



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

of the

# **Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

---

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY**

**MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT**

---

Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable H.H. Rolfes  
Speaker



---

**NO. 4    AUGUST 15 & 16, 1994**



**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY  
1994**

Hon. Herman Rolfes, Chairperson  
Saskatoon Nutana

Hon. Carol Carson  
Melfort

Glenn Hagel, MLA  
Moose Jaw Palliser

Lynda Haverstock, MLA  
Saskatoon Greystone

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch  
Prince Albert Northcote

Rick Swenson, MLA  
Thunder Creek

Eric Upshall, MLA  
Humboldt

**MEETING #4 1994**

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY**

**Room 10 Legislative Building  
1:42 p.m. Monday, August 15, 1994**

**Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy**

Hon. Herman Rolfes, Chair  
Glenn Hagel, MLA  
Lynda Haverstock, MLA  
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch  
Rick Swenson, MLA  
Eric Upshall, MLA

**Other Members in Attendance**

Anita Bergman, MLA

**Staff to the Board**

Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk  
Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services  
Deborah Saum, Secretary

**AGENDA** Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Swenson, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

**MINUTES** Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Upshall, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #3/94 be adopted. Agreed.

**ITEM 1 Decision Item - Review of the "1994 Survey of Canadian Legislatures" requested by the Board on March 17, 1994**

The Board requested the Legislative Assembly Office to forward the Survey to the Independent Committee on Members' Remuneration, once it is established, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

The Board agreed to release one copy of the Survey to the Press.

**ITEM 2 Decision Item - Communication Allowance amendments to allow certain office equipment expenses out of the Communication Allowance. Draft Proposal for establishing a Constituency Services Allowance**

Moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Ms. Haverstock:

That, effective August 15, 1994, Members have the option of claiming information technology expenditures including hardware, software, printers, peripheral equipment, supplies and related services for installation, operation and maintenance, and photocopier expenditures and Fax supplies from either the Communication Allowance or the Constituency Office and Services Allowance.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the Board amend Directive #4 by adding the following Subsection and renumbering subsequent Subsections:



(8) Any equipment, furnishings or supplies that have been purchased with the Communication Allowance funds will become the property of the Crown when the Member ceases to be a Member. All such items are subject to the Inventory Guidelines approved by the Board of Internal Economy.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Moved by Ms. Haverstock, seconded by Mr. Swenson:

That Directive #4 be amended by deleting "(black and white)" after the words "pictures with students", on the Acceptable list.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Ms. Haverstock:

That Directive #4 be amended by adding the following to the Acceptable list:

- information technology expenses including computer hardware and software, printers, peripheral equipment, supplies and related services for installation, operation and maintenance of a computer system
- photocopier expenses including rental or purchase, related services for operation and maintenance, per copy charges and related supplies
- **fax supplies**

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Ms. Haverstock:

That under the Not Acceptable section of Directive #4 the words, "except as listed above", be added following "office equipment or furnishings".

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1342

**ITEM 3      Decision Item - Provision of Dental Plan benefits to Constituency Assistants**

The Board declined to proceed with the proposal.

**ITEM 4      Decision Item - Telecommunications presentation as requested by the Board on March 3, 1994 (Mtg. #2/94). Issues related to the presentation**

The presentation was arranged for Tuesday, August 16, 1994.

**ITEM 5      Decision Item - Expense allowance issues deferred from March 3, 1994 (Mtg. #2/94)**

**1. Education events for Constituency Assistants**

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Upshall:

That the Constituency Office Allowance be amended to allow Members the option to pay from the Allowance for education courses attended by constituency assistants. The course must be relevant to the job duties of the constituency assistant.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1343



## **2. Travel costs of constituency assistants attending training seminars**

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the Legislative Assembly Office bring forth, at a future meeting, a recommendation which would provide for reimbursement to constituency assistants, from the Constituency Office Allowance, for travel expenses incurred to attend training courses or while carrying out duties relevant to the job. This recommendation is to provide for a limited use of the reimbursement privilege.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

## **3. That it be permitted to charge hospitality items, up to a certain dollar limit, to one of the expense allowances**

Moved by Ms. Haverstock, seconded by Mr. Hagel:

That this proposal be rejected.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

## **ITEM 6**

### **Independent Committee (Haverstock)**

A discussion was held and it was agreed that discussions between Government and Opposition Leaders should begin in September.

Moved by Ms. Haverstock, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch, that the meeting be adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

**MEETING #4 1994 (continued)**

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY**

**Room 10 Legislative Building  
9:07 a.m. Tuesday, August 16, 1994**

**Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy**

Hon. Herman Rolfes, Chair  
Glenn Hagel, MLA  
Lynda Haverstock, MLA  
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch  
Rick Swenson, MLA  
Eric Upshall, MLA

**Other Members in Attendance**

Anita Bergman, MLA

**Staff to the Board**

Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk  
Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services  
Linda Kaminski, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services  
Deborah Saum, Secretary

**Officials in Attendance**

**SaskTel:**

Phil Bohay, Manager, Customer Services  
John Meldrum, Vice-President, Corporate Counsel

**ITEM 5 Decision Item - Telecommunications presentation as requested by the Board on March 3, 1994 (Mtg. #2/94). Issues related to the presentation**

A presentation was given by Mr. Bohay. A discussion was held.

The Board requested SaskTel, by Friday, August 26, 1994, to check that all constituency offices are on "Advantage Preferred", and if not, to contact those offices.

The Board deferred decisions on 1-800 numbers under Telephone Allowance and in caucus offices pending further analysis as follows:

The Board asked the Legislative Assembly Office to do a twelve (12) month cost analysis, comparing the incoming collect calls in the caucus offices with the equivalent costing had "1-800" been used, and forward to the Board Members, along with estimates for future costs based on industry usage information from SaskTel.

The Board agreed to defer a decision regarding payment for additional telephone services under the Telephone Allowance and on caucus telephone accounts until a decision with respect to 1-800 numbers was finalized.

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Swenson, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

It was agreed to meet again at the call of the Chair.

Herman H. Rolfes  
Chair

Deborah Saum  
Secretary



**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY**  
**August 15, 1994**

**The Chairperson:** -- It now being 1:30, past 1:30, I think we should begin the board meeting. Let me welcome you back after a short recess from the Legislative Assembly and to our board meeting.

The first item on the agenda, of course, is the approval of the proposed agenda or changes or additions to the agenda. Could I either have a motion, or items to be added or deleted, or a motion to accept the agenda as proposed?

Moved by Glenn Hagel, seconded by . . . that we accept the agenda as proposed.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- This is the agenda . . . just hang on here . . . that does have . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Six items on it.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Right. Good.

**The Chairperson:** -- Moved? Seconded by? All in favour? Carried.

First item on the agenda then is the minutes of the last meeting. If you turn to your package that has been sent out to you, you will find the minutes on no. 394 -- meeting no. 394 -- and if you'll peruse those minutes. Are there any discussions on the minutes?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Mr. Speaker, on the second page, where it referred to the board requested Legislative Assembly Office gather information, etc., I know we made that decision. I had thought it was in motion form, but this doesn't indicate it was in motion format.

**The Chairperson:** -- Would you direct me again?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Second page, right in the middle -- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6th item down.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. The board requested the Legislative Assembly Office to gather information at their earliest convenience?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Right.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well I will have to check with somebody else. What does the verbatim say? It is a verbatim. I haven't got the verbatim

here. Was there a motion moved? It may have just been requested.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay. I'm only concerned about accuracy. As long as it is recorded accurately. I thought it was in motion format.

**The Chairperson:** -- It's not that the chairman didn't try to get a motion.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I was casting no aspersions at all upon the quality of the chair.

**The Chairperson:** -- No, I don't believe so. The chairman asked several times if somebody wanted to make a motion, and then somebody said that it doesn't have to be a motion. And that's true, it didn't have to be. It was a request made, and the request was carried out. Okay, I don't think there was . . . No, there was no motion made.

Are there any comments? Or will someone move that we adopt the minutes as presented? Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Upshall. Any further discussion? All in favour? Agreed.

All right. Then the item on the agenda is: review of the survey of the Canadian legislatures as requested by the board. That was sent out to you people and what we have done, for the benefit of the board, we have made a summary of the survey -- and I think we can hand that out now -- as accurately as we can so you have a quick synopsis of actually what is transpiring at present time on the Canadian scene in these various areas. Debbie is just handing that out right now and I think we should run through that quickly so that we have some idea as to where we are at.

If you look at the first item, jurisdictions where partisan material is prohibited in publicly funded allowances, you will note that most jurisdictions have something in that regard. They're not all the same, if you went through the material, but for the most part they have something that does prohibit materials of a partisan nature. Although you look at Quebec, they do not prohibit it in their householders, but in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland it's simply an unwritten statement or an understanding that it not be done.

Well, Quebec, it's . . .

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Prohibited in householders, but permissible everywhere else?

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, that's correct. Yes. Did I say the opposite? Okay, I'm sorry if I turned it around.

Manitoba, political content allowed in householders. Now, just to what extent, who knows?

Okay, definition of partisan. If you look at that. Some use a general prohibition of partisan political content without further definition, and in those jurisdictions which attempt to define partisan begin with certain standard elements as follows: communications funded from Legislative Assembly funds may not use political party logos or colours, promote political party activities, solicit funds on behalf of any party, or solicit party memberships.

Other elements may not contain personal criticism of another member. It may not advocate signing or signing petitions, and may not solicit votes for or against any party.

Now how do they monitor it? Though this is all over the field, but in Alberta, they have to submit a copy of the . . . and Manitoba, a copy of the ad, the mail-out, etc., in order to claim your expense. In Quebec and Ontario, the caucus is responsible for the monitoring of partisan content. And in some other jurisdictions, or all other jurisdictions, the members themselves are responsible; there's no monitoring procedures in place.

And then we go to promotional items. And this is something that, as you know, many of our members have requested that we have another look at promotional items. And you'll notice here jurisdictions which allow the purchase of novelty items for broad distribution: flowers, gifts, trophies, donations.

Saskatchewan, there's no . . . everything except no donations. Alberta permits them. Manitoba donations limit, 200. British Columbia, no flowers or donations, and Newfoundland allows the others.

Jurisdictions which allow or provide pins and flags only: Yukon, Ontario, Senate, and Prince Edward Island. Quebec here allows items purchased from the National Assembly boutique. And the House of Commons, novelty items up to \$1,000 per year only. In New

Brunswick, novelty items up to \$340 per year.

So really they're somewhat all over the field, yet there is commonality running through, I think, all of these. But there's certainly . . . Not everybody does the same thing; they're a little bit all over the field. So I would like members to keep that in mind as we are going through establishing our own rules and procedures in these various areas.

Now on item no. 1, is there any further discussion or suggestions or what members would like to do on it? As I say, it was simply a survey requested for us to bring back to the board. Is there any further discussion on that item?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I would think it would be appropriate for the survey to be put in the hands of the independent commission whenever that is formed. I think we all realize that the commission is going to have to have pretty wide-ranging abilities. This may be helpful.

I personally am pleased that the effort was made because I think all members should be aware of what's going on around them. We're not an island unto ourselves as far as public thought on these issues. So I'm pleased that the effort was made and I just hope that we use it wisely.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, I guess I want to just echo what Mr. Swenson has said. I want to thank the Clerk and her staff for the work that they have put in to putting together this information. I know that you're under some constraints with respect to your budget as all different departments are. And so I know it was an added pressure on your staff and I really want to thank you for the work you've done putting this together.

I think beyond having it passed to the independent commission, when that commission is established, that this information we would want to share with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner who, through Bill No. 70, is now The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, is part of the process that we put in place during the last legislative session to deal with some of the areas where there may be a disagreement with respect to a member's expenditures. And we now have a process whereby those types of issues can be adjudicated in a fair and an



August 15, 1994

independent fashion.

So I would recommend that the commission, as well as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, have this information for his perusal.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay, are there any further discussions? Can I accept that -- there's no motion to that extent -- but can I accept that that is the wish of the committee that that be done, that this information be made available to the commission and to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? Everybody agreed? Okay. So agreed, then.

Any further discussion on this item? Okay, thank you.

We will then go to item no. 2 and that is on the communication allowance amendments to allow certain office equipment expenses out of the communications allowance. There's a draft proposal before you.

And ladies and gentlemen, if I may make a suggestion on this, I would like us to turn to item no. 2 but go to option 2 rather than option 1 first. And that is on page 6 of your . . . I will explain that to you. We have been struggling with this for some time as to what to recommend to the board because there are many members who are finding themselves in some difficulties because of the restraint that is before us. So if you turn to page 6 we have option 2 there.

Should the board accept option 2 as recommended, then it will automatically do away with some of the items in option 1 because option 2 is all inclusive.

What option 2 is recommending is that we take the three allowances -- the constituency allowance, the constituency assistants' allowance and the communications allowance -- and make it a global allowance. Not increase it, but give the members the flexibility of being able to spend from those three allowances as their conditions dictate.

And I think many of you will recognize that we have members who are paying high rents; others are paying considerably lower rents; other have heavy expenditures in the equipment facilities; and so on.

And members have been requesting of the

Speaker and of the Legislative Assembly that we allow them to expend money from one area as opposed to another because they're running short in their rent -- they simply can't meet their rent -- and ask if they can take money out of their communications allowance and so on.

This is basically what Alberta is doing. Well, there are a whole number of them are. My understanding is Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, House of Commons, New Brunswick, B.C. (British Columbia) and Newfoundland. Those are the provinces that have gone to sort of a global budget in order to accommodate the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

We would monitor the total expenditures in each, for each MLA in the Legislative Assembly Office. So there would be no more expenditures, but the MLA would have an opportunity to serve his or her constituents as their particular circumstances dictate. This is really what it does.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Thank you. I can understand where this appears to be a very logical proposal and that it would be much more adaptable to the very needs of MLAs across the province, but I'm wondering if it's not somewhat premature. And that's because it would be an interim measure, I'm assuming, until the independent commission on remuneration would examine all of this -- until it's been struck and then its recommendations come forward which would be put in place at a later date.

So my concern about this is twofold. First of all, that I think what it may in fact do would be perceived as being put in place mid-stream rather than waiting until an independent commission can look at all of these things and come up with a recommendation based on full information.

And secondly, there may be a perception among the public that by changing these operating procedures mid-stream, that in fact elected members may be wanting to avoid a certain degree of scrutiny of their expenses -- which I don't think is the case at all but I think it may be perceived as such.

I'm much more concerned about making sure that the independent commission is able to do its job without making the job more complex by



having all of these things changed piecemeal.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I have looked at the two options that you've outlined here, and the one that would establish a global allowance has been discussed at the board a number of times over the years. And I think that the conversation as I recall, and the debate as I recall, basically indicated that members were not supportive of putting in place a global allowance, for a number of reasons that I won't go through again today.

But I guess I want to speak to the independent commission and the work that it will be doing. And I think quite clearly it's not the intent of members to make wholesale changes at a time when we are about to establish a commission that is going to be dealing with all of these issues in some detail.

But we do have some immediate concerns by a number of members who find that, as you've indicated, the levels of rent and the market demands in their constituencies preclude them from running their office in a reasonable fashion. They paid a rent and they have little left for other services that they want and that their staff need in order for them to serve their constituents.

Which is why, after looking at the two options, I think the first option would make sense to me because what it does is allows for the communication allowance to pick up some of the expenditures that were now only allowed under the constituency office allowance. And it really doesn't make ... there's not a great deal of change. We're just, I guess, reshuffling some billing from the office allowance into the communications allowance without increasing, in any way, the amount that members have to serve their constituents, and thereby holding a line on the costs of operating the constituency offices which is what this Board has been trying to achieve over the past couple of years.

So I think this is what you were saying, Ms. Haverstock, that you don't think we should be making massive, sweeping changes now. And I think I understand that you support then option 1, which would allow some shift but not wholesale shift, and would then satisfy the concerns of some of the members who are in some high-ranked districts.

So I guess with that there is only one other concern that I have with respect to what is

allowed under this directive. And there's been ... and I didn't see it in here but I know in terms of our ability to communicate, the facsimile machines, the fax machines are becoming much more an important tool in terms of communications. We now have the ability with some of the technology that's been developed to be able to do a lot of things in-house that previously would have had to be done by printing companies on a contract basis through the communications allowance.

And one of the issues that I think I would like to raise, and that I would like to see some discussion on, is to whether or not if we do decide to accept option 1, to whether we would want to include facsimile costs, fax machine costs, paper, perhaps toner, and those kinds of things. And I think that's been before the Board here and I can't remember what the discussion was, but quite clearly it's an issue that some of our members have raised and asked that we bring to the table.

**The Chairperson:** -- Clearly, if the Chairperson may express his opinion, I of course have put option 2 as my preferred option from my discussion with many, many MLAs.

