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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Victoria

Thursday, December 12, 2013

Issue No. 3

HON. LINDA REID, MLA, CHAIR
AND SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Victoria
Thursday, December 12, 2013

Chair: * Hon. Linda Reid (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly)

Members: * Hon. Michael de Jong (Abbotsford West BC Liberal)
* Eric Foster (Vernon-Monashee BC Liberal)
* John Horgan (Juan de Fuca NDP)
* Shane Simpson (Vancouver-Hastings NDP)
* Michelle Stilwell (Parksville-Qualicum BC Liberal)

** denotes member present*

Officials Present: Craig James (Clerk of the House)
Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees)
Gary Lenz (Sergeant-at-Arms)
Hilary Woodward (Executive Financial Officer)

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MINUTES

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



**Thursday, December 12, 2013
1:00 p.m.
Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.**

Present: Hon. Linda Reid, MLA (Speaker and Chair); Hon. Michael de Jong, MLA; Eric Foster, MLA; John Horgan, MLA; Shane Simpson, MLA; Michelle Stilwell, MLA

Officials Present: Craig James, Clerk of the House; Kate Ryan-Lloyd, Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees; Gary Lenz, Sergeant-at-Arms; Hilary Woodward, Executive Financial Officer

1. The Chair called the Committee to order at 1:06 p.m.
2. **Resolved**, that the Committee adopt the agenda as circulated. (Eric Foster, MLA)
3. **Resolved**, that the Committee adopt the minutes of November 28, 2013. (Eric Foster, MLA)
4. The Speaker provided the Committee with a proposal to install an accelerometer on the main dome of the Parliament Buildings to measure and monitor its movement.
5. **Resolved**, that the Committee approve the installation of an accelerometer on the dome. (John Horgan, MLA)
6. The Committee considered the November 28, 2013 report of the Finance and Audit Committee and in particular, the report's recommendations regarding the provision of iPads for Members to access House and Committee documents, and clarification of the Members' per diem policy. The Committee requested information to confirm the source of earlier expenditures on iPads and also confirmation of the number of devices required.
7. **Resolved**, that the Committee support in principle the iPad proposal to ensure all Members are provided with electronic access to House and Committee documents through this technology. (Eric Foster, MLA)
8. **Resolved**, that the Committee adopt the recommendation to clarify the Members' per diem policy. (Shane Simpson, MLA)
9. The Committee considered Vote 1 Budget Estimates: FY 2014-17 and agreed to a further review of revised budget estimates in January 2014.
10. The Committee agreed to invite a presentation on the role and mandate of the Legislative Library at a forthcoming meeting.
11. The Committee considered its draft report entitled *Legislative Assembly Management Committee Annual Report, 2012-2013*.

12. **Resolved**, that, pursuant to section 5 of the *Legislative Assembly Management Committee Act*, the Committee adopt the *Annual Report 2012-2013*; and further that a copy of the report be deposited with the Office of the Clerk and that the Speaker present the report to the House at the earliest opportunity. (John Horgan, MLA)

13. **Resolved**, that the Committee meet *in-camera* to consider a personnel issue. (Eric Foster, MLA)

14. The Committee met *in-camera* from 1:53 p.m. to 2:14 p.m.

15. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 2:15 p.m.

Hon. Linda Reid, MLA
Speaker and Chair

Craig James
Clerk of the House

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2013

The committee met at 1:06 p.m.

[Madame Speaker in the chair.]

Madame Speaker: Good afternoon, and welcome to the Legislative Assembly Management Committee meeting. We are joined on the line by the Minister of Finance. Everyone else is in attendance. Thank you so very much for coming. I appreciate that.

Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

Madame Speaker: A motion to approve the agenda? Moved, Foster; seconded, Horgan.

Motion approved.

Madame Speaker: Review of the previous minutes, of November 28, 2013. Any comment? Take a moment to peruse.

A Voice: I move adoption of the minutes.

Madame Speaker: Thank you. So moved. Secunder?

Motion approved.

