But from the task force's point of view, the end result is still going to be recognition that these types of matters have to be resolved at the municipal level and not through changes within provincial legislation. Six months from now we could be back here addressing the same concern, and quite

frankly I would have to make the same type of argument: that these matters of taxation and subsidies have to be determined at the municipal level, not at this particular level of government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I should apologize to Mr. Szczechina. He was wanting to get in earlier. I don't know if you still do or not.

MR. SZCZECCHINA: Mr. Chairman, I just had a question. I have never seen the constitution or the terms of reference of the Jewish Community Centre, and I certainly would like a copy if that's possible. Can we get a copy?

MR. PARKER: Certainly. The city, but perhaps not Mr. Szczechina, has received copies in the past in connection with previous proceedings, and they are of course public documents, being registered at the companies branch. I have no further comment on that, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The documents are a matter of public record. They're available from the companies branch.

MR. PARKER: For Mr. Szczechina's convenience, I'll send him a copy.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Chairman, I suppose in a sense this will sound a little silly, but I'm trying to get the city's attitude with respect to the Jewish Community Centre and why the taxation is such a big problem to them. But I suppose the silly part of it is that if you did it for them, they'd do it for everybody type of idea, if that's their attitude. I was just quickly calculating that a \$50,000 bill is about 10 cents apiece to everybody here in Edmonton, which seems to me a pretty reasonable amount to donate, if you like, or not receive, in view of the fact that this centre, as I understand it, is quite a formidable place and on a lovely piece of ground, of which a lot is literally useless because it looks over a river bank.

The point I'm trying to get at, though, is that if I were running a city, I would encourage people to do this style of thing all through the system — churches, schools, anything at all that helps our young people to grow up and become decent citizens and stay off the streets, as it were. Surely there's a compensation here even with regard to the crime rate of the city when you have a club like this that keeps — I've forgotten the number of families; it was quite a high number — 1,800 members involved in different things. I think if I were running the city I would feel pretty good about saying to this style of club, "Get after it, and we'll give you all the support we can", rather than taxing the dickens out of them. So the burden on the taxpayer who has already paid personal taxes to the city — it seems to me that that should have some level of connotation in this discussion.

MR. FROST: Mr. Chairman, the city just wishes to point out that it hasn't come today with its position decided. We come of course, as we've indicated, to ask for a deferment. It may well take the position the hon. member has spoken of. The kinds of questions that we have been asked and that the Jewish Community Centre has been asked are exactly the kind of consideration that Edmonton city council

would like to give to this matter. In fact it has in the past given this type of consideration and has come up with a position opposed to the tax exemption. At this time we just wish to underline that we would like the opportunity to make this kind of consideration. It's not intended today to be a confrontation. It's just the position of the city, as Alderman Wickman has indicated, that this is viewed as a municipal concern, a tax exemption which the city will have to live with. Also, it is a matter of fairness to other organizations that will undoubtedly seek the same kind of exemption. But to date we haven't made any consideration at all.

MR. PARKER: Mr. Chairman, following up on Mr. Frost's comment about other organizations that would seek the same sort of legislation, the same of course could have been argued a year ago in connection with the Calgary Bill. I was advised, I think by both yourself, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Clegg earlier in the year, that subsequent to the passing of the Calgary Bill — which is virtually identical to this one, in connection with a Jewish community centre which is virtually identical to the Edmonton one; both Alberta cities with about the same population — lo and behold, there wasn't one other application for such an exemption this year, except for the Edmonton JCC. There really isn't any water behind all those floodgates.

I re-emphasize that the principal amount of municipal taxes charged against the JCC is \$50,000 a year. There's already \$150,000 owing. If it's not dealt with by the end of 1984, there's going to be another \$50,000 owing. That's not the case with the other centres that involve a payment of lease fees. It's a different situation. Our centre and Calgary is one situation, and the cultural clubs that lease land are a completely different situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just for clarification and to follow up on my previous question, there appear to be continuous references to the city's policy with respect to cultural centres. I'm curious to know, Mr. Frost, if your two witnesses are familiar with the facilities offered by the other four cultural centres that Mr. Wickman referred to earlier — the Dutch Canadian, the Italian, the Sikhs, and the Hindu. Are they familiar with the facilities offered in those centres?

MR. FROST: Mr. Szczechina indicates he is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would like to know if the other four centres have tennis facilities.

MR. SZCZECCHINA: No, Mr. Chairman, they do not. However, the question in my mind is not whether or not they have tennis facilities but the types of programs they offer. Surely to goodness, opulence is not a question of whether an organization should get a grant or not. What we're obviously talking about here is an opulent facility, because everybody agrees that it's opulent.

We're not saying that this organization shouldn't receive support from the city of Edmonton or the provincial government, if the provincial government chooses to give it support. But if the province wants to give it support, perhaps the province should buy the property from the Jewish Community Centre,

lease it back to them in perpetuity at a dollar a year, and then give the city a grant for the difference in taxes. Then the Jewish Community Centre can apply to the city for a cash grant in aid, and we can give them cash to help defray their costs, whatever they might be, to keep their doors open.

There are all kinds of alternatives, but to simply say that this group is going to get consideration at this time, when there are other groups out there who provide useful programs — whether or not they have a swimming pool is not important. It's the question of whether they provide useful programs for the community and whether they are going to continue to provide those programs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Szcechina, I'm not here to argue the case one way or the other. My purpose in dealing with this is a matter of clarification.

For your information, YMCAs are exempt, by provincial statute, from paying property taxes in the province of Alberta. We are simply trying to clarify whether there is a similarity between this organization, which has asked for an exemption from taxation, and the YMCAs in the province. Your previous evidence and Mr. Wickman's evidence today is that there are other organizations in the city which are being compared to this particular organization. I am trying to clarify whether or not in fact they are comparable to that organization. If you could just answer my question, please, and not offer your argument, I would appreciate it.

I'm asking you if they have tennis. You say they do not. Do they have squash or racquetball facilities?

MR. SZCECHINA: I'm not aware of their having squash or racquetball facilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Do they have weight-lifting equipment and exercise rooms?

MR. SZCECHINA: Yes, some of them do. I believe the Italian cultural centre and the Dutch Canadian Club do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any further questions?

Gentlemen, that will conclude the proceedings this morning as far as you are concerned then. Thank you very much for attending today. The committee will be dealing further with this matter, and we'll let you know our decision.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity of making our views on this matter known.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we have a motion to go in camera? . . . It's moved by the hon. Member for Cardston that the committee go in camera. Is the committee agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[The committee moved in camera at 9:32 a.m.]