I know what the board members are saying, because of the commissioner being appointed; but you must keep in mind, whatever the commissioner recommends, it will not take place -- my understanding is -- until after the next election, which is another two years away, and then probably it will take at least another year. So you're looking at three years hence before we correct something that I think we should have done a long time ago, to give members more flexibility to serve their constituents. That's really what we want to do. And I've heard it time and time again since I've been Speaker that, look, these things are different in rural Saskatchewan than they are in urban. And I agree, they are. But they're also different from certain urban members to other urban members.

And if we really truly believe that we want to enhance the ability of members to serve their constituents, as long as we have accountability and there's no more increase in expenditures -- and there will not be -- I mean, this can be ... and we would be very, very strict in the Legislative Assembly Office that there would be no additional expenditures.



Why would we not want to allow the MLAs to be able to serve their constituents the way they feel best under their circumstances. To me that's the direction we should go. I hear what the members are saying. I will admit this is my option, my preferred option, and from what . . . in my consultation and discussions with various members.

Certainly option 1 is an improvement and it will solve many of the problems that we presently have and that MLAs are having. I will not deny that.

The other option that you may want to look at is option 2 minus the constituency assistant allowance, so that you would combine . . . the real problem does exist between the constituency office allowance and the communications allowance. If we made those two allowances one, and left out the constituency assistants' allowance and had that separate -- that's not my preferred option -- but I think that again would solve a lot of the problems that MLAs are having.

If we go option 1, all your problems will not be solved, and there will be MLAs who will still be complaining as to why don't you allow me to do this, why can't I do that, and we will simply have to say no. And that's what we get paid for, to say no, if they don't abide by the guidelines that are set down.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Mr. Chairman, I polled all of my members before this meeting to make sure they were comfortable with most of the agenda. And I don't have any problems of this nature, so it's got to be coming from somewhere else.

I can't understand why members would want the public to have a new fund to castigate that is much larger than what they presently have. And I have tried over 10 years to explain the differences in my funds to some of my most intimate friends, and they still don't understand. So it comes out that the new fund is now 35,000 instead of X, and then I have to try and explain that. And they think I'm overpaid and underworked now. Why would I want to reinforce that?

**The Chairperson:** -- I don't follow that, Rick, if I may say so. The fund is no larger than it is right now.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- No, but it is broken into three

separate categories, and when it comes out in *Public Accounts* it's all broken down for them. You're proposing to lump it together now into one global fund that they could draw anything within those three categories from. And I don't understand how anyone in the public would find that more accountable than what we have now. I mean we've been tightening and tightening and tightening with receipts and trying to stop the nonsense, and I just think your option 2 is . . . I mean we're back to the Stone Age again.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well let me just simply say that there are some members who have taken out personal loans, and under the present circumstances we cannot address that issue. But if the members had the flexibility of taking some of their allowances out of communications to pay back the personal loans that they have committed to buying -- let's say a copier or whatever -- we would be able to resolve those problems before the next election arises. In the present circumstances we can't do that because there isn't sufficient money in the office allowance to do that.

What we would do in order to address those problems is to say to the MLA, look, you can make additional contributions by going into your communications allowance to pay off those personal loans that you have put forward in order to buy this equipment, which we can't do at the present time.

Now many of you may not be aware of some of those circumstances -- and there's no need for it, that people should be aware of those -- but those are circumstances and it involves a number of MLAs, and that would solve one of those problems that they have. Maybe they shouldn't have taken out the personal loans that they did a few years ago, but they did. And now, you know, we should find some mechanism to help out those MLAs to pay back those loans in order that they can pay for that equipment which is in their office.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I understood that was being looked after.

**The Chairperson:** -- No.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- That business with purchasing office equipment -- that's being looked after.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- That's being looked



August 15, 1994

at. As I understand, Gwenn, you've been talking and trying to put together a list of what would be acceptable and suitable equipment to service an MLA's office. And we would then, you know, bring it back to the board for discussion and to see if it's . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Using SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), right?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- That's right. That would be the vehicle to be able to clean that up. Would this not be taking . . . And I don't know if I've got the floor here; I think Mr. Hagel wanted the floor.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'm used to being ignored.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Would not these amendments in the first option here take some pressure off of the office allowance to be able to have that happen at any rate?

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, that is true. I did say that.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Would it satisfy then the needs of all of those with outstanding loans to be able to have those loans recovered by whatever certain date? And I have no idea what the amounts are or any of that, but would this solve that problem?

**The Chairperson:** -- I think they would. I think that's correct; it would. Yes, I believe that if we accepted option 1, that most of the problems in the loans could be taken care of. That is correct. I was not trying to infer that. What I'm inferring is if we make no changes, if the board says today no changes are made, then we cannot rectify some of the problems that exist out there.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- But option 1 will do that.

**The Chairperson:** -- Option 1 would do that. That's correct.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think I'm agreeing with the three who have spoken before me. When I look at the options, I find some attractive things about both of them, quite frankly. However, when I sift through which I think better serves our common purpose at this point in time, I find myself leaning toward option no. 1. If I can just explain why I say that.

There is the matter of review by the commission that's been referred to, so I won't repeat that.

But also there is the matter that Rick referred to and Eldon commented on just now related to the SPMC taking over the responsibility for providing furnishings and equipment.

What we've not sorted out clearly at this stage -- not through negligence, just because that we haven't been able to at this stage -- is then what is the resultant impact in terms of reductions of the office allowance. I'm making the assumption that once SPMC has the responsibility to provide furnishings and equipment that's packaged to all members, there has to be clearly defined that consequent to that there will be a reduction in the amount of office allowance that is available in the total package to MLAs.

And I think rather than blend those things all together at this stage, before sorting that out we're wiser -- to help us in the clarity of our thinking -- to keep them relatively separate at this point in time. MLAs have got allowances to do three things as we define them here, and I know as I go through the survey of other jurisdictions, I find myself feeling that by and large our structure, with the shift to SPMC provision, is what I tend to feel most comfortable with, quite frankly, as a structure.

Because we're saying MLAs have got three responsibilities: one is to operate an office, to have an office presence; one is to communicate; and then one is to provide service to constituents. And so we say there's an office allowance that covers rent, etc.; there's a communications allowance for saying what it is you have to say as an elected member; and then we hire people who, on our behalf or together with us, deal with our constituents to help address individual constituent concerns.

Now that sounds to me like pretty solid thinking, and what the directives that come out of the Board of Internal Economy should reflect is the expectation. Now we can all have our own judgement as to whether that's a smart thing for a politician to do or not, but that's . . . But at this stage I'm a little hesitant to look at something that brings them together. We say, well on the one hand it gives an MLA total jurisdiction as to how you best do all of your job in combination.



But I guess my fear is that while we're doing that and then consequently introducing the SPMC furnishings and equipment ownership, then it can be tempting to do one of two things: completely eliminate the office or office allowance or to leave it alone, and I don't know that either of those is the responsible thing to do at this point in time.

Therefore I think we can just ... we more clearly think through what we're doing as we shift from one structure that we've used in the past to another that we've adopted in principle to be applied in very specific terms. All of the time that we're doing this we're wanting to be both accountable and seen to be accountable in terms of trying to enhance the public trust.

And so for that reason I think the ... without addressing it specifically, because it's not before us right now, item 1, provide some flexibility in some very specific areas that I think reflect how the office world has changed over the last five or six years with the changes in equipment and the job that MLAs do, without going to complete flexibility, without having defined all of the parts. Because we still haven't defined the impact of the SPMC ownership in that part of the total picture, added together with the concern about referral to the commission for review.

So it's with all of those things, Mr. Chairman, that I guess this is my long-winded way of saying I don't vehemently oppose proposal 2, but given what is on our plate now and about to be on our plate in the next year or two or three, I think option 1 better serves the combination of things without giving an opportunity for cynicism about accountability.

We have a responsibility here to two bodies. One is to the MLAs, to assist MLAs to do their job well. That's an obligation we have. We also have an obligation on the board here to look at how things are done in the context of enhancing public credibility about accountability of members. And I just happen to think that no. 1 at this stage will do a better job of the balance of both of those obligations of ours at this point.

And I'm in no way offended, Mr. Chairman, by your defence of option no. 2 and I'm willing to consider that some more. But I think the thing I'd want to draw attention to is the SPMC ownership thing has to be part of the mix that I think we just haven't got a clear enough handle

on to make assumptions about today.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further discussion? No, I'm not offended at all. It's up to the board to decide what they want. It's my job to put forward what I think serves the members best from my perspective on what I have heard from various members. And from my experience being here as a long-time member, I think it won't be very long in the future and the members will say, well why didn't we accept that option.

But I can fully understand, I can fully understand what members are up against. I think it could very easily be sold as a way of serving the people of Saskatchewan, making it possible for each MLA to serve his or her constituents to the best way possible. And this will allow it with no further expenditures -- absolutely no further expenditures. And accountability would be there because they have to submit receipts for everything regardless of what they expended it on. And so the Legislative Assembly Office would still be monitoring that very closely.

But I've put forward my option and the members have clearly stated that's not the option they want to go with, and that's fair enough.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Mr. Chairman, if I could just ask for clarification. As I listen to your rationale, it strikes me that you could also say exactly those same things about option 1.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well it would still not give the members the flexibility. Under option 1, they still have to expend the same amount for the constituency assistant that they couldn't ... I mean with mine it would give you the full flexibility. You could spend more; you could spend less.

If you felt that you would want to spend half of your communications allowance in communications and spend the rest on personnel, that would be up to you. If you felt that's the way you could better serve your constituent, that would be up to you.

If you wanted to have real cheap accommodation and only spend \$500 a month on very cheap accommodation and spend more on communications or more on personnel, that would be up to you. It would give you the flexibility. Some want very

August 15, 1994

elaborate offices rather than . . . and spend less on communication. That would be up to them. The total amount for each MLA would be the same as presently allotted, but it would give them the flexibility of what they wish to do.

But you know, as I say, that's the way I would like to have it if I was an MLA. I would want to determine how that money should be spent in my constituency. Eric, did you have a comment?

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Yes, a comment. I don't disagree, Mr. Chairperson, with no. 2. It gives a lot of flexibility and I think that's what a lot of the members are looking for, although . . . The only thing I'd point out is, in terms of consistency, if we feel it's going to be referred to the commission, and I think as a member I want to be as consistent as possible, with throwing the doors open now and potentially closing them part way later on, it not only gives me a problem as a member for consistently serving my public or my electorate, it also gives potential problems to constituency assistants who may have their remuneration changed . . . level changed, and then have to be changed again.

And so I just . . . Although I agree with what you're saying here, I think in terms of consistency it should be . . . And so therefore I think I would move that we accept no. 1 with the recommendation including fax paper and toner, if I caught what was being agreed to here earlier.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Now that's in the first part of 1, right? You're not lumping . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- We're going to option 1.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Option 1 has two parts to it.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Well just go to the recommendation part.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, option 1, first part, which says:

That directive 4, communication, be amended as set forth in the attachment to allow members the option of claiming information technology expenditures including hardware, software, printers, peripheral equipment, supplies, and related services for installation, operation, and maintenance, and

photocopier expenditures from either the communication allowance or the constituency office and services allowance.

Plus Eric is adding on fax and toner.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- I think Glenn just said the word fax "supplies" -- probably encapsulizes it better than . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Just insert it . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Fax paper and supplies is what you're referring to, right?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- And the machine?

**A Member:** -- Fax machine is telephone.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, fax machine is under telephone already. That's unlimited.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- So the facsimile machine supplies is I guess that we're saying.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Now can you buy fax machines through your office allowance like you could any other equipment?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- You can buy a second one through your office allowance.

**A Member:** -- But the first one isn't.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- First one's telephone.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay, is that . . . Oh, we were uncertain; was there a suggestion that the second machine be put under here? Second fax machine? That was not intended? That was not . . .

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Just supplies.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Is that . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Just a comment on that specifically, because that's a . . . I mean I won't belabour it. That's been before the committee before. The notion that came to committee before was that supplies rather than office be charged to telephone allowance and was rejected at that time because we said



August 15, 1994

telephone allowance is an unlimited allowance, and you shouldn't move something out of a limited allowance to an unlimited.

But this is simply moving from an limited allowance -- office -- to the flexibility to put it to another limited allowance -- communications -- and I think accurately reflects the modern-day office reality where many of us are replacing postage letters with faxes. So it's simply an option that was not considered the last time fax supplies question came to the board.

**The Chairperson:** -- All right. Any further discussion on that?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- So can we have the reading of . . . How would the motion be worded?

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. After "photocopy expenditures" adding "and fax supplies". Okay? After "photocopy expenditures", adding "and fax supplies". Understood?

**A Member:** -- Yes.

**The Chairperson:** -- It's a parenthetical comment, still thinking . . . making a mistake. All those . . . It's just a joke, you guys.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- But the parenthetical comment is on the record now, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairperson:** -- Sorry. Strike that from the record. It never . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- That's on the record now, too.

**The Chairperson:** -- It never existed. It's just a joke.

All those in favour? Oh, did we have a seconder? It was moved by Eric; we need a seconder. I'm sorry, I didn't get a seconder. Seconded by Lynda. All those in favour? Carried. Thank you.

Okay, now we need to . . . I think we need to just discuss very briefly the effective date of this.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Is there any reason that this would want to be backdated to effective August 1?

**The Chairperson:** -- Well, yes . . .

**Ms. Borowski:** -- Backdating it six months

would probably help, you know, like . . .

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- But just to backdate it a month is really no benefit. What are the implications of backdating it say three, four months, six months? I don't . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- The board doesn't really have the authority legally to do retroactive things.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Okay. So then effective today?

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. An effective date . . . I'm told that we can do it immediately without any difficulties. Is that okay? And we will get a letter out to members or . . . Yes, we would have to inform each. We will get a letter . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- There'll be changes in the directive that will be sent out.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes. Get a letter out very quickly if we can.

All right then, we need to go to the next item on communications. Because of the change, there has to also be some change to the directive, no. 8. If you check no. 8 in bold print, that is page 4, right after the first option. You go to page 4.

The change would have to be:

Any items that have been purchased with the communications allowance funds will become the property of the Crown when the member ceases to be a member. All such items are subject to the inventory guidelines approved by the Board of Internal Economy.

I mean it just follows that if you can now buy property out of communications allowance, then that would have to be put in there.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'll move that the directive no. 4 be amended as . . . worded precisely as . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Secunder?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Are you on this point 8?

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, we're on point 8. He moved that we . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'm assuming you want to deal

with these item by item.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, yes. He's moved it. We need a seconder before we discuss it. Seconded by Eldon.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- The intent is right, but I can think of a whole host of things that will be problematic. How does advertising become the property of the Crown? How do mugs and pencils and lighters and all that?

**The Chairperson:** -- No, there's a \$50 . . . Isn't there a \$50 limit to the guidelines? Oh, I see. Okay. You're right.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- There isn't. Another point, as reviewing this stuff, I'm . . . Has this stuff been . . . When we make up these directives and we in effect make laws, is this stuff run by the Legislative Law Clerk or anybody in Justice for legality?

**The Chairperson:** -- No.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- It is my understanding, going through that book on other jurisdictions, is that in a lot of the jurisdictions that is the case. And I find us, we sit in here making up rules and regulations, and they have had not only public money but how in ever to do things, and I am really worried at times if some of this stuff ever gets into court, and it might, given some of the circumstances around this, that it has no legal bearing on it whatsoever.

And it's fine for our staff and ourselves to talk about these things, but if this stuff hasn't been charter proofed and a few things . . . Like I know as a minister in the last few years, you have lawyers coming out your ears because of the connotation that was attached to it. And I would wonder why we would not use the Legislative Law Clerk at least to be part of the drafting. I would feel more comfortable. And if he can't handle it, as I understand in other jurisdictions, then Justice is consulted. There's a natural progression of steps on all things dealing with the Board of Internal Economy. And that is the case in Ottawa. But we seem to ignore that.

And I just made a short list here: newsletters, billboards, mugs, advertising. There's all sorts of things which have been allowable under communications for decades. We now say those things all become the property of the Crown because that allowance is now eligible

to move. But we can say that, but maybe we're just kind of drifting along here looking for trouble. And I have no problem with us doing that, but I'm . . . experience over the last couple of years has made me very gun-shy about these issues. And I don't know why he would not, for instance, be physically present at all board meetings to advise as to constitutionality and those type of things.

**The Chairperson:** -- I think, Rick, you make a good point, and we have been discussing getting the Law Clerk to rewrite all the directives. In fact, we were in the process of doing that. So I don't disagree with you at all that I think we need to involve the Law Clerk a lot more in writing up the directives. We were in fact just discussing it this morning, rewriting the directives and get the Law Clerk to do it. So I don't disagree with you at all on that.