Health of the Parliamentary Precinct

Madame Speaker: That brings us to item 3, health of the parliamentary precinct. With the indulgence of the members, one of the outstanding items from a previous discussion was the health and safety of the legislative dome. I would like to propose that this committee discuss and come to grips with the attachment of an accelerometer to the dome to measure whether in fact the dome has moved since 2006 or not. I think that's a good place for us to start, and with the support of the committee, we will make that activity happen.

It was discussed earlier today in terms of perhaps taking a reading six months hence, and if there's absolutely no movement, having a further discussion perhaps in June of this coming year as to whether or not we maintain that device and continue to monitor that on a go-forward basis.

The travels that have been undertaken in terms of what is happening with the legislatures in Sacramento, in Salem and in Olympia.... Certainly, there has been movement. This is not something that's unique to our dome. It is a circumstance, if you will, based on the age of the buildings and the structure of the buildings and the actual configuration of those domes. So again, a circumstance not unique to British Columbia.

Certainly, that is activity that they have undertaken in

the past to determine the scope of the problem. I would suggest that we continue to do that work, and if someone wishes to move that, that would be grand.

J. Horgan: I'd like to speak to the issue. Last meeting we were advised that there had been movement. This is my home community. There was a lot of discussion on coffee row. I don't know if this penetrated in Kamloops or Parksville or Vernon, but it was certainly a topical issue here in the capital regional district.

This is an iconic building and one that the residents feel very attached to. So I'm troubled that we were advised at the last meeting that we had a problem, and now we're going to monitor the problem over the next six months. That tells me that we didn't really have the information that we needed two weeks ago. There was a lot of discussion, a lot of concern about costs, and now our solution is to measure if we have had movement or will have movement in the next six months. Is that correct?

Madame Speaker: We are going to do our due diligence. The report we received was dated 2006 and indicated there had been a shift. I don't know, and I can't tell you today if that has changed since 2006. I think that's the next logical step — to ascertain whether or not there has been additional movement.

J. Horgan: That's good by me.

[1310]

Madame Speaker: What I've gleaned in the last two weeks is that certainly, domes have moved on other legislatures, but it hasn't been continuous movement. They have found a new home, usually within an inch of circumstance, and have come to rest. If that's the case in British Columbia, that's actually good news for us. The reality is we don't know that today.

J. Horgan: Absolutely. Then I'll move the motion.

Madame Speaker: Thank you so very much. Seconded?

S. Simpson: Just on that and speaking to the motion, I'm happy to second it and speak to it a little bit. I'm supportive of the recommendation to put this meter on there. I think it is the due diligence thing to do. We'll spend a relatively modest amount of money, a few thousand dollars, to have this on there, monitor it between now and June and July or whatever and then come back with a report about what the assessment of that has told us.

We're not going to be doing any work while we're here in the spring anyway. They're not going to be knocking the dome around while we're inside the Legislature. At least I hope not. So I think that gives us a chance to then take a look. Clearly, if what we learn is that this is a dif-

ferent issue than what we might have thought it was a few weeks ago and maybe one that we don't have to spend millions of dollars to fix — we'll have lots of places to spend money on this building in other places — that would be a good thing.

I think it would be good to have a lot more information than we have today about what's happened since 2006, and maybe it gets to tell us a little bit about what happened before 2006, too, based on the information that they have.

Madame Speaker: Further to your point, it's also a weather condition consideration. Even if work is required, no one does it in November, December, January, February. The dome needs to be dry, and the mortar needs to be dry, should anything be anticipated or contemplated.

It's been moved and seconded that we better ascertain the movement of the dome.

J. Horgan: I'm just also glad — and I think the record should show — that we're going to have a meter on the building to see if we actually make any difference at all when we're in session. That's an appropriate thing as well.

S. Simpson: The Seahawks moved their building.

Madame Speaker: We're voting on the first motion.

Motion approved.

Madame Speaker: Further contemplation, Mr. Clerk, on the health of the precinct?

C. James (Clerk of the House): No, I have no further comment at this time.

Madame Speaker: Item 4, report of the finance and audit committee.

Finance and Audit Committee Report

C. James (Clerk of the House): Under your blue tab in the binder that was circulated on November 28, there is the report of the finance and audit committee, which contains a number of recommendations — a few recommendations. One of the recommendations is for the use of tablets by members. Most members do have tablets, but there are a few that don't. The Deputy Clerk is able to speak about this request, as well, that was reviewed by the finance and audit committee.

There's also a recommendation relating to the members' per-diem policy, which is still being considered by the finance and audit committee, as I understand it.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees): I'm happy to answer any questions that the members might have with respect to either recommendation. On the first recommendation that had come forward from the finance and audit committee, as your notes state, the proposal is that the assembly would provide any members who are not currently in possession of a tablet device, an iPad, with the provision of that device to enable them to manage volumes of committee documentation, such as the binders that you have been provided with at LAMC meetings.

As well, we would like to go forward with a package whereby we would be able to provide members electronic copies of House documents during a sitting of the House. For example, through the same technology that we would be able to facilitate members to receive committee-related documentation, we would also be able to provide members, through their iPads, with today's orders of the day, *Votes and Proceedings*, recent *Hansard* transcripts and bills under consideration in the House.

So there would be two streams of information that we would be able to push through these devices: committee-related and House documents. That's just by way of background on the first recommendation.

Madame Speaker: Questions?

E. Foster: We have iPads now. I believe they're provided through our caucus. Is that correct?

C. James (Clerk of the House): They would have been.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): Yes, my understanding is that the members of the government caucus, because of their involvement with cabinet committees, have already utilized this technology and the kind of document software that I've described to support their work in conjunction with cabinet committees.

The proposal would be only to provide iPads to any members who do not currently have one in their possession who would like to participate in the project. We're currently confirming the estimated number of members who are not currently in possession of an iPad and who would like to participate in this program.

[1315]

J. Horgan: How long will it take you to determine who uses an iPad and who doesn't? At what point will we be making a decision on that item? With respect to the government members having access to this technology, I'm not certain if it was a caucus expenditure or a government expenditure. If the government is purchasing iPads for government caucus members, I'd like to know about that, and I think the public would as well.

If we could get some clarity on those members that currently have them, what budget that came from and if

it's a caucus expenditure, then that would, I think, change how we would determine what this committee would recommend to the members of the Legislature.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): We could certainly confirm whether it was, in fact, a government purchase, to support cabinet through cabinet operations, or a government caucus purchase. I don't have that information here.

We have been in touch with members of the House who, to the best of our knowledge, are not currently in possession of an iPad, and we are awaiting receipt of a final confirmation of numbers from those individuals through caucus.

J. Horgan: So no time horizon on that?

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): Well, I revisited my request this morning, through my colleagues. I was hopeful to have it for you today. The original estimate, at the time that budgetary funds were set aside for this project in the summer, was up to 50 members. That number has now come down to less than 35. I would expect, in the fullness of time, that the number would be somewhere between 20 and 25, but again, I don't want to commit to a final number until I've received that information.

J. Horgan: Great.

Hon. M. de Jong: Madame Speaker, just to John's point.

John, I'll check, but I'm relatively certain the members of the executive council have tablets that are paid for by either cabinet office or the individual ministries.

The issue will be the private members on the government side.

J. Horgan: Thanks for that, Mike. I anticipated that members of executive council would be given technologies through their ministries. But if I understood the report from the Deputy Clerk, she'd made reference to members of cabinet committees who don't have to be members of executive council. That's a government expenditure that I'd be interested in knowing.

Hon. M. de Jong: Right — okay.

S. Simpson: Just in regard to this, I think the information we had originally gotten was that it was members of the government caucus who were sitting on cabinet committees were supplied that by government because of their responsibilities on whatever cabinet committees were there.

That is important: to know from where that expenditure is being paid for — whether it's out of caucus funds, which is one thing, and then caucuses make their own

decisions about how they expend funds. If it's being spent out of government funds or another pot of money, then that's important to know.

Also, then, to get a sense, kind of, of what we're talking about here — whether we're talking about the difference between iPads that are Wi-Fi or iPads with full service.

In terms of the list, I do believe that... I know, from our side, we've accumulated that list. I think it was passed on today — again, the final list from our side.

We've provided information about what members have tablet technology and whether it's personal or was paid for by constituency offices — I know some members bought them through their constituency offices; some just bought them personally — some sense of what that technology is that they have. I think we've provided that information to the Clerk's office now.