This particular one, again that makes your point. Had we written that any office equipment that has been purchased, I mean, would meet what we want. I mean that's an oversight, and we should put that in there. Any office equipment that has been purchased with communications. And that would delete all the advertising and all that kind of stuff. So I think you make a good point, and it's something that we will be getting the Law Clerk involved in I think very shortly.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'm prepared to frame the amendment, or if you want to move an amendment to second your amendment. However, I think the point you make, Rick, is bang on and is quite an oversight that I certainly had in moving it.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Go ahead.

**The Chairperson:** -- Somebody just pointed out something. By putting in office equipment -- maybe we have to say office supplies that have been purchased, because software would probably not be office equipment, or books would not be office equipment. So if you put down office supplies. It's so difficult to try and catch everything. I don't know . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- We just bought an encyclopedia set for \$800. Should they take that home with them or should that stay?

**The Chairperson:** -- And if you say equipment, someone would say, well that's not office equipment.



August 15, 1994

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well I'm certainly prepared to change the motion here. Maybe we should just talk this through and figure out what we want to say before we move the motion, rather than get hung up on the parliamentary procedure. And why don't I just withdraw the motion to facilitate that at the moment.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well we can do that or just continue the discussion on that. I'm quite . . . give a broad, you know, leeway here for discussion purposes. I think everybody knows what we're trying to do here, that anything that is of a substantial nature that is purchased with government money, reverts back to the Crown. That's basically what we're saying. And we don't want to include such things as advertising and newsletters and all that stuff, no. So if somebody can come up with some other wording here to help me out, I'd sure appreciate it.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well just maybe if I could ask you a question to perhaps help clarify this. With the inventories that have been done, is it correct that any items, for any better term at the moment, of value of \$50 or more are required to be inventoried and returned to, I guess, the province through SPMC when a member ceases to be a member. First of all, is that correct? I see Gwenn shaking her head, no.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- The restriction is that items of \$50 or more have to be on the inventory, but items from zero dollars or more have to be returned to the province. There is nothing that says if it's under \$50 you don't have to worry about it; you can give it away, or take it home. The directives that now read states that you don't have to itemize every little stapler that you have in your office. But anything that's been purchased with public funds, even if it's little, stays there when you leave.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- And so what would be the problem then if the wording here in the . . . and that's stated clearly in the office directive, is it not?

**The Chairperson:** -- I think it is.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- From what we can recall, and we just have to check that, that the inventory guidelines did not specify that it was materials purchased only by the office allowance. It said any materials purchased by public funds

should be inventoried. So it would have included your communications purchases. I don't think we were thinking of the promotional items because we presumed if members had bought mugs and so on, that they'd have already distributed them.

**The Chairperson:** -- It says in no. 9:

Any equipment, furnishings or supplies purchased with public funds, either through a direct sale or through lease-to-purchase arrangements, or through loan financing arrangements, will become the property of the Crown when the Member ceases to be a member.

That is what it says: any equipment, furnishings or supplies. That was intended by no. 8 here to cover those items, but it was never intended to cover newsletters or advertising. But I get your point. Do those have to remain there? Of course not.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- All we have to say, Mr. Chairperson, is that any items that have been purchased with the communication allowance funds as per amendment to directive 4 on whatever date be subject to the same terms and conditions as the office allowance equipment, or office allowance guidelines. That would cover it.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, that would cover it. Or we could simply change by saying, any equipment, furnishings, or supplies purchased -- same as we have in the constituency office allowance. We could say that -- any equipment, furnishings, or supplies purchased with the communications allowance funds will become the property of the Crown.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Could we say office supplies, so that it's the stuff that's been established for something at the office and not for distribution?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to think of a situation where it would be offensive to return it to the Crown, i.e., a billboard ad. If a member purchased a billboard ad and ceased to become a member, what would the net worth of this billboard ad be? Or what would the net worth be of 100 coffee mugs that may have been used for promotional material?

My guess would be that a member, before he



August 15, 1994

ceases to become a member, will ensure that they are distributed for the purposes that they were intended for, communications.

In terms of any capital purchases that may come either from the communications or the office allowance, I can't think of an instance where we would want to exempt something so that it could become the personal property of the member.

The intent of the changes to these directives was to ensure that public funds that were spent by a member would revert -- and the assets that would remain -- would revert back to the Crown and the people of the province who initially bought them. And I mean I just can't get around my mind what we would want to exempt from that.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well somebody has already suggested, what about newsletters that have been bought with public funds?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well how do you revert them to the property of the member -- the newsletter? I mean once a newsletter is put out and mailed to your constituents, I would assume that they wouldn't be stale-dated and sitting in an office and then that somebody would want them.

My guess would be that a newsletter would be printed from the communications . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well many of them have no value before they're put out; I'll agree with you, Mr. Upshall. And I could name a few specifically but I won't do that today. But I mean I don't know why a member would want half a box of newsletters after he ceases to become a member. I don't know.

**The Chairperson:** -- Ladies and gentlemen, could I suggest that we word it the same as our office constituency allowance, that any equipment, furnishings, or supplies purchased with the communications allowance funds become the property . . . Then we're consistent with the constituency office allowance.

It didn't seem to bother anybody before. And then, you know, as we rewrite all these directives through the Law Clerk, they of course would all be brought back here for board approval once we get them all rewritten. And maybe that would change these to some extent. I don't know how they write these things. I'm not a law clerk.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Mr. Speaker, I agree with your recommendation and I just want to say that the point Mr. Swenson raises with respect to having these directives vetted through some legal opinion, whether it be the Law Clerk or an independent law firm -- I'm not hard and fast on that -- but I think it's valid and I think really it's something that when the independent commission comes back with a report and when we are putting together directives that will pertain to members' allowances that quite clearly we will want to have I think legal people have a look at what we're putting forth.

On the other hand, the drafting, a legal mind drafting these directives, in most cases and in the experience that I've had with the legal community, it's damn difficult for members of the legislature and/or the general public to understand in actual fact what the directives mean.

So on one hand I think you want it in lay terms where they're easy to understand, easy to interpret. But on the other hand there needs to, I think, be some scrutiny by some legal people to ensure that they're complying with whatever we have around us.

**The Chairperson:** -- Could I just have some clarification on that? I noted you said the Law Clerk or some private firm.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well I would say in this case probably the Law Clerk would be the appropriate place to take it. In the event that the Law Clerk had a workload that he couldn't handle, then I mean we'd do that in other areas. But I think the Law Clerk is probably the best way.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, I'd be a little bit afraid of a private law firm because you'd be looking at thousands and thousands of dollars.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Mr. Chairman, I think we've talked this around. And if it's acceptable, then I will move the motion regarding the directive as you recommended. I don't have it written before me.

**The Chairperson:** -- I have it. Any equipment, furnishings, or supplies that have been purchased with the communications allowance, etc.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay, I'll move that.



August 15, 1994

**The Chairperson:** -- Seconder? Second by Eldon. All those in favour? Carried.

Okay, we have just a minor amendment on the next page, one minor amendment on the next page.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Mr. Chairperson, just I'll talk briefly on this. You talked about shortly having the Law Clerk rewrite some of the directives. Now for clarification purposes, do you mean totally rewrite or scrutinize the directives for improvement to conform of legality?

**The Chairperson:** -- No, my understanding is to rewrite all the directives so that they will -- what's the word I want? -- so that they are in keeping with the legislation that we have. Consistent format so that they're legally written and in keeping with the legislation. I'm not sure that they'll be easier to understand, but I think if something should go to court that at least the precise legal language is there. And we would bring it back.

I mean it's not that they would be done and not brought back to the board. They'd come back to the board for board approval and the Law Clerk would be here and we would go through those to make sure that the rewritten format is what the board had intended them to mean. So we would have to spend some time in going through those then. Okay? Now that'll take some time. That's not going to be here next week. Okay?

Next page then. There is a minor item I want to draw to ... and this has been ... I have touched base I believe with you, Rick, and with Linda and Eldon, I believe, on the black and white pictures. It was worded that we could only have ... pay for black and white pictures for MLAs. Well it just so happens to work out that it's cheaper to have the coloured pictures smaller in size than to have the black and white. In fact the black and white were a lot more expensive.

So I touched base with you people and you all said, okay, that's fine. And it's just here for your approval so that we're now putting in writing what we are actually doing ... have been doing for the last couple of months.

Could I have someone move that that be corrected? Lynda, seconded by Rick. Any further discussion?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- In effect, what's happening is where it formerly said, black and white pictures of students, would be changed to simply read, pictures with students?

**The Chairperson:** -- That's correct; that is what has happened.

All in favour? Carried.

You will note, because of the directive changes that we have just made, there also now have to be some changes made to the following, to include what we have just added. And we have to also add on there, plus fax supplies. Okay? We're just putting in what we have just approved.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Is fax supplies just the third item ...

**The Chairperson:** -- Way at the end. Yes, that is correct -- third item.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Where it just simply says, fax supplies?

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes.

Could I have someone move that? Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Ms. Haverstock.

Further discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

All right. And the not acceptable, there is, except as listed above -- office equipment or furnishing except as listed above. Okay? We need someone to move that.

Mr. Hagel, seconded by Ms. Haverstock. All in favour? Carried.

Okay, option no. 2 we can skip. Beautiful option.

Okay, we are by constituency assistant dental benefits. This item, I think the recommendation is very clear, that effective September 1, 1994, constituency assistants be enrolled in the public employees' dental plan.

I think, as you know, many of the employees for a fairly lengthy time were part-time employees and did not have the required number of hours in order to be eligible for the dental plan. That is no longer the case and there are a number of constituency assistants

August 15, 1994

who could be eligible, I think, at very little cost to the treasury. In fact I think the cost would be something like \$8,424 per annum. That is the recommendation that is put before you.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Mr. Speaker, I know it's a small amount, and I know that the service provided by the constituency assistants is important work. It's important work for the people of Saskatchewan and our ability to represent our constituents. And I have to say, that I really think it's unfair that we rate them based on civil servants' scale in terms of their salary, and I would very much like to see them with the ability to be enrolled in the dental plan.

The cost, as item 3 would indicate, is in the neighbourhood of \$8,500 a year. And I know that it's not an awful lot of money. I do however though worry about public perception. And let me say why I say that. Ministerial assistants have been put on a salary grid that is consistent with all other forms of civil service in that there is a range and a consistent range which is different than has been the past practice. There's now a consistent range in which they are hired and in which they are paid. There are four levels and four increments, and a ministerial assistant operating at the top of the pay level is receiving the full top-level pay. It takes a period of time to get to that level; because of the increments, it takes up to four years for a ministerial assistant to be able to achieve what that job will pay in its optimum form.

Now this isn't inconsistent with any other civil service or any other job within government in that the increments happen on an annual basis. But I want to say that I don't think the general public understand that that is the case. And I think ministerial assistants have been taking, frankly, some unfair raps because they've been treated consistently with other civil servants who have the same increment form.

As I said, I don't think the general public understand and quite clearly the media either don't want to understand or refuse to understand, and it becomes an issue. It becomes an issue where MAs (ministerial assistants) are accused of pay raises on an annual basis. And I don't know that the constituent assistants would want to be -- because of the dental plan and because of inclusion in a dental plan -- would want to be having the same kind of a public profile on an

issue that frankly I think is fair and that I think makes sense. It provides for consistent treatment. And I'm not convinced that it would in fact be treated fairly by either the ... by the media, I guess, if I'm to single in on where I think the problem is.

So having said all of that, it's my perception that the constituency assistants that I have spoken with would rather not see this implemented even though it makes sense, in terms of public policy, to treat them as we do with other clerk typist 3, I think is what their salaries are. And I think that frankly they would be more willing to forgo inclusion in the dental plan than to have the media play a football with it as they do with the increments that ministerial assistants receive which is, as I've indicated before, consistent treatment with other people within the civil service.

So for that, I'm not sure where this came from and I understand the intent, but I think at this time I would really have a difficult time to support their inclusion in the dental plan even though it makes, I think, sound public policy, and I think it's fair, and the amount of money that would be required to make this happen is really not an awful lot -- \$8,500 a year.

I guess that's sort of where I stand on this, even though I want to see it happen and I would like to see this service supplied to my constituent assistant. And I guess I really don't have any more to say on the issue right now. I'd be interested to hear what the reaction would be from, I guess, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party with respect to this issue.

Like I say, on one hand it would be unfair to refuse it, but on the other hand I think the unfairness and the profile that the issue would take wouldn't justify implementing it at this time.

And secondly I think it might be something that we may want to put off until we do budget deliberations which should begin in the next few months as we put together the next Legislative Assembly budget for the next fiscal year.

**The Chairperson:** -- I have two people on the list: Lynda and then Rick.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Well I'm sure that our three assistants would love to have this coverage as



August 15, 1994

would probably most of the 63 other constituency assistants across the province. But I do think that there is a good likelihood that this would send out a signal as further evidence that there be in fact privilege extended to select individuals and not ordinary citizens.

Let me back that up by the dilemma that would be created here. First of all, it poses the following questions: do we consider constituency assistants to be bona fide public servants entitled to all of the benefits to persons holding the status of public servant? And if the answer is yes, then that has to be followed up with another question, and that question becomes: how can we give these individuals all benefits due to public servants without requiring them to compete for their positions in open competition, as any public servant would have to, or for that matter, having standardized job descriptions and duties?

So I think that we would have to resolve finding the appropriate answers to those questions before we in fact provide them with dental benefits.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I agree with both Eldon and Lynda that these people are political appointments and I don't think the public of today would accept that. I don't think, Eldon, you can assuage your conscience the way you pay your ministerial assistants by mixing them up in here though. That's another issue entirely. I find it a rather strange leap of faith.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I may have to elaborate then. You're begging me to elaborate on it. I mean that's . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Don't blame the poor constituency assistants on the way you pay your staff. I mean I've got mine for the same 10 years but there's no question. Like Lynda said, she's there because she has my political appointment, and I think she works very hard on behalf of the public and leaves her politics at the door when she goes to work and is a good servant of the folks, but she is what she is. And until I was prepared to accept somebody from the Public Service Commission who went through a competition, I don't think I should have the right to ask the taxpayer to provide dental things for it. And I guess if we're so flush that Eldon's right, we should look at it at budget time.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Any further discussion? All those in favour of the recommendation? All those opposed? Unanimous.

I was told that I went ahead of myself and there was no motion, nobody moved the motion, and so, if the board declined to receive it, I guess there was no mover. Okay, so I guess I should really have asked for a mover.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Where did this come from? Like was this on the minutes before? I didn't see it there.

**The Chairperson:** -- Oh yes.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- But not as a decision item.

**The Chairperson:** -- Oh yes. Yes, item number . . . decision item no. 3.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- From the last meeting?

**The Chairperson:** -- No, no, from the agenda that was sent out to you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . oh, it came . . . a request of certain MLAs who have asked that the dental item be put before the board.

Any MLA can ask. Any MLA can ask for an item to be put on the agenda of the board, and you know we've been trying to get members to go through their member on the board, but they don't have to. If the members on the board refuse to accept items, then the member has the opportunity to ask that an item be put on the agenda for the board to consider. That's why, when I put the agenda before you, if somebody wished to have dropped that, deleted it, they certainly could have, could have moved that that item be deleted and would not have been here for a discussion. Okay?

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, item no . . . Do you want to take a break, a slight break before we . . . Item no. 4 is scheduled for tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock, and this is with the item with SaskTel, I think, as you are aware. So item no. 4, we will not proceed with item no. 4 but go on to item no. 5. But do the members want to take a slight break or continue? All right let's take a . . .

**A Member:** -- Where are you going to go to smoke now that it's after July 1?

August 15, 1994

**A Member:** -- This has absolutely nothing to do ... (inaudible) ... just because there's a break now. I don't have to.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, but if Mr. Lautermilch is going to smoke: not out there, I would suggest out back there. That's where the smoking is. I notice Mr. Hagel pointed that way; he meant really that way.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- But as usual I was wrong.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes.

**A Member:** -- So even the outdoors are regulated.

**The Chairperson:** -- In front of the building they are, yes.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Who's decision was that?

**The Chairperson:** -- Arbitrary decision, as a lot of things are. There will be a 10-minute break. We will resume again at 10 after 3. Thank you.

**The meeting recessed for a period of time.**

**The Chairperson:** -- We can begin our meeting again.

During the break there was a request by the media to make available a copy of the survey that was done, so I would like to have the board make that decision as to whether or not we make a copy of the survey available to the media.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, I think that the survey probably should be released. It's all public information, quite clearly, some of it gathered from jurisdictions across the country, and I think they should have the opportunity to have a look at and do a comparison between Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions. I think frankly we've made some major inroads in terms of reform of our directives and I think they should have a chance to have a look at this.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Yes, I do too. But I'm just wondering how much they are willing to reimburse the cost of preparing it.

**The Chairperson:** -- I don't know; I didn't ask

that. If we were to make it available I think we would probably make one copy available, and if they wish to have more copies, they could either xerox it or do whatever they wished. But I think we would make one copy available. Because it's a fairly thick report and would be fairly expensive and so I'm suggesting we make one copy available to the media. Agreed?

**A Member:** -- Agreed.

**The Chairperson:** -- All right. So we'll make a copy available then.

All right, we now are on item no. 5, and that is on expense allowance issues. And, ladies and gentlemen, these are all deferred issues of other meetings. So the first one on it is educational events, and that members have the option to pay for educational events attended by constituency assistants, such as training seminars, classes, etc. Constituency office allowance funds would be used to pay these expenses. That is the recommendation.

And recommendation no. 2, that funds from one of the expense allowances be used to reimburse the travel costs of constituency assistants attending training seminars.

So if we could go with the first recommendation or first suggestion. Is there any discussion on it?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- First of all, maybe if I can make a comment about both of them combined; but I recognize that the one that's before us right at the moment is related to educational events. I support both.

However I would hold the view that we would want to expand the eligibility for reimbursement of expense allowances for constituency assistants beyond ... only limited to attendance at training seminars or events.

But let me just comment on both together. I think one of the things that's happened over the past ... less than a decade, is that the role of constituency offices and therefore of constituency office staff has changed dramatically. I think the public has come to expect a substantially larger level of access to constituency services, both in terms of time available and ease of access. And consequently there's been a substantial change, I think, in Saskatchewan over the last



August 15, 1994

decade in terms of the demands put on an MLA's office, along with the changing technology in our society, I think.

And I just reflect back to the early days when I was first elected, in 1986. Nowadays, we certainly would see, I would think, at least as many, I think likely more, constituents in any given week who are seeking either assistance or information. And along with that, the ability of MLAs to provide information to constituents in a much shorter time span in the last eight years that I've been involved as an MLA has been substantially reduced.

Consequently, I think the level of expertise required by constituency assistants in 1994, I think, is dramatically different than what it was 10 years ago. And most MLAs will have an assistant; some MLAs will have maybe perhaps more than one assistant because they've got more than one location.

But however they're located by MLAs -- and those will vary -- I think what is common is they are people who are required to have a fairly broad range of skills. Some will come to constituency offices, I think, because of their public relations skills, their problem-solving skills, perhaps their clerical skills. By the end of the day, they have to have -- maybe because in the public relations context -- their communication skills; in the context that we talked about earlier here, the ability to put together things in print form, things that help an MLA communicate, and not only in terms of layout but also in terms of presentation.

It's extremely difficult to find a person that is willing to assume the employment risks that come with working for somebody whose continuation depends on public approval and has all of those kind of skills that the modern-day office provides.

And so I first of all am speaking very strongly in support of the ability to use the office allowance to allow our constituency assistants to improve their skills. There is absolutely not a single penny more being permitted for the use of members by doing this, but we're simply expanding the ability of members to use that allowance to improve our service to constituents by helping our constituency assistants develop their skills.

I think it would be true to say that in any modern-day office, whatever its purpose for

existing, if you're not improving your use of technology and the skills that go with it -- that alone -- then you're probably an office that's on your way out of existence, and that is just as true for an MLA as it is for any other office in Saskatchewan today.

So, number one, I strongly support the ability to use our allowances to enable our constituency assistants to improve their skills, as related to the performance of their jobs.

Then secondly, because that will, with the exception perhaps of Regina or Saskatoon members maybe . . . Chances are that at least some and probably most opportunities to develop skills or knowledge which are necessary to serve constituents will involve leaving the place where the office is located. And if we're going to recognize the legitimate value of educational experiences for our constituency assistants, then it would be silly to not at the same time recognize the validity of reimbursing for costs -- reimbursing the costs, I should say -- assumed by our constituency assistants in order to get training.

But further than that, Mr. Chairman, I think there is some legitimacy in expanding the reimbursement for expenses for constituency assistants beyond just the attendance at training seminars. This may be more relevant to rural members, and maybe others will want to comment, than it is to me.

My constituency assistants, both . . . the work in the office is jointly shared by the other MLA from Moose Jaw and myself; our constituency assistants live within the city. But it will be quite common for rural members, I would think particularly, that constituency assistants and offices (a) are not necessarily located in the same community; and for sure whether they are or not, MLAs will have meetings and need to be represented by their constituency assistants I would think frequently in places outside of where the constituency assistant happens to call home.

And that if a constituency assistant is doing some travelling and bearing personal expense to work for an MLA to be part of providing those range of services that our constituents have come to expect, then I don't think it's fair for us as employers of constituents assistants to assume that they have to personally eat those expenses.



August 15, 1994

Again, there's not a single penny being added to the allowances being made available to MLAs here. But I think that's a legitimate office experience if an employee is bearing some personal expense to carry out his or her duties as a constituency assistant, that we permit that.

I'll address that perhaps by way of the precise wording for the second one when we get to that. But I see these tied together. And I think what we're simply doing here, we've had a lot of discussion here today about the role of the MLA and MLA's office, and therefore I'll conclude then by saying that I would support . . . Maybe we'll let some discussion continue before moving the motion. You've got the recommendation; I'd be happy to move the motion on the first recommendation.

**The Chairperson:** -- All right. Is there any further discussion?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Well my colleague from Moose Jaw makes sense, as usual, in his arguments, but I'm perplexed in how we could do this when we won't fix their teeth.

We said it's not worthwhile to include them in the dental plan. And they'll probably have their teeth longer than they will the job with me. So I know we're not allocating new money here, but we are allocating money that presently may be not spent onto other things. We've encouraged, I think, people to be as frugal as possible. I don't spend all my allowances. I guess I can always be creative, Glenn, in finding new ways to spend it. But at the end of the day it's still the taxpayer spends X on me.

If you get a new computer, whenever we've changed equipment, part of the contract always is that they have to come and they have to provide us with so many hours of training. And it's competitive out there today and they all do that. And it doesn't matter what piece of equipment you buy today, they're all willing to provide that at their cost, not ours.

I really wonder how many constituency secretaries, as we've known them, and call them constituency assistants, travel around, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. You're more likely to see that in urban settings where they can go down to the Co-op hall or whatever and take in a meeting for you.

But for my secretary to drive from Briercrest to

Central Butte, except for about two months of the year, is not something I would ask her to do by herself. I wouldn't ask a female to be out on the road driving 150 miles to attend a one-hour meeting with the snow blowing or the mud flying. And that's reality in the constituency that I serve -- miles and miles and miles of nothing; and damn few places to get somebody to change a tire.

And I don't want to risk it; I don't want her risking that. She's not equipped for that. So she goes to meetings in Moose Jaw where I have a concern, but that's no extra dough. And I think if we do this, it's just one more thing where we're thinking up things for us to spend our allowances, that if they're not spent, get turned back in.

And the commission is going to look at a lot of things. Part of that recommendation may be that the type of individual or individuals that serve the public, vis-a-vis constituency offices, need to have a different mandate. They're simply not a clerk typist 2. And if that's the recommendation, fine. We'll decipher that as members and try and put in place a regime that we think is good for servicing the public.

But I'm very leery of expanding anything right now that we don't necessarily have to. That's my view.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Just very briefly in response to the question Rick raises, and I think he went on to answer his own question: unlike the previous item that was rejected because it represented an additional cost and was described by the committee here as worthy of consideration when coming to budget time next year -- and that's really the appropriate time to consider it if at all -- this represents absolutely no additional allowance to be made available to any member.

I guess if one looks at it, as Rick says, it's something you pay for that you're not paying for now and otherwise you wouldn't pay, I guess it is. I think in most cases it's a matter of making priority decisions. We've been talking a good part of this meeting about giving some flexibility to the expenditure of office allowances so as to be able to assign them to communications allowance because members have not been able to do them.

I point out this is an office allowance expenditure, which is where it is. And I simply



August 15, 1994

don't believe that for the large majority of members this would represent any additional cost, but a priority decision about the operation of an office. So just to respond directly to the question he raises.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, you know I think certainly there is some different circumstances in different areas and members will take different approaches and different attitudes towards how they serve their constituents. I can think of one example and I guess let me just briefly outline a scenario that may be different from that of Mr. Swenson in his riding.

The member from Shellbrook-Torch River is an example, has a constituency assistant who lives about 20 miles from town, north of Prince Albert. And it may be that we're a heartier lot in the North, I don't know. But she commutes to town on a daily basis, winter, summer, spring, fall. She as well attends to meetings in Smeaton on a regular basis. He has constituency office hours out there, and she travels to Smeaton to attend to the work that they do out there. In a lot of cases the member is east of Smeaton in his riding which extends quite a ways beyond, and will come back to Smeaton, meet her there, and then they meet with constituents there.

And I think the intent here is within the existing budget to be able to reimburse his constituency assistant and others who find themselves in a similar circumstance, to be able to reimburse them for the mileage and the expenses they incur in terms of attending to meetings in those areas. There's many times I'm sure when that constituency assistant will travel with the member whenever that's possible. Sometimes it's not and I would suggest that on the rare occasion it would be a reasonable expenditure within the budget to reimburse her mileage.

And I think there are some other differences too in that there certainly is a difference between a person who has experienced the job of the constituency assistant for a period of time and who understands the role, understands the job, the nuances of that particular job, and over a period of time who has developed expertise to be able to handle that job.

And I think interaction in terms of professional development and constituency assistants, one working with the other, is certainly a positive in

order to train new people, from the experience that's been gained by those who have been around for awhile.

But the bottom line is, is I don't think this is any kind of comparison to the agenda item we talked to earlier because there are no budget implications; it's simply members determining, having the ability to determine how best they can serve their constituents with the existing dollars that are available to them. And certainly it isn't the intent to create any incremental expenditures in order to be creative in terms of finding different ways to spend money. I think what it is is an attempt to try and allow constituency assistants to act in a professional manner, develop the training that may be required and/or classes, seminars within, as I've said before, existing budgets.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further discussion? Could I have someone move the recommendation? Moved by Mr. Hagel. I assume you're moving the recommendation at the bottom of that page.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Bottom of which page?

**The Chairperson:** -- That the constituency office allowance . . . Is that correct? Page 1.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Right, yes.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Item 5, page 1.

That the constituency office allowance be amended to allow members the option to pay from this allowance for education courses attended by constituency assistants; the course must be relevant to the job duties of the constituency assistant.

That is correct?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Moved.

**The Chairperson:** -- Moved by Mr. Hagel. Do we have a seconder? Seconded by Mr. Upshall. Any further discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

We then are on item no. 2. And before we proceed with item no. 2, let me just point out that if item 2 were adopted, that there would be a number of people who would not be eligible under that directive, that is cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Leader of the



Opposition, because they do not receive a travel allowance.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Then you're saying that the travel allowance would pay for the constituency assistant?

**The Chairperson:** -- That's correct. It is recommended that out of the travel allowance that is presently going to MLAs, that they be allowed out of that travel allowance to pay for constituency assistants to attend the training seminars and so on. Again, no increase in expenditures but that it come out of the travel allowance of the MLA, if they wish to pay for those expenditures.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, let me repeat then what I had referred to before, that it would be my view that the appropriate place for reimbursement of expenses incurred by an employee of the MLA, a constituency assistant, would be in the office allowance as a legitimate office expense, as it is in thousands of offices across Saskatchewan, when there are employees who are reimbursed for expenses. I don't have a proposed wording, and I wonder if I may ...

**The Chairperson:** -- Well if that is all you are attempting to amend, then you could simply say: that the constituency office allowance be amended to permit members ... We would delete "travel" and substitute therefor: that the constituency office allowance be amended.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well maybe if I could just conclude what I was wanting to say. Because I think what I would like to do is to refer this to the Clerk and then ask for at our next meeting a recommended wording to accomplish these things.

It seems to me administratively the appropriate way of doing this would be to have on the form that the constituency assistants use for payment, to alter the form to provide for claiming for expenses. These have to be signed by MLAs and approved before they're sent in. And that the motion should make very clear under what circumstances it can be approved and also very clear what the maximums are.

And I would think maximum, you know, that under no circumstances could anything beyond the Public Service Commission rates be approved, for example. Because there has

to be an element in accountability here in doing this.

And I just don't have that clear enough in my own mind to propose a motion at this meeting. Again, I wonder if we could have some discussion and describe an intent and then request the precise wording, because I think the wording is -- in my view anyhow -- is that the wording is not only in a directive but it would require some alteration of the forms that are being used by the Legislative Assembly Office as well, and that we just deal with it appropriately to take care of it in one motion.

**The Chairperson:** -- I think I will ask the Clerk to respond to that because I'm not familiar whether or not those forms have to be changed or not. I just don't know.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Mr. Hagel, do you want to include in-constituency travel then for more than just the training seminars but within constituency travel?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes, the training seminars but, as I described before, when constituency assistants are having travel-related expenses in performance of their duties as a constituency assistant. And there may also ... I don't know but there may also be some need to alter the form to permit for the reimbursement for the educational as well.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, just a couple of points. I guess I would see this as having to come ... because some members don't have travel and accommodation allowances, and that I guess it would need to come from either the constituency office allowance or from the communications, one of the two. I would also see this as being very limited and accountable. I don't think that there ... you know, certainly the intent is not to have a constituency assistant acting as the MLA. The MLA is paid on a formula and is given the ability to travel in his riding, his or her riding. I think the intent here is to, on a limited basis, allow the CA to facilitate the work of the MLA.

So I think we would want to have maybe a recommendation ... not a recommendation but quite clearly some kind of an outline as to what options we might want to look at and bring them back to a subsequent meeting of this board.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Could I just have you



August 15, 1994

clarify that for a moment? You're talking about the recommendations regarding what?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well I don't think you were here for the first part of the discussion on item 5 as it pertains to, I guess, reimbursing constituency assistants for professional development seminars, those kinds of things, out of the existing funds. The committee voted on that and the first part of that was adopted, was passed by the committee.

The second part deals with the travel costs to attend these types of seminars, and what we're discussing is where they would be paid from, how it would be accounted for to the Legislation Assembly Office, but as well there was a request from Mr. Hagel that we look at in-constituency travel. As an example, if a member has one constituency assistant and on maybe a weekly or a monthly basis will have constituency days in a municipal office, as an example, in a community maybe 30 miles away from where home base is, that the constituency assistant would be allowed to claim travel to and from that meeting on a limited basis.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Yes, that's what I really wanted to speak to; I wanted to make sure that I understood what you were talking about, Glenn, and you were asking for recommendations so I wondered if that was surrounding his comment.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- The recommendation regarding the wording of it, yes.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Yes. I'm interested, is there going to be a cap considered regarding this expenditure as far as travel claims are concerned? I'm just wondering if travel claims by the constituency assistants would be allowed to a maximum per year of an expenditure of a certain amount of dollars.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I think quite clearly that's the intent. As I indicated to the Clerk that there needs to be a cap, there needs to be a limit on this. It's not the intent to have a constituency assistant travelling the length and the breadth of a riding, you know, in terms just reimbursement of some legitimate expenses, limited expenses that would come out of the existing funds available to MLAs to be dealt with on that basis.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- And I really think it's

important to have it articulated what any kind of travel is for.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Agreed.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- But simply going from, you know, one's own home to wherever for a job, that's one thing. But I do think that, you know, it's within reason; particularly in rural areas it really puts a lot of demands on people's time and their pocketbook to do certain things and we have to be cognizant of that. But I think that there has to be a lot of checks and balances, one be a maximum per year expenditure.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I don't know when you came in. What I would suggest is that this is a constituency office that gets . . . this has to be from the constituency office allowance.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Oh, okay.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- And the one that's the recommendation that's written here says from the travel allowance. But what I was suggesting is that the allowance that it would be drawing from, the constituency office allowance, which would not increase any because of this.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Maybe I've been at this too long, but I mean these are not bureaucrats, folks, we're talking about here. I mean in a previous movie here we talked about these people being what they are. These are political appointments. Okay?

Ms. Haverstock said until we're prepared to go through a competition and they're picked by the Public Service Commission, we shouldn't be doing things. I mean does anyone think in the minds of the public that this person running around your constituency is other than what they are? They are a political appointment. And if they're getting access to the taxpayer, you know it's no more than what's been allocated.

Most of those people will indulge in political activity because that's been our system. We shouldn't knock them; they're good people. But that's been our system. And I mean I can see a scenario where a member is going to retire so the anointed one is the constituency assistant and travels around a bit, gets to know the folks, you know. I mean I'm only repeating to you what the coffee row talk will be in my town. I legitimately could hire someone on and



August 15, 1994

they're my constituency assistant and get to all the right places and their travel expense is covered.