Madame Speaker: What is the pleasure of the committee? To proceed with endorsing Madam Clerk's journey into this endeavour?

S. Simpson: I would support further information, certainly, to resolve it. I think the principle behind this makes some sense, and what we need to do now is get some clarity about what exactly we're talking about — what that looks like and how many — and then resolve that, and what kind of technology we're talking about. Are we talking about iPads straight across? Are we talking about with or without service? All of those things.

We need a little more information, I think, in terms of that, to make sure that members are being treated in an equitable way, whatever that means. I don't think we have quite enough information to know what that means.

Madame Speaker: So the will of the committee is that we return to this in the next meeting in February?

S. Simpson: Yeah, or deal with it before.

J. Horgan: Finance and audit committee?

S. Simpson: Yeah, I think we can deal with it. I think if, in principle, we're agreeing, then we can move forward.

It seems clear to me, from the Deputy Clerk, that whatever we're talking about, it's going to be somewhat less than what was originally anticipated in terms of numbers and presumably in terms of costs as well.

[1320]

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): If I might, just for the information of members, I understood that some funds had been set aside to facilitate this project in conjunction with election orientation and transition planning to ensure that we were poised, for the new parliament, to provide this level of support.

The recommendation was essentially based on a com-

mon device for all members, and that's why, in the fullness of time and with input from members, it was identified that the iPad was, in fact, the tablet of choice and would be the easiest for us to facilitate a secure distribution of documents in a timely fashion.

We have identified the particular model that would be recommended, and my understanding is that a Wi-Fi model which doesn't incur the additional monthly service charges would be, again, sufficient to meet the purposes of our proposed project.

So we're really down to the final number, which I'd be pleased to provide all members of this committee for their information as soon as it's known and received to us.

E. Foster: I know the one that we have, if we're on cabinet committees.... There's just Wi-Fi. We don't have the additional on those.

I think, though, having said that, there are a couple of members — I would think, certainly, in your case as well — that are in areas that they need the additional service, and they have it, but there are very few of them. Pretty much everybody just goes with the Wi-Fi. It does say....

S. Simpson: I think we can sort the details of that out.

Madame Speaker: Would it be appropriate to have a motion in principle to support this project? Moved by Eric, seconded by Mr. Horgan.

Motion approved.

Madame Speaker: That brings us to.... I should ask: any other items under...?

Actually, why don't we discuss for just a moment the...? I'll let Kate speak to this in terms of the per-diem discussion we tried to seek clarification on last time and, if that's the will of the group, take a moment to peruse the document.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): Just, again, for the information of members, in the November binder that was distributed to you.... Under the blue tab, it includes a report from your finance and audit committee, which was dated November 28.

The two recommendations that have been discussed just now are on the second page of that report — first, of course, dealing with the tablets that we were just discussing a moment ago and, second, the member per-diem policy. In essence, my understanding is that the finance and audit committee had recommended a clarification of that policy to ensure clarity around the prorating of the per-diem amounts, depending on meals provided to members in the course of their duties. That is outlined on the second page of that report from last meeting's binder.

Madame Speaker: Any questions? Looking for a mov-

er and seconder. Mr. Simpson, Ms. Stilwell.

Motion approved.

Vote 1 Budget 2014-2017

Madame Speaker: That brings us to item 5, Vote 1 budget estimates. We did not have the benefit of the Finance Minister's wisdom earlier when we were discussing whether or not, on the treatment of the discussion.... I would invite further comments, certainly, from the Finance Minister. My sense was that we would treat this as a Treasury Board submission, but I'm more than open to hearing from individuals around the table.

Hon. M. de Jong: Only this. People may have different ideas. I'm not sure that qualifies as wisdom.

We started to go through some numbers last time. I think the question here is about the ability to have this discussion in the regular LAMC meeting, in the public forum. I can't think of any reason not to, really. It's a proposed budget and sort of a discussion about allocating those amounts.

I suppose if we stumbled on to something that fell into one of the usual categories around surrendering, negotiating confidence or something like that.... But on balance, I certainly don't have any qualms about LAMC having an open discussion about the budget.

Madame Speaker: Any other commentary?