In an ideal world those kind of conversations wouldn't occur, but the reality of politics in this province is that until we change public perception of what those people are, that will be the perception. You're talking about things that are nice in a perfect world, but it ain't perfect. And I don't know if we can afford the criticism that goes along with these types of changes without changing some very significant fundamentals of the system.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, I think we can put together a directive then, put together a package that will clearly articulate that these are not for attendance to political rallies but that they allow the ability of a constituency where a member chooses to have constituency office hours in outlying areas, the ability to travel to those locations.

Now, I mean I find this quite interesting, this whole conversation. I sat on this board at a time when the constituency assistant salaries and the limits were increased under your administration from a half time to a full time, and I didn't see this argument mounted at that time. There was incremental funding, fairly dramatic incremental funding. I didn't see the argument mounted by any members of the government side at that particular time . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Or the opposition.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well, and that's fine. But I'm not the one that's making the argument. I'm saying that these people . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I'm talking about the world we live in, Eldon.

**The Chairperson:** -- Order, order.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- What I'm saying is that these people serve a legitimate reason. They're there for a legitimate reason. And I think they do a lot of good work. And certainly they're political people; that's how they're hired.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Right.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- But by the same token they also manage to funnel through the bureaucracy, whether it's an opposition CA or

whether it's a government CA. And they help people with social services and with workers' compensation every day and they do it on a daily basis. And I can tell you that the constituents who I represent are well aware of the good work that these people do. Otherwise there'd be no need for a constituency office, period.

Now if you're a proponent of doing away with constituency offices and the people that staff them, then make your case. But all I'm saying . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I didn't say that.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I have the floor. All I'm saying is that for the work that they are doing, they're being reimbursed with a pay cheque on a monthly or biweekly . . . bimonthly basis.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Right.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- And all we're saying is within the allowance that we would allow -- when they're travelling rather than when they're working by the hour -- but when they're incurring some costs to travel to a constituency office, that they be allowed to claim for travel out of that allowance.

Now you can take your position. You've put it forth. I've put forth my position. I've indicated that I think it can be done. We should look at it on a limited basis and have asked the Clerk to bring back some options that we can look at. And if you choose to vote against that, that's fine. If the committee chooses not to accept that, that too is fine. But I think we should have a look at it.

I know there is some legitimate expenses and I think that we can reallocate some money from within that, the same as we've done with rent. Quite clearly your constituency office, by your people, may be viewed as being a political office. And I may not. I don't know that.

But we've already in this meeting moved and put in the ability to move from the communications allowance so that people can pay rent. Now some may think that's an illegitimate way of reallocating funds. I don't. I think it makes some sense because I think the offices are worthwhile. And if you're of the opinion that the offices are nothing than a den for political hackery, make the motion that we



August 15, 1994

get rid of them, and we'll have that debate.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- I think that there are certain things that have come to bear, certain other realities. I know that Rick has talked about some of the perceptions out there.

I've spent some time over the last couple of months travelling around rural Saskatchewan. One of the things that comes up quite frequently of course are the new constituency boundaries. Some of these new constituencies are about 640 kilometres around. I think that creates a new kind of reality.

I know that the argument that I used before about constituency assistants, they are not what I would deem bona fide public servants, but I don't think that it's the same argument here. I think that they have certain kinds of responsibilities that are asked of them by their MLAs and that if people are to go to different parts of large constituencies and to do the job that's being asked of them, that they shouldn't have to be out of pocket for those kinds of expenses.

And I think that there can be some restrictions put on this so that there is very strict accountability. I know that when I was thinking of this I thought of a maximum of let's say \$500 per year. And you're not going to be going around doing a whole lot of cavorting on that kind of expense for travel.

And I think there are other things that we may want to consider here. I don't know what it's like for some people who live quite a distance from Regina, in outlying constituencies, to have their constituency assistant come to Regina once. But I know that that would be, if we're talking about the general current travel rates that you were talking about earlier, that that would cost \$150 from Saskatoon to Regina return.

So I think we can be flexible and reasonable on this, and I guess in some ways I'm differing with you, Rick, but I don't see them as apples and apples with the previous concern about the dental plan.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well there is no motion before us. There's a recommendation before us that this be taken back. I don't know if that was made as a motion.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Would you like a motion formulated?

**The Chairperson:** -- Well we need something so we can deal with it. If members wish to refer it back, then you just get it referred back with instructions, I guess.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Let me just attempt a verbal . . . I haven't written something down here -- but to give some direction. I'll move that:

Recommendation number whatever here be referred to the Clerk for recommendation at a future meeting, which would provide for reimbursement of expenses to constituency assistants from the constituency office allowance for expenses incurred in the carrying out of the constituency assistant's duties, and providing for a limited use of the reimbursement privilege.

If somebody wants to alter some of that, but I think that summarizes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And as long as I don't have to repeat that.

**The Chairperson:** -- Could I get someone to repeat that? I sure couldn't.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- We'll develop the minute from the verbatim.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Could you read it out?

**Ms. Saum:** -- I missed the last three words. Okay, Glenn Hagel moved that we . . . Did you say we refer to the Clerk for recommendation at a future meeting, or we . . . Anyway.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes, refer to the Clerk for future . . . Yes.

**Ms. Saum:** -- Refer to the Clerk for a recommendation at a future meeting, which would provide for reimbursement to constituency assistants from constituency office allowance for expenses incurred in the constituency assistant's duties and providing for a limited use of . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Of the reimbursement privilege.

**Ms. Saum:** -- Oh. Does that make sense?

August 15, 1994

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- I think the only thing you might want to add in there is travel expenses, not just expenses.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay, what . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- To provide for reimbursement for constituency assistants from the constituency office for travel expenses incurred in carrying out the constituency assistant duties within the constituency . . . well, you might say that because you might want just . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- No, because I want to accomplish both -- within the constituency as well as . . . because it will frequently be the case that training things that the assistants do require . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- All right, we have a motion. Do we have a seconder? That this be referred to the Clerk? Seconded by Eldon. Further discussion? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously.

All right. The next item then is that it be permitted to charge hospitality items, up to a certain dollar limit, to one of the expense allowances.

Now here again, ladies and gentlemen, this is not an increase of expenditures. It's simply taking, or giving, MLAs the opportunity to charge certain hospitality items out of one of their present allowances.

As you know there is no way today, if you have a public meeting, to provide for certain hospitality items such as beverages -- we're referring of course to non-alcoholic beverages here -- to provide for coffee or tea or juices or even doughnuts or a few goodies of that nature. You cannot, at the present time, pay for any of those out of any of the allowances that we presently have. And a number of MLAs have requested that this be allowed. So that's why this is before you.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Well I can understand the circumstances under which some people may want to be able to use some of their allotted budget in this way, but I absolutely disagree with it and I think this can be perceived as a recipe for abuse. And I think that if people actually expect a free lunch or free coffee or anything else these days from a politician, if they do they have to learn otherwise.

Most people are quite prepared to put in their 25 cents worth or their dollar or their anything else at a public meeting to pay for coffee. And I just think it's a frivolous use of our dollars -- taxpayers' dollars.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Yes. I think that, as opposed to the last agenda item whereby the debate was around the service, to improve the service of a member to his constituents, I agree with the last speaker that this is not, and it has nothing to do with improving a service to a constituent, using taxpayers' money for that purpose.

And I think that snack items could be expanded dramatically to be a snack buffet or something, with somebody's great imagination. Even though I know the need and the convenience it does create to be able to provide coffee and doughnuts at meetings, I just think that it doesn't really . . . we're not really using taxpayers' dollars here to improve the service of a member -- a member's services -- to his constituents. So I think that this should not be carried forward, as Lynda has said.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I'm going to pass. I agree with the former speakers.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further discussion? Do I have a mover? You will move what?

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- I'll move that recommendation no. 3 be, I guess, be removed.

**The Chairperson:** -- That it not be dealt with or that it not be proceeded with?

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Well, actually rejected I think would be better.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Rejected, okay. Do we have a seconder? Seconded by Mr. Hagel. Any further discussion? All those in favour? Carried.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have one further item on the agenda for today. Item no. 4 has been deferred, but we have item no. 6 on the agenda that is put on at the request of Ms. Haverstock: independent commission. And I will say no further about it; I don't know any more about it.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Well I think that this is something that we've discussed at each



August 15, 1994

meeting since January 6 when a motion was put forward that the Minister responsible for SPMC, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party report to the next meeting of the board with . . . not limited to the following items. There were three items stated: terms of reference, membership, and budget for an independent commission on MLA compensation and payments.

This item came up again at our March 3 board agenda; and I don't know if you recall, but the quorum for the meeting was lost before any significant discussion of the proposed commission took place. But we were assured at that time that in fact there was a commitment for the three of us to get together and do some work on a whole proposal for an independent commission and that a meeting would be convened.

So my rationale for asking for this item to be discussed today is twofold. First of all, we have an agenda that I think today, if we look at it, was devoted almost entirely to making small kinds of amendments for the directives. And this is similar to what we've done in the past at previous meetings. And I think that if we're truly committed to the concept of an independent commission . . . And this is not any single party's idea or individual's idea. I know that Rick had had this on as an agenda item before I even came on the Board of Internal Economy, and I know that the government has made statements that they very much are committed to this concept as well.

I think if we really are committed, then we should empower a commission and soon. Because right now we seem to be moving the pieces around the board, making small changes, when I think that many of the more fundamental things should be addressed by the commission and many of these other things then would be addressed in turn.

Even though any recommendations of this commission would not likely be enforced before the next general election, I think that we would be doing the public a great service if in fact we assured them that the system was going to be addressed. I think in turn we would be doing them a great disservice by continuing to tinker with the system that we currently have. And we need a significant overhaul and I think a lot of people believe that.

Secondly, given the past session's changes to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, I wonder if our role as board members in asking for a commission to report has been affected by that. The old wording -- and it's section 67.1(3) of the Act -- called for a resolution of the Assembly to report on allowances, and the new wording of that section calls for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to require such a report by order in council.

So I am wanting to know today if possible, if anyone has this answer; whether or not, Eldon, you are still intending to consult with Rick as Leader of the Opposition, and myself, in drafting the guidelines for the commission, given the changes in the Act. That's one of the things I'm interested in.

Secondly, I think that there's been a great deal of cooperation and assistance from everyone -- the official opposition, and I would like to think the third party, in producing amendments to Bill 70 in the last session. And I think that a lot of headway was made in resolving some of the concerns of this board regarding the expenditures of certain allowances, as well as broadening the powers of a commission.

But the existence of that legislation in itself does not actually establish the commission. And while much of the terms of reference for such a commission is contained in the legislation, it is my interpretation, and I am open to correction, that we have yet to discuss the budget for the commission, the membership of that commission, and the time frame for the formation and the reporting of the commission.

So I'm hoping that by putting this on the agenda today, that some of those details can be discussed, and if not, I guess what I'd like to do is to end up having some firm commitment for a date and a time when we can proceed with this kind of discussion.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, Mr. Chairman, I've discussed this issue with Mr. Swenson, and I guess it was felt that after the session, at least certainly I was of the opinion that it was time to go home and reacquaint ourselves with our constituents and our family. And all of us I'm sure were either on summer political tours or doing whatever we do as politicians and as folks who do have families and that we wanted



August 15, 1994

some time to have some time back in our ridings.

So I didn't ask to meet with you either in July or in August. And the discussions that I've had with Mr. Swenson would indicate he would feel comfortable with a time frame some time in September, that we would sit down and discuss your concerns and your thoughts with respect to the composition, you know, the issues that have been raised in terms of the independent commission and what its role will be.

And I would think that we've all had a bit of a summer break and in September we could get together and discuss as we had committed to doing in prior meetings of the board. As you've indicated, there was a great deal of cooperation in terms of Bill 70, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I appreciated the cooperation of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party in putting together amendments that were supported by all parties. I think the goal that we're trying to achieve quite clearly with the introduction of these amendments is that we will establish a commission that will act in the interest of the members of the legislature and of the people of Saskatchewan. Because the bottom line here is that what is good for the members of the legislature is in actual fact the same as what will benefit the people of Saskatchewan in that they want some accountability from their members, they want to ensure that members of the Legislative Assembly are spending public funds in an appropriate fashion and that the allowances that will be there are accountable and that they'll be fair.

And also that the members of the legislature have protection in terms of their operations and their actions from themselves, in some cases, and I would assume in many cases when there are some discrepancies in the guidelines, a lot of it is done in error. And so I think the establishment of the independent commission is really going to be a benefit to all of the people of the province. So we're anxious to get on with this process.

The other issue is quite clearly the amount that members of the legislature are paid; what the remuneration is for the job that they do. And I

think the role of the commission will be important in establishing some degree of confidence that all of these issues are broadly accepted.

And so I just say in closing that I look forward to the discussions that we will have and hopefully we can agree on the make-up of the commission, its mandate, the scope of it. And we've done some of that in terms of section 4(1) of the amendments. So I think we've made some strides right now, so some good things really that have happened.

In terms of the nature of the board, I've been a member of this board since 1986 and I don't think the nature of the issues that we deal with has changed, nor do I think it will change. We do deal with small issues, some that seem inconsequential. But I'd just say in terms of what we've done today, just this one item, I hear members were having a heck of a time to pay the rent. We've made some amendments that allow for transfer from one allowance to another.

The commission, as you've indicated, is probably going to be in the report. Whatever it is probably won't be put in place until after this term of government. And so we're going to be dealing with these issues between now and then on an ongoing basis. And I know it's tedious and I know sometimes it's frustrating, and there are issues that all of us would rather not deal with. But this board was put in place to deal with them, and whether they seem to be inconsequential or whether they aren't, they're important issues to the members and we need to deal with them in the fairest way we can.

So I anticipate asking -- there are three of us -- finding a mutually agreeable time, some time around, you know, the last couple of weeks in September when the kids are back to school, when everybody's back into the routine of doing what we do as members of the legislature.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further discussion? There's no decision to be made on that item. It was before us for information and discussion purposes.

That, ladies and gentlemen, ends the item or the agenda for today. We have one item left and that was scheduled for tomorrow, and that is a presentation by SaskTel. And so that will



August 15, 1994

---

proceed tomorrow. I have a question: is 9 o'clock a suitable time for people? And we will continue until the item is completed. I don't have any other items to consider tomorrow except that one.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, could I just ask how long the presentation is.

**The Chairperson:** -- The presentation's about a half an hour.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Okay.

**The Chairperson:** -- But I've asked SaskTel not to extend it beyond a half an hour. I think there'll be a number of questions that MLAs will have pertaining to their individual offices and so I've asked them to be ready to answer those questions.

Do I have a motion of adjournment? Moved by Lynda, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch. All in favour? Great, unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.





## BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

August 16, 1994

**The Chairperson:** -- It now being past 9 o'clock, and we do have a quorum, I think we should begin the meeting.

Before I begin the meeting, I would like to introduce the people that we have here this morning from SaskTel who will be making a presentation. Sitting directly to my right, or immediately to my right, is Phil Bohay, the manager of customer services, and to Phil's right is John Meldrum who is the vice-president of corporate counsel, I believe. Okay.

And I would ask members to withhold your questions until the presentation has been made. Write down your questions that you may have as they arise, and ask them after the presentation. So I will, without any further ado, turn over the meeting to the SaskTel people.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Thank you. As mentioned, we're here to provide you with some information about the services that might assist you in running your constituency offices more efficiently and cost-effectively. And with that we have a hand-out that has significant amount of material and detailed information in it which has the details of what I'll present today. I'll cover the highlights in a short presentation and then we'll have some opportunity for questions after, as the Speaker has suggested.

As I go through this please keep in mind that each office has some unique requirements or is operated just somewhat differently and that we'd be prepared to do a detailed analysis of any individual constituency office at any time, and feel free to call us to do that.

On page 2 of the presentation, that just gives you the three broad categories of information that I will cover. And that's long-distance services, local access, and then additional services.

The next page ... In the portfolio of long-distance services, there's really only two that would be probably applicable to a constituency office, and those are Advantage Preferred and Advantage 800.

Firstly, the Advantage Preferred is a long-distance savings plan for those customers who spend more than \$25 a month in long distance and calling-card calls. It provides a standard

rate throughout Saskatchewan for all your calling, outgoing calling.

In the fall this service will also have the ability to bill by account code. So if you were in your constituency office and you wanted to set up your calling such that some might be personal calls, some might be business of the MLA office, and other in terms of the cabinet responsibilities or the Speaker's responsibilities, you could allocate to different accounts, your toll calling. And that will be available this fall on this service, Advantage Preferred.

Next, on the Advantage 800 there are two categories of 800 service. One is an entry level and the other is a very high volume. I will not cover the high volume one because that one is pretty much for call centres and those kind of operations. But for a constituency office, what the Advantage entry 800 would do is to provide the ability for people to reach you at no cost to them; however, the constituency office would pick up the cost of the long-distance charges. You could promote the 800 number through the directory, through business cards, through your letterhead, or other fashion if you choose, newspapers, whatever, and that will increase the calling but increase the accessibility as well.

For those constituency offices that are today taking collect calls, accepting collect calls, there may be some opportunity for savings and I've provided an example on the next page.

In this example you have a five-minute call, and we've just used Regina to Moose Jaw to just give you an example. If it was collect calls, the cost of that five-minute call would be \$3.60. If you had an 800 service that call would be \$1.75, again realizing that the calling again would be probably increased because you're advertising an 800 number. You'll probably get more calls, but I guess the opportunity here is that, for those who are accepting collect calls today, you could increase your accessibility to the public significantly more while not increasing your costs by a great deal. And we could do an analysis in detail of any particular office in terms of collect calls versus 1-800.

The second area is the local access and this is basically the line and dial-tone charge. And I'm not covering it in terms of details here, other



than to say that there are different rate groups. Line charges vary considering the location, considering the number of lines you require, and also taking into consideration what equipment you want to put at the end of the line. So there's a number of different rates. And again the rating is also in your package with specific details.

So that's all I was going to say on the local access itself. It's just basically the dial tone and line charge.

On the next page, we have the additional services. And starting with telephone hardware, again this is the stuff you'd see on your desktop. And that is available through SaskTel or any other vendor in the community that sells telecommunications equipment. It can be connected to the SaskTel lines.

There's certainly a wide variety of equipment available out in the market-place and a great deal of different features. So you've got anything from a single-line phone to a multi-line system. And it's just a matter of preference and choice in terms of what you want to use for this application. And that would of course include things like fax machines and everything else.

Secondly, on Centrex, this most of you are probably familiar with because you use Centrex in your offices here in the legislature. It works off the central office equipment in SaskTel, so does not require you to actually own a particular piece of hardware other than your phone on your desk. There's no equipment in the back room of your office, in your building, wherever your constituency office is.

So the advantage here is there is no outlay of cash or lease cost. You rent the service from us and then can terminate it at any time. So that's the advantage of Centrex. And it has all the features and functionality of any other system that we have.

The next one is the custom-calling features. We've listed nine there and I'd kind of draw your attention to three in particular that I believe would have some immediate benefits to a constituency office. And that would be, say, starting with speed calling. That would just allow you to be able to call a number of people that you call frequently; you can do it very quickly.

The next one would be, say, three-way calling. It gives you the opportunity to conference in and have a quick meeting with two other people -- easy to set up and easy to use.

And the third one that I'd bring your attention to is the call-forwarding option, and especially call-forwarding remote. Which when I say remote, that means I could call forward my number from, say, Swift Current to Moose Jaw, for example. And that would be particularly applicable if you've got a small office, one assistant in the office, and they're not available on a particular day to take calls, you could call forward your number to another member's office to pick that up for you.

So there's those kind of opportunities available to you.

So the others are certainly . . . There's details again in the package on the other services. But I thought those three would be ones that I would highlight.

On the next page, we talk about starting with Message Manager. And for those of you who are not familiar with Message Manager, it's very much similar to an answering machine except you don't actually have a piece of hardware in your office again, or your home. The Message Manager is programed right on your line and the system at our central office maintains all the calling information.

In addition to receiving calls, what Message Manager allows you to do is also leave a very detailed message for the people calling you. And if I give you an example of, you could say: I'll be in my office, in my constituency office, on Thursday and Friday of this week; if you wish to meet with me then, please leave the message at the tone and my assistant will get back to you and set up an appropriate time for you. You could leave that kind of detail of a message which you can't do on an answering machine because typically it's too short of a time frame. And again the advantage here is you don't actually have to buy any hardware and there's no ownership required; it's just rented on a per-use basis or per mailbox.

Secondly, cellular service. I think the cellular is fairly widely known today. It gives you the portability to pretty much go anywhere. Right now in Saskatchewan there's . . . 80 per cent of the populated area of Saskatchewan is covered with cellular service so a fairly broad



reach at this time, and has all features of the land line in terms of call forwarding, call waiting. You can have Message Manager off a cellular phone. As well you can do the remote call forwarding that I talked about in terms of calling your land line number forward to your cellular and vice versa if you wish.

And the last two services on this page that we talked about are the conferencing services. Firstly, video-conferencing. SaskTel has now set up nine centres in the province with video-conferencing facilities, and in these rooms you'll find a layout of some furniture with TV and a camera, and you can set up a conference call, a video-conference call such that you could see the people on the other ends -- multi-location call. You can have document information that you can also view on the screen.

So that is available now in, as I suggest, nine cities so it still would entail some travel to those communities but probably reduce the cost of time and travel that exist today in trying to get members together for discussions. The cities that it is available is Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Weyburn, Estevan, Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, North Battleford, and Prince Albert. So those are the nine centres.

And lastly teleconferencing. This is in addition to what I talked about before about the three-way calling. This is for three more people. If you want to have a conference call just over the phone, just simply dial 0 and ask for the conference operator, and you could establish a conference call. It's a very effective way to conduct a meeting without having to actually travel.

Those are the services we wanted to cover. What we did on the final page of this presentation is put together sort of a typical office using some of these features and services, and we talked there about a three line of Centrex, for example: two lines for the office and a third one probably for a fax machine. On that you'd put two telephone sets, and we just picked two kind of medium features -- mid-range feature sets, two Message Manager mailboxes, as I talked about.

And then we did a sampling of a 1-800 line with assuming 100 calls at 3-minute duration, and that would be \$105, and then we set some direct distance dialling on Advantage Preferred

of 250 calls assuming 3-minutes, and that would be the bill, so the total bill is \$439.

And then in addition to that we've given you a couple of examples of . . . or an example each: one of video-conferencing and one of teleconferencing for both a 30-minute meeting using the video and 30-minute meeting using the telephone. So that just gives you some relative relationship in terms of cost versus the time and the use that you would have from those services.

So I guess in closing on this part of the presentation, I just say that again this is a sample. Any office, each office, is somewhat different. We'd be prepared to come out and have a one-on-one discussion with the people in the office in terms of how it's being operated and what opportunities exist.

We did not get into some of the services in terms of tying your PCs (personal computer) together in a network or e-mail because I think that we'd have to do further analysis of how the business is being run to come forward with any recommendations on that. So that's the summary and I'll turn it open to questions.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, Phil, I have a question on the dividing up your bill. You were saying . . . I missed it. Was that Advantage Preferred or . . .

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes, Advantage Preferred.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. What's the cost on that?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- I don't have the cost. We're going to roll out that service in the fall and I don't have a cost for it at this time.

**The Chairperson:** -- Do you think it will be very expensive to set that up?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- I don't believe so. It's just probably a small surcharge for the billing cost. But in terms of setting up the account codes it would not be . . . I don't think they really charge . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- We don't need any different equipment or anything.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- No. All you'd have to do is when you make your call you'd probably be asked to punch in some additional digits. And the digits,



the number of digits will be flexible so that it would fit your accounting system, if you have some sort of a ledger system that you need to fit to.

So it could be a two-digit or four-digit code that you'd want to put in and then the system will just know to track that call from there forward to that account.

And as I suggested, like in your situation you might have Speaker business you'd want to allocate some calls, some to the constituency office itself and perhaps some personal or other. So you could have three or four accounts for yourself on that particular line.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well, I certainly would be interested in that.

Okay. It's open for questions so just . . . if you have any questions or comments.

I have one further question on Centrex. Is Centrex available to everybody in the province? And if it is, what's the saving that . . . what's the advantage of having Centrex over what we have right now? I mean, for the MLA. Let's say we wanted to have Centrex in our office.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Okay, maybe I'll start by explaining the difference between . . . There's, I think, some confusion in government in terms of because you have Centrex that allows you to do the dial 3 and get on the government network. Centrex, you can have that dial 3 functionality without having Centrex service itself.

So really what Centrex does as a service is it provides you all the features you have on that phone in terms of the full features of the set plus the fact that you don't actually have to buy any equipment to manage the phone system.

And I know some of the constituency offices do own a small system in their constituency, and there's actually some hardware that goes kind of in the back room that you don't see, but you do pay for. What Centrex is, is you don't actually pay for that hardware, you just pay a monthly rental for that service.

Now Centrex is not available in some centres. Typically there's not a lot of them but we're . . . I believe there'll be Humboldt, Tisdale, Melfort, in that area. There are some switching centres

there that are a different make and do not have Centrex service themselves at this time. But we can certainly make it, by putting some equipment, make it look like the Centrex in terms of features and functionality.

**The Chairperson:** -- What would be the advantage over Centrex as opposed to what we presently have, or would there be any advantage?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Well I think there's . . . Again, the offices are so different. I've looked at some of them. Some just have three single-line phones and others have a small system. So it's just a matter of . . . in terms of how you want to operate your office and the functionality you want between yourself and your assistant in terms of call forwarding and answering on your behalf; having two or more lines picked up on the same phone. Those are the type of features that you'd be looking for that are provided on that Centrex.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- The problem, or one of the problems right now is -- well, it's better than it was -- but they send about four bills like fax and the cell and the office and the calling card. But I think now we've got them sort of jammed together in one.

But is there -- and maybe you told me this already and I didn't hear it -- but is there a method whereby I can just have my bill, and it doesn't matter if I'm calling from a pay phone in Battleford, I can put it on the same bill and my office, myself and my fax machine? Maybe fax machine would be separate.

But see that would be an advantage and my office in the legislature here. Because if we as the Board of Internal Economy want to know, you know, have a one person and their bill, it would be nice to be able to call from anywhere and have it set on that one bill, but identified as cell, calling card, office number or legislature office number. And that would be I think a big advantage. Now I don't know, would it cost more or can we do it?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- There's some just restrictions in our ability to do that. And I think that we can certainly tie the calling card to your constituency office and those kind of things. The area that we would not be able to do at this time is the cellular bill. The cellular bill is run on a separate billing system and is just not doable from our perspective now.



Now in terms of tying to the office in the Legislative Assembly or in the legislature here, again you're on a government network so that is again separate. But the constituency office, the calling card, the fax machine should all be able to be brought together.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- I'm interested in whether Message Manager is available outside of Regina and Saskatoon.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- It is. Again there are some communities where it is not and the list I think is in the package. But certainly it is in Saskatoon, in most major centres. Yes and actually a good number of the smaller ones as well. And as demand increases, we will put it anywhere.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- What about confidentiality with the Message Managers? I'm curious. You know, I'm sure that as the "owner" of the Message Manager that one has a code. But you're saying that this is controlled centrally. What sort of . . .

**Mr. Bohay:** -- It has an account code. Again you identify first your phone number and then your PIN (personal identification number) number or your secret password number. And same kind of confidentiality I guess as you'd have with a bank card or anything else.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- I don't know if you've been watching some of these programs in the last few weeks about bank cards and PIN numbers. That doesn't raise my level of confidence.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Bad example.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- The officials tell us in here where we find which areas don't have Message Manager. Is there a chart or something?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- I believe there is, yes. But I can certainly, if it isn't provided in here, I can get that.

I don't think I have that forwarded in here. I have the brochure in the package but it doesn't have the communities. But I can certainly forward that to the office.

Again as demand dictates we can deploy that service pretty much to any community. So it's not a technology issue, it's more of a market

issue.

**The Chairperson:** -- Getting back to Message Managers. Just like I guess the banks are able to have access to your bank account to find out how much money you have in that account, because it would be checking it, can the employee of SaskTel, or any employees of SaskTel, access your Message Manager that you have there and find out what the messages are?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- No, they cannot. They can only . . . If, for example, you've lost your password, the only thing we can do is reset your password. And then at some point the information is -- after 21 days -- the information is deleted from your mailbox.

**The Chairperson:** -- So it's not like a credit union where you could simply go into the file and say okay, Herman Rolfes has got 150,000 in his current account.

I knew that would get a rise from you people. All right, I was short a couple of hundred thousand.

No, but just like they are able to access it, SaskTel, you're saying, employees are not able to access.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- We do not access, no.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. So what you're saying . . .

**Mr. Bohay:** -- There's privacy.

**The Chairperson:** -- It's strictly confidential.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Are there any other questions?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- I'd certainly encourage you to consider trying the video conference at some time too. Again it's available in the nine communities so it isn't quite at the kind of reach that we need everywhere in the province. But certainly I think we're trialing it at this stage in those locations and we'll see how it goes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- On I guess video conferencing and teleconferencing. Teleconferencing, you've used the two examples here -- P.A.

August 16, 1994

(Prince Albert), Regina, Swift Current for 30 minutes. The video conferencing, if you had expanded that say to nine centres, all nine centres for say three hours, are you multiplying 30 minutes times six and three centres times three?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Again, we'd have to price the long-distance charge, and then there's a fee for each additional location as well as a rental, one-time rental. So I'd have to work that out for you.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay. And teleconferencing then, I didn't realize teleconferencing could be customer handled. You can set that up yourself?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes. You still call the conference operator and she provides the chairperson with one number and the other members of the party another number. So you'll have two numbers. And you'd just have yourself or your assistant call the people who you want to have the conference call and provide them with their number. So then you as the chairperson, you dial in your number, they dial in theirs, and everybody gets on the call.

The chairperson has a different number because you have some additional accesses that you can do during the call. Like you can what's called lock the conference bridge. Once you have all your party on the call, you can lock the bridge so that nobody else can access the call, if for example the number got out somehow. It jams out.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- When I look at the charges here, again the same parallel if you had the nine centres for a longer period of time. In essence on teleconferencing, is the additional cost then the long-distance costs?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- After you've done the initial hook-up?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay. Well let me change that. Specifically, is that the additional cost then?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- The additional cost would be just the additional legs that you have on the call, yes. There is no extra administrative cost or anything like that.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- But is the additional charge simply the long-distance costs of those other lines?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Okay.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- At the rate for conference calling.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Which is different than at the rate for long-distance calling?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- I don't believe . . . It may be, yes. I'd have to look that up as well. I don't have that one specifically. It is a different rate, yes, for conference calling.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I'm interested in the Advantage Preferred and what's the impact. You said you've done an analysis on some constituency offices. If we were to look at this as an option, can you give us any kind of an idea of what the savings may be, just on an average office that you've looked at. Say pick Humboldt or Watrous or Melfort, whatever.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- We've already moved for the most part, and we've just done a sample. We did not check all the constituency offices, but the ones that we did check have already been put on Advantage Preferred.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Are all of the rurals, or are all of the constituency offices on Advantage Preferred at this point?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes. Yes, all the ones that we checked. We did not check all the offices but we checked a sample of about 10 or 15, and they were all ready to move to Advantage Preferred. And that was part of a calling program we had done earlier in the year to make sure that that happened.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- So this is reducing the telephone long-distance costs?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes. And effective September 1, that Advantage Preferred rate will go from 25 cents down to 23 cents per minute. And the 800 service, just as information, the 800 service entry is right now at 43 cents a minute, and that will be going down September 1 to 35 cents a minute.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Can you give me



some idea of -- and you've looked at some of the offices as examples -- the number of collect calls, if any of these that you have checked were to have looked at the Advantage 800, the entry, would there have been any cost saving for the government or for those offices?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- There was a couple of them that would have been kind of break even. And then there were some that had very, very few, like one or two collect calls. So those probably would not demonstrate a cost saving again, but they don't have the accessibility to the public as well. So there's that sort of trade off there.

In terms of -- the range of LD (long distance) calls of any particular office varies a great deal, anywhere from \$38 to \$150 to 200-and-some dollars. So I can't give you an average because it was a very, very wide range.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- So then basically in order to make the 1-800 option pay, you need an office that accepts a considerable number of collect calls and more than probably what you are using on the examples you've looked at, but that it would increase access, quite clearly.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- It would clearly increase access, and I think from this example, I mean you're saving somewhere close to \$2 in the calling, so really what you're looking at is additional incremental calls there to make up that \$8 monthly rental. So you're not looking at a lot of calls.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- We took a three-month period of time in our caucus office and had an independent comparison made of what we would have saved between what we've got now and 1-800 -- 20 per cent. We're doing it again just to confirm we weren't in some sort of special window there. That's quite a bit of money.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Rick, can I ask you, is that your caucus office? That's not constituency offices?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- That's caucus, that's not constituency.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- So basically what you're saying then is that a 1-800 would give you substantial cost saving.

Is there any restrictions with respect to caucus allowances as to whether or not caucus offices can access the 1-800 option, Gwenn?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- The caucus telephones are paid for by the Legislative Assembly. There has really been no decision made about whether or not ... that's why we've come to the board with a request for a decision about whether or not they should be permitted it.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Is this decision more based on a request with respect to caucus offices or constituency offices?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- They're both there. There are two separate ones in your package; one for a constituency office and one for caucuses.

**The Chairperson:** -- And that was done at the request of members of the board who had instructed us to, first of all, look at caucus to try and implement 1-800, feasibility of implementing 1-800 in caucus office; and then the board, members of the board said, well while you're at it, look at 1-800 for caucus ... or for constituency office. See if it would be feasible to do that also. And that's why they're on the agenda.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes. I have no further questions of the SaskTel officials. I do have some questions and some comments to Gwenn.

**The Chairperson:** -- I want to ... would it be possible to recommend to an MLA what would be the best system to set up in his or her office? Would SaskTel be able to do that? If I had someone come out to my office, would SaskTel be able to say, okay, on your billing record in the last year or whatever, you've got four lines; no, you haven't got the right system; this is what you should have. Would SaskTel be able to do that?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Absolutely, yes. We could do that. In fact, if you wanted to do it as a particular campaign, perhaps to go around and do all of them at a particular snapshot in time, we could arrange to do that as well.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well I would like to have it for mine, because I'm just not certain that I've got the right system. I don't know. And when people start talking about all these things that are available, you may as well talk Greek to me. For the most part, they don't mean

anything to me. So I've got to go to the experts who have to tell me, yes, for your system, the number of calls that you have, this is what you should set up.

And because I conduct a fair amount of the Speaker's work out of my MLA office, I'm very much in favour because if I use my calling card the calls are so much more expensive; so in the *Public Accounts* my MLA telephone bill is going to be fairly high next year. And that's why I'm interested in your 800 preferred number. I've been trying to save money, but on the other hand I'm also a little bit embarrassed about, you know, my MLA telephone number being as high as it probably will be. But I'm told it's not going to be nearly as high as some of the rural members who have all these long-distance calls that they have to make.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Who do we call then to have someone come to our offices when we are . . .

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Actually I think we've got a card right in that brochure there that you could . . .

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Colleen Rhodes?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Colleen Rhodes. And if she isn't able to do, we also have others that can come out and do that as well.

**The Chairperson:** -- Lynda, that's Colleen Rhodes right in the back. Okay, that's the person you would talk to.

Okay, are there any further . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes. Phil, you said that you've checked with 10 or 15 MLA offices regarding Advantage Preferred, and those you've checked have all switched to it because it's more advantageous. There are another 50 or 55 offices then. Is the intention that SaskTel is initiating contact with all of them?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Well we'll certainly check all of them to make sure they're on Advantage Preferred. And then in terms of the outcome I guess of this, if there's a desire to have us go out and talk about 800 service and those kind of things or other questions, we'd be prepared to do that as well.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- You're already on a plan of attack here that has you making the contact on the Advantage Preferred.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Exactly.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- So if we've not been contacted, we will be.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Yes.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further questions? Don't ask me any questions later on, because . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- And by when? Those that have not been contacted, will be by when?

**Mr. Bohay:** -- We should be able to have that done within the next . . . the end of next week, in terms of looking up the remainder and making sure that they're done. I believe that they all are, but we are just going to double-check. But I'm of the belief that we've already done that.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further questions? If not, I want to thank Phil and John and Colleen -- is it? -- for being here with us this morning, and we look forward to further conversations with you in regards to the advantages and things that there may be for MLAs.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** -- Thanks very much. Phil, before you go, I noticed there was one question. Some time ago, someone had asked what services are exclusively SaskTel and what can be provided by other private firms. That question has not been asked, although it was asked in this committee some time ago. Could you answer that for us before you go? I'm sure that's going to come up and I can't answer it. I just don't know.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Well as I had mentioned, the hardware itself is available from any vendor that's providing telecommunications hardware. Cellular is available through the competitor as well. The cellular phone itself is available again through a number of dealers and retail operations. So the items that are restricted I guess to SaskTel at this stage would be local access and long-distance services.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay. Any questions in that regard? Okay, thanks very much.

**Mr. Bohay:** -- Thanks to you.

**The Chairperson:** -- Okay, ladies and



gentlemen, we now should turn to item 4. Turn to item 4 of the agenda, and we don't need to restrict ourselves to item 4 as such, but to the presentation that was made this morning. And the first one on the agenda is Ms. Haverstock.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- So what you're saying is that we don't have to deal with the first recommendation first? I have a . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Oh no, no, I don't think so. Do you have questions in regards to a presentation that was made this morning?

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Well I have questions in regard to the presentation, but also I'm just trying to figure out some things that only Gwenn could answer.

**The Chairperson:** -- Oh sure, yes, go ahead.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- The second part of the first proposal is that extra telecommunications services such as the Message Manager be allowed under the telephone allowance. And I think the recommendation is what supports this service.

But I'm wondering if you know whether or not that kind of thing would be available all over the province. And they indicated that there were some communities where it would not be allowed, I think simply because it's not available. And I'm wondering if caucus offices would also be able to obtain the Message Manager service on their phone lines that are currently paid for by the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- I think that it's probably all fairly possible. Even SaskTel mentioned here that the communities that don't have it, all they really need is somebody to demand it. And I think if a constituency office was the one that demanded it, I expect that it would be provided fairly quickly.

As far as could caucuses have those services? I think if the board decides that that's an appropriate way to go in terms of cost and public access, certainly it's no problem at all to provide those services.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Okay. So it really is . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- We would want to monitor it over time, I think, to determine what the cost changes might have been, and then the board

could look at it again after a period and assess, you know, budget considerations.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- That really leads into my next question, which deals with the 1-800 number and I think . . . don't know whether it was Glenn or Eldon made reference to it, but the third proposal we have as to the caucus offices installing a 1-800 number, the question that arises of course, what would the incentive be since currently all of our long-distance calls are paid for in the caucus offices by the Legislative Assembly. So if we accept a collect call, currently we don't pay for it; the Legislative Assembly pays for it, right?

So what is our incentive to get a 1-800 number since it'll transfer the expense from the Legislative Assembly to our caucus. Now unless we make a different decision here, at present our caucus grants are deemed unconditional. So we can go ahead with this expenditure without the board's permission if we want to use our caucus grant that way.

But again, the only possible way that this recommendation makes any sense as an option, I think, is if we're allowed to or permitted to, the decision is made to install a 1-800 number but the costs are borne by the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- I don't think I have any response. There are the two options, A and B, that were outlined there, and the recommended one was the one that was the most cost conscious, I guess. But that is the board's decision to make.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I agree with Lynda. We've done the analysis on what would happen in our caucus operation by going that way, and for the life of me I can't come up with the reasoning here that it would increase costs. I mean we're doing it again in another three-month snapshot, but a 20 per cent saving is a substantial saving to the Legislative Assembly and the taxpayer and everything else by going that way.

The way this sort of tilted it is that it would be more costly, therefore the caucuses should be picking it up out of their grant when it simply isn't true. We would in effect be providing more service to people in the province and have a cheaper cost.



August 16, 1994

And as Lynda said, we've got an open-ended system now. The volume of calls that we had during the last session on the "Mr. Premier I want to know . . ." alone, it would be nuts for us to switch back to this proposal here.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, I think we've got . . . with respect to 1-800 service, I guess without a more in-depth analysis of the cost benefits that may be accrued to constituency offices, before we I think could make a decision, from what I've heard, it really wouldn't make much sense to allow 1-800 service simply because the number of collect calls to constituency offices wouldn't warrant the expenditure.

And I can't see where that would be a benefit. I think I would like to see a cost/benefit analysis with respect to the three caucus offices, in terms of the system that we're using now and what a 1-800 service may provide. I don't believe that the allocations to caucus grants should be impacted simply because we would allow a cost saving, if it is 20 per cent as Rick indicates, that that should be coming out of a caucus grant allocation.

But I would want to be assured, before we would allow that to happen, that the installation of the 1-800 at Legislative Assembly expense, that we would in fact be reducing the global amount that we're paying in telephone and actually have some cost savings by introducing the 1-800 service.

I guess what I'm saying is I don't want to see it downloaded to the caucus grants or to become part of the caucus grants, but on the other hand, I don't want to see an increase in the amount that our telephone expenditures are, the Legislative Assembly Office.

So if we can effect some cost savings here with respect to your budget, Gwenn, and if you can do an analysis that can show us that that can happen, I could support the installation of 1-800 service.

There is one other issue though and that is with respect to advertising. We, a few years ago, cut the amount that the Legislative Assembly budget was spending on advertising in the yellow pages and in the telephone books. There used to be, as I recall, an alphabetical list of all of the MLAs and their constituency offices and whatever. And I think it was something in the neighbourhood of a

cost saving of 50,000, or 30 was it? But it was fairly substantial. But what I don't want to see is an incremental amount in terms of what we are spending out of our advertising budget in the telephone books and/or in the yellow pages, because I think there needs to be some kind of a cap on that. I don't know if we have a cap on that right at this point.

It may come out of the member's communications allowance; I don't know. If that is the case, that's fine, if it's part of their global savings. But I think we have to have a set standard in terms of what the Legislative Assembly budget will pay for individual members and caucus office advertising in terms of publishing these numbers. And I'd sort of like to see where we're at on that, on the advertising aspect of it as well.

And I think the other issue is I think we need to ensure that all members are on -- what do they call it again -- Advantage Preferred. I think we need to ensure that all members are on it. And I don't know how we instruct . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . He said he would know within a week. But I want to ensure that all members are on it.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes, they'll make the contact, but they'll only respond to what people ask them to do.

**A Member:** -- Why don't they send a memo around?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well I think what we should do is we should . . . I don't think that would hurt. But I want to know and I want a report back from SaskTel to ensure that all members are on it, because I mean it's a fairly substantial saving. And when we struggle with this budget to try and put together the services and try and maintain a zero increase in expenditures, I think we need the support of all the members in terms of their constituency office expenditures and their telephone allowances as well. So I want a report . . . I would like a report back to the board to ensure that all members are saving what they can in terms of this budget.

So you could bring us a cost/benefit analysis on the 1-800 as opposed to long-distance from the three caucuses? Can you do that?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- What we can do is do some scenarios. Like the whole costing will depend



August 16, 1994

on usage, and usage will depend on how much it's advertised. So what we can do is compare current collect-call costs with a couple of different scenarios of so many calls per month on a 1-800 number with basic advertising only in the 1-800 directory, for example. I think that's about the minimum you can go in terms of advertising your number.

And then we could maybe do a scenario with an increased number of calls and perhaps some other form of advertising -- newspaper or a brochure or something.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I think probably the one that I would want to see is with the minimum form of advertising. Any incremental advertising could be done by whoever wants to do it. But I think if we're going to go this route we want to have a maximum impact on long-distance call savings. And they can advertise, the individual caucuses can advertise however they see fit, but I think I would like it based on the minimum of advertising and what our actual is.

And you might want to bring it in in terms of a global expenditure with the three caucus offices lumped, as opposed to having them separated. I think it would be helpful to have it just in a global amount if there's any way . . . And I don't know if you can go through and find out how much long-distance, the actual collect charges are, or how long it would take you to do that.

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- Not very long. They do appear on the phone bills. And actually, quite frankly, the majority of the collect calls are primarily from the one caucus office. There are other collect calls on the other caucus phone bills but very, very minimal. So really, in terms of cost analysis based upon past research, there really would not be a benefit until there would be a usage to warrant the savings on the calls.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Could you give us from January to June? Give us a six-month period. Lump the three caucuses together and then do a costing if we had had the 1-800 in place, keeping in mind the minimum of advertising that we are requesting.

**The Chairperson:** -- Eldon, if I could just make a comment here, I think we would be kidding ourselves if we think that costs will not increase with a 1-800 number. No, but we

don't know that. We won't know that. That will depend on what members do. If each member in his or her newsletter advertises the 1-800 number, or if caucus has put an ad in the paper advertising the 1-800 number, or whatever other method they use, I think you're going to have a substantial impact on the cost increase on the 1-800 number.

Yes, but you will, by doing that, however, you will accomplish what you want to do and have . . . that the public will have access to the MLAs and to the caucuses.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- There are other ways to handle this too, Herman, if it becomes unmanageable. We could put a cap on the amount. It would be an individual caucus office and then over and above that you'd take it out of your caucus grants.

What I'm trying to do . . . and I don't know what our telephone budget is -- 800? I can't remember; something told me around 875,000?

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- No. For just the caucuses?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- No, no. The whole works.

**Ms. Borowski:** -- 500,000.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Was it 500,000?

**Ms. Borowski:** -- For constituency offices.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I mean, look, if we can save \$50,000 on that, what that means is the computers that you're looking for. We will have access to the funds to maybe put a new computer system in there for you when we do the budget this fall.

But I think, you know, it's important to provide the service, but on the other hand if we can save some money, and I'm certainly not adverse to putting a cap on the amount of telephone proportions of the number of members if it would become a problem. But I think we need to allow the access. But at least we should have the discussion and have a look at the analysis.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well we can certainly do that. There's no problem in giving you the analysis. What I'm saying is that the future impact will all depend on what MLAs do with it.



And if they go out and strongly advertise the 1-800 number, the bills are going to increase. We know that. But you might accomplish what you had intended to do and have public access to the MLAs and caucuses. And so . . . But we can do that; there's no problem with that.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes, thanks, Mr. Chairman. First of all I want to acknowledge the point that you made. The reason telephone companies advertise the use of 1-800 numbers is to increase your business. And so obviously all history associated with 1-800 numbers suggest use will go up and therefore the cost. So we would be absolutely foolish to not be acknowledging that right off the top here.

So in my mind any argument that 1-800 is a money-saving argument is really quite a misleading argument because I think that's simply not the case. And that would not be the intention. The intention would be to increase access.

From the point of view of the board here, then that says to me that we have to be very conscious of some form of capping. And I think also I agree with what Eldon has said, that the analysis should ought not to be on a caucus-by-caucus basis but the global for the building.

As years come and go and caucuses change positions in the thing here, I think it would be my prediction likely that the government caucus office would be the lowest in terms of collect calls because people who want to call the government will call cabinet ministers. And probably the official opposition, no matter who is the official opposition, will always be the highest and the third party will always be the second. I think that I would predict that that's a constant. So it doesn't really matter who's using what now; we have the configuration here.

But I think in terms of doing the analysis, I disagree with the January to June because that encompasses the legislative session, which I suspect is probably in terms of long-distance calls into this building the high-use portion of the year. And probably a 12-month analysis is really an accurate way of doing it so that we can get a before and after.

I listened this morning and I didn't hear any reference to what SaskTel predicts your usage goes up when you go to 1-800. And other than

to say that that would be more, well I knew that before we started. And I'm not sure just how in the world you're able to -- and I guess this is why we bow to you, Gwenn, to figure this out -- but how in the world you predict what going from a collect call now to 1-800, what the impact will be on the total bill. But you'll obviously need some SaskTel advice in terms of history for businesses or whatever, that will help in doing that analysis.

Anyhow, the bottom line, I guess we need advice to come back to us before I think we can make the specific decision here, which would be an analysis of the actual, and also some notion of cap has got to be included in some way, shape, or form, I think. Otherwise I think we're all sitting here quite obviously predicting that the total cost . . . although the cost per call may go down, the total cost of long distance that is being absorbed through the total Board of Internal Economy budget is likely to increase. And therefore your computers get even further into the distance in terms of replacement, if we're going to use that analogy, would be my prediction.

So I'll stop there, and ask that we use 12 month, and also the recommendation includes some advice from SaskTel based on industry experience. And I'm not sure what's parallel to caucus offices. And then it's a separate issue, the 1-800, for individual constituency offices. I think that's a separate issue.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- We had asked SaskTel that question: does industry experience indicate that there's some predictable change when you introduce a 1-800 number? And they were a little reluctant to say a figure because, as you say, it's hard to compare a constituency office with some business out there that's introducing a 1-800 number. They did say that, I think, in industry -- Debbie, do you remember what they said? -- they said about 10 per cent is kind of what they expected in terms of increase in calls.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- In number of calls or cost of calls?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Yes, in number of calls. Now I don't think we're going to be able to predict anything here. But what we can do is do a cost analysis. If the calls increased 10 per cent, how then does it compare? If they increased 50 per cent, how does the increased access compare with the then cost? And the board will



at least have some information on which to make a judgement as to how far you should go, or if you do want to put a cap at some point, where should that be.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- The person we've used is Linda Vargo. She's the 1-800 number from SaskTel. And as a matter of fact, she'll have our second set of numbers this afternoon because we've been trying to do these comparisons and do it up. We do accept, as Glenn said, a lot of collect calls. And that's just natural in opposition that you do that.

Those calls -- and I would be interested to see the comparison -- are expensive calls because you're using operator assistance in a lot of cases to do that. And 1-800 is significantly cheaper that way. I don't know if you can do a global without breaking it down. Do you have access to all of our telephone stuff?

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- Yes, I certainly have copies of the bills.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- By our caucus and their caucus?

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- I'd have to initially break them down and then pull them together.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I wasn't suggesting . . . I think you have to do that in order to get it, but what's important to us here is what's the total cost when you roll all three caucuses together.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- As part of the global budget?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Yes. Now recognising that it will have the most significant impact on wherever the highest use is, the second most, and third most. But our concern here is how is it affecting the whole picture.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- See, I think the only place our caucus number presently is listed is in the government directory. I don't believe in the yellow pages anywhere or in any form of . . .

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- Yes, in the blue pages in all of the SaskTel government directories throughout the rural areas. The caucus phone numbers are in the blue pages underneath caucus office. And you're underneath there as Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Right. But other than that there's . . .

**Ms. Kaminski:** -- Other than that, that's right.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- There's no other advertising. See when you talk about capping, to me if wild and woolly advertising is the concern, you can deal with that. To make it fair to everyone you can say that your numbers will be listed here, here, and here and anybody beyond that will have to look for their own means. If we want to run ads in every weekly newspaper in Saskatchewan, that's our cost, as it should be, to advertise a particular phone number.

But it will be an interesting analysis and we'd certainly be prepared to share that information with you as quick as possible.

**The Chairperson:** -- Any further questions or comments? What I hear from the members is that it's too early to deal with the questions that are before us at this particular point in time. That members would like to have an analysis done of the present situation and give the board some indication of what may happen if we go to a 1-800 number. Should the calls remain the same, what cost savings there would be. Or should the calls increase by 10 per cent or 20 per cent or 30 per cent? And I think what we have said is that, yes we can do that and provide that to the members or to the board.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- One other thing, a consideration I think we should deal with because it is a matter of policy. There's a lot of options now on what members can do. You've got Message Manager, Ident-A-Call, call return, call forward, three-way calling, you've got all of these things that are supplied by SaskTel at present, and some of which are probably being accessed now.

I'm concerned that Ident-A-Call should not be available. The anonymity of people calling in is often important, and to have a name come up on the . . . Both in government and opposition I've had people phone who just sort of want to get something off their chest, and I've always felt that part of being in this business is having the courage to take those because you do get a feeling for a portion of the population. And I don't think Ident-A-Call is something that we as public officials should have as an option.

I don't know. I'll throw that out for other members. Because as technology moves forward it's a question we'll have to deal with.



**The Chairperson:** -- Is there any comment from any other member on that?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes. I don't know how you would avoid that, Rick. I mean there's private telephones at home and all over the place, and people can block their number if they so desire. As I understand it, the technology is there to keep your number from showing up on a number that you phone. And I think as people become aware of the technology that is available and the fact that Ident-A-Call is there, if they want to maintain their anonymity, quite clearly the technology is there to be able to allow them to do that.

So I would . . . I guess this is as it is with all directives; I would hate to see us start exempting some of the new technology. It's changing on a weekly and a monthly basis in terms of what's available, and I don't know that we want to start . . .

**Mr. Swenson:** -- No, I didn't mean your home or any of that. If you want to have that . . .

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- But even in the constituency office, whether I phone your home or whether I phone your constituency office, I have the ability to block my number. So I don't know that it's an issue.

**The Chairperson:** -- Well if I can make a comment. I think some constituencies already have it. I think they already have those phones in their offices. I don't know how many, but I do believe some have them already.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Name display.

**The Chairperson:** -- Pardon me?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Name display.

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes. I've been looking at it myself. I have not gone with it yet. I respect what Rick is saying, but from time to time I sure wish I did have it. But you know, I haven't got it in my constituency.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I look at the telephone directive for MLAs -- and I'm not talking about caucus here, but MLAs -- it looks to me, if I'm understanding this correctly, that MLAs are permitted all the long distance . . . all the hardware and long distance, anything that comes in hardware form; but that those services that have a cost

that doesn't come as a result of hardware or long distance, that those are not covered by the Legislative Assembly at the moment.

And that our reason, our rationale, for . . . part of our rationale for looking at this had to do with my initial raising the question of Message Manager, which is an answering-machine service without an answering machine, and not a hardware cost but a service cost.

And that as we're looking at this in terms of MLA telephone allowances, it's simply asking ourselves whether we should add another category, which is telephone services, period, or a specific listing of permitted telephone services, or we don't change it at all which means it's only hardware and long distance. Am I correctly summarizing what is the current state of affairs?

**The Chairperson:** -- Well I'll have to have somebody else answer that because I don't know.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Currently we can't really tell what services members may be utilizing, especially the central offered ones like Message Manager. Those don't necessarily show up on the bill. It used to be that you couldn't even tell the difference between fax and cellular and -- well, cellular you could -- fax and your telephone line. Now I think those are . . . oh, we still can't tell the difference there so . . .

It's only recently that members have been asking: can I have a 1-800 number, can I have Message Manager? But we don't really know. Some may already have and used some of those features and they are just appearing on the bill as part of the bill and we don't really know.

**Ms. Borowski:** -- We can't tell that from the bill. There's just a rental charge, so . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Right. But the answer to somebody who says then . . . the answer given at this stage to the member who says: am I permitted to add Message Manager to either my office or home, then the answer right now is no?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- That's correct. We basically said well that hasn't been contemplated in the directive and we want to go to the board with . . . to get a more precise decision; but some



may have it who haven't asked.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Now, well I guess it's the absence . . . the current approach you're taking, if it's not specifically included then it's excluded? And because there's not telephone services -- we don't have that category -- then you feel that there . . . it's fuzzy. Probably to be fair, it's fuzzy and therefore . . . Therefore, it's fuzzy, and everybody feels awkward when it's fuzzy.

**The Chairperson:** -- And yet we don't have a specific handle on it because we just don't know. I mean, as the bills come in some members may . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well the last time the telephone directive was written these didn't exist so there was no way to specifically include or specifically exclude because they didn't exist, as I'm sure the case will be two years from now that there will be services available by telephone that don't exist. When I was first elected, fax machines . . . I never heard of a fax machine; now we couldn't live without it.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, but that was in 1942.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- And I'm a relatively new member. And, Mr. Speaker, when you were first elected they hadn't heard of telephones.

**The Chairperson:** -- Oh heck, no, didn't even know what telephones were.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Everything was done by telegram in those days, right?

**The Chairperson:** -- We knew how to write at that time too. Well, any clarification of direction from the board as to where we want to go with this?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- I don't think you'll ever straighten out all of that too. Like Eric brought up a valid point, the way we offer it now. I mean I eat all of my fax, my outgoing fax costs at home. They're on my own personal home bill and the stuff coming in from wherever gets picked up because of the caucus office and into the machine at home. Some days I do 50 pages at home of stuff coming in from all over. Anything that I put back out I've always eaten.

Now I haven't got a clue, but it isn't worth my while to go through that phone bill and sort all

of that out. It just isn't. And until there's some point I guess where I can punch in a number that will direct that billing some place else, I'll just continue to eat it. And some months I probably eat 50 bucks. I don't have the patience to sort that out.

We're never going to come up with the perfect system in here because technology is going to leapfrog every six months. Eldon's going to end up with a whole bunch of used stuff that is time lined.

I got a fax machine I'm just switching in my constituency office. We paid 1,600 bucks for that thing in '89, and the new one's come along which is 10 times better at \$1,200. And they say the old one's worth two. You know, what do you do?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well that's an argument I think for, I've felt for some time, for the use of telephone services where they're available, and that's why . . . (inaudible) . . . the question of Message Manager versus telephone-answering machine when a service can provide the same thing as a machine. The thing that we can all predict is the machines are rapidly decreasing in value no matter what you got. And therefore I think for our consideration, including a category which says telephone services may have some financial wisdom, as well as providing the necessary clarity, to get rid of the fussiness.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Are we dealing then with this recommendation, or I'm not quite following . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- No, I get the impression, Lynda, that we can't deal with it at this particular time because the board would like to have some more information.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- If there's information gathered then, is there any way of knowing? Like is there any way of speculating what these added services might cost? I mean that's a lot of supposition in that one.

With Message Manager, for example, if we're dealing with these services that are listed in item 2 for consideration, I'm getting the sense that this would be quite difficult to determine.

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Message Manager, I mean we can find out the cost of that. I mean it's just a monthly charge and usage fee on that. So we'd

be able to get that information. I think a lot of these other features are . . . do not cost --you know call return, call forward, other than just the line charges that you incur when you're using them. They're part of the system.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I'm having a difficult time to determine why we're dealing with this. I mean if the Legislative Assembly Office can't identify, first of all, the members who are using it and billing it as part of their monthly billing, why does it become an issue? If there is technology available to a member, we have an unlimited telephone allowance which costs a half a million dollars a year, you say. Why wouldn't we, as opposed to a repressive approach to this, say that because the nature of this is that members were to be allowed telephone access to their constituents and because technology is changing and because the ability to communicate in different ways is changing on an ongoing basis, we wouldn't allow these to be billed as part of the monthly billing.

I mean I don't know how . . . When a member phones in and says can I get Message Manager? Is Message Manager allowed? I don't know how it can be said by the Legislative Assembly Office that, well, no it's not allowed because it's not specifically indicated that you can have it.

You know, I would rather see us take the other approach. And if we start having budget problems, and I mean we're not even sure that there's incremental costs to the Message Manager thing here, but I mean if we start then having budget problems, and if we want to start putting a cap and want to start putting a limit, then we should do that.

But I think probably the best way to deal with this, as Mr. Hagel has said, is that we would just add another category and that be telephone services, and then there would be no ambiguity. You would be comfortable that we have identified that those would be reasonable services for members to access, but that we should look at this, I think . . . We're not going to settle this today. Or I guess we could, this portion of it, by just adding telephone services and then deal with the 1-800 issue at a subsequent meeting.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- That's what I was asking. Let's get this one finished.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well I've got no problems with just adding telephone services as another item that would be acceptable and let's get this thing off of the plate.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- To directive no. 2?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes.

**A Member:** -- So that would cover Message Manager then?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes, that would cover Message Manager, Ident-A-Call, call return, call forward, three-way calling.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Would it cover 1-800?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- No. That would be excluding 1-800.

**A Member:** -- The cost is right in within the . . .

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Here, \$14.95 per month for a business for Message Manager. And it is 5.95 per month for basic residential; and 7.95 per month for enhanced. I don't know if one gets a bargain deal on that.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- We can negotiate with SaskTel.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Would that recommendation be available to the caucus offices? Like members have offices in their caucus office. Would that be available in there as well, or . . . All of this stuff. I mean you've got a phone sitting on your desk.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- In the caucus office here, you mean?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well I think we'd want to use some common sense; I think if in the caucus office there was one Message Manager available to the whole crew. I don't see that you need to have a Message Manager on every telephone. I think we've got to use some discretion as MLAs and some common sense in terms of the public dollars that we're spending to provide these services.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- My understanding is that isn't how it works. There's one . . . you need



August 16, 1994

one line per Message Manager. If you have eight telephones, you need eight Message Managers.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- But I'm saying your main caucus number. If you would put a Message Manager on your main caucus number, you know, I mean and quite clearly you could have access to any MLA within the caucus office if you phone the main caucus number. I mean I may have a separate number, but it doesn't mean that I personally have to have . . . It's not going to kill me as a member of the legislature to walk down to the secretary and say, are there any messages for me on Message Manager?

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Yes, they do. It's called boxes. You have one number and then there's boxes on Message Manager.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Exactly.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- So you can service as many boxes off of your Message Manager as you want. I mean it's just a technical thing that they set you up.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Well to me it's just . . . We're dealing with the principle here, and the principle is to allow access to the technology. And I think it's got to be up to the caucuses and to the members who are in the caucus to use their discretion and their common sense in terms of costs.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well it seems to me that there's two questions here. One is directive no. 2, telephone and telephone-relating expenses for members. And then the other is services provided to caucus offices.

Maybe we can deal . . . I think we have . . . please guide us, Gwenn -- that in order to accomplish this we need for directive no. 2, only add in item 2(a) an additional two words, the telephone services, to accomplish that for members which would include both in their offices as well as those lines that they use for telephone services in their own homes. Am I correct?

**Ms. Ronyk:** -- Yes.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- So why don't I just move then, Mr. Chairman, just to formalize this and get us moving along here:

That directive 2 be amended by adding the phrase "telephone services" to item 2(a), excluding 1-800.

**The Chairperson:** -- But anything else.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'm on the directive in the back of the book.

**The Chairperson:** -- Directive in the back, way in the back.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I'm not on the recommended stuff, Rick. You go right to the back of your book under the directives category.

**The Chairperson:** -- There's a tab which says directives.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- And then you go to directive 2. And then item 2(a); 2 is where it begins, eligible expenses from this allowance include. And then (a) says, constituency office telephone expenses including installation, rental, long distance, directory advertising, and telephone services of the . . .

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- It may be prudent to hold off on this until we make a decision on 1-800 which is going to be brought back to us I would assume at the next board meeting. Because I mean you're going to amend this directive excluding 1-800 and then change it later to include 1-800 if we decide. Why don't we defer this whole item, bring back the recommendations with respect to the 1-800, and let's deal with all of this in the next meeting.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- I agree with that, Mr. Chairperson, but I have a question. And that is, I guess I'm not supposed to have Message Manager on my cell, but I've had it ever since I had my cell phone. Sorry. It's a wonderful little device. Maybe I shouldn't be saying this. But if we're not going to do it, does that mean I have to get rid of it? And I know other people have it too.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- It's part of the package, boss.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- It's part of the package, yes. But then the other side of it is if we do move this, I've got two offices and I've got a home, so I could have four Message Managers if I wanted to. And I think if we did it this way we might have sort of a snowball.

August 16, 1994

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I've got answering machines in those places right now that I think need to get turned over to Eldon at some point in time. They're worth nothing. They'd be great paperweights eventually.

**Mr. Swenson:** -- Can this be done by the end of the month so we don't have . . . We can have a conference telephone call to settle this issue once we know the facts. Can we get this done? I mean, how busy are you? Let's say by the end of this month the information is available to the members of the committee.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- Why don't we have it mailed out, and then if we decide there might be some other items and we may want to meet, or we may want to do the conference call. But let's have the information mailed out and then we can get together with our respective caucuses.

**Mr. Upshall:** -- And that'll include a breakdown of all these little gadgets that he's talked about here, okay? Is that right?

**The Chairperson:** -- I don't know. That was not discussed while you were gone. If you're going to throw that in then . . .

**Mr. Upshall:** -- Well I want to know what the hell Ident-A-Call . . . Some people like gadgets, and if we just say telephone services, some are going to have every bloody gadget that's going on and we really don't need all the gadgets. So I think we have to have a breakdown of what we need and we don't need.

**Ms. Haverstock:** -- Have you asked if there's added expense with those items?

**Mr. Hagel:** -- I think that is covered now because that's hardware. So that's already included.

**The Chairperson:** -- Ladies and gentlemen, before you leave, I need to know, you're talking about us getting this information. You want this information sent out to you. Do I get the feeling . . . somebody said, well we can deal with this teleconferencing; I heard someone else say, well maybe there are other items that we may want to consider at the next meeting.

Getting you people together is not an easy task. And being harvest time and so on, it'll be

even tougher. Do I get the feeling that there is a necessity for us to meet in the next three or four weeks? And if it's not, then I don't want to put the staff through a whole bunch of work and then find out, no we can't meet or whatever. If we don't need to meet then . . . Is there anything on the commission that the board has to consider? I don't know.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- I think, Mr. Speaker, we had agreed to meet at sometime around the end of September . . .

**The Chairperson:** -- Yes, but does the board need to meet . . .

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** -- And what I would suggest is that if you can compile the information, send it to us, we will talk with each other. I mean we know how to use these machines that we're all discussing here, and we can consult with the troops on whether or not we need to meet or whether we don't and request of you to call a meeting based on the conversation.

**The Chairperson:** -- All right, I will then await from you people as to whether or not we should look at meeting in the next three or four weeks. And if I don't hear from you people then, unless something else comes up that we'd need to meet, I don't anticipate a meeting of the board in the near future then.

**Mr. Hagel:** -- Well I don't think anybody is going to fall off the end of the world because we haven't come to a decision on this specific telephone debate.

**The Chairperson:** -- No, not at all. Is there anything else that we need to discuss? If not, I do want to thank you people for your attendance at this meeting, and have a good harvest or whatever you're going to be doing. And we need a motion of adjournment by somebody. Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Swenson. All in favour? Agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.