J. Horgan: We were under the impression, coming into the meeting, that there was some concern around confidentiality and the Treasury Board process, but if the Minister of Finance and the secretary to Treasury Board don't care, then we certainly don't. We're quite happy to talk about this openly.

[1325]

Hon. M. de Jong: Yes, John. At the end of the day, matters that go to Treasury Board are still covered by the confidences and the privileges. But as a parliament, we sort of came together and said we want the Legislative Assembly Management Committee to meet in public. And I don't know.... This is kind of part of that, isn't it?

Madame Speaker: Another British Columbia first. Hilary, please lead us through Vote 1 budget estimates.

H. Woodward: What I thought I would do was start with just an overview of the process and then discuss the budget itself.

This is the third year of the revised budget-building process for the Legislative Assembly. Consistent with the approach taken in 2013-14, the Legislative Assembly has taken into consideration fiscal constraint through-

out the budget-building process. On October 21 budget instructions and budget templates were issued to all departments, followed by detailed budget submission presentations by those departments on October 25 and November 5.

The entire Vote 1 2014-15 budget submission was then reviewed by the Legislative Assembly executive on November 22, and that was in preparation for the November 28 presentation of the draft summary budget to the finance and audit committee and the Legislative Assembly Management Committee.

Included in today's materials is a detailed overview of the proposed 2014-15 operating and capital expense budget for the Legislative Assembly as well as the final version of the proposed 2014-15 budget submission.

Madame Speaker: The members had an opportunity to canvass some of that detail this morning in finance audit. Does anyone wish to pose a particular question or have a further discussion?

S. Simpson: I guess the one item here — and we talked briefly about this, and it is the one area where I think that we may have some additional pressures — is around the budgets of constituency offices. It's my understanding that they've not changed since 2007. They've stayed pretty much static since 2007. So \$119,000 is what we get to operate our budget — setting aside rent and that which is paid more directly and a couple of other costs.

So there has been no ability to look at that. We're looking now at.... We saw the report from Mr. van Iersel, who reported last year to LAMC about the operations of constituency offices across the country. I do think that we need to look at the operations of those offices. We do need to look at the adequacy of the funding there. We do need to look at whether some cost-of-living increase or something makes sense in those offices to cover those costs — and look at how we function. I think there's been a lot of discussion about how those offices function in relation to what happens in other jurisdictions.

I think that's an important discussion for us to have. I don't know how it fits into this budget year, because we're moving very quickly to the budget. But it's a discussion that I think we need to have, and it obviously has budget implications around what those costs should be and whether there should be any adjustment there. It's something that I think we need to look at and have a fair conversation about.

Madame Speaker: Well, there's certainly time available. We will not — if I understand correctly — nail down this budget till mid-January. So there's some contemplation time.

Any other comment?

Hon. M. de Jong: Am I reading...? I'm looking at table

1, members services, and I see a bullet there that speaks to a proposed \$430,000 increase in member constituency support. It does say that that's primarily due to office lease costs. Is that the case?

H. Woodward: Yes, that is correct.

Madame Speaker: For the information of Mr. de Jong on the line, members are just taking a moment to review any other outstanding issues they may wish to bring forward.

Hon. M. de Jong: I have a couple of questions relating to the capital side of the budget.

[1330]

Madame Speaker: Please proceed.

Hon. M. de Jong: I'm on page 10 of the document, and it speaks to a summary of capital projects 2014-15. I will simply ask the question and read the statement to indicate my interest.

There is a library elevator modernization. I note that we have struggled with some access issues within the buildings in their entirety. My only observation is, with limited resources.... If the choice is between improving access or modernizing an elevator in a library that a very small number of people have access to versus elevator and access issues elsewhere in the building that impact the public and a broader number of people, we may want to think about that.

Madame Speaker: Mr. de Jong, I can speak to the elevator in the library issue. The elevator is currently not functioning. It is in need of repair. It is the only access for our members who are unable to use the stairs to access the Ned DeBeck Lounge. A number of committees meet there. A number of delegations bring presentations forward there. Typically, that is the room where outreach happens in terms of the ALS Society, the Salvation Army, those kinds of things. Unless we find a new home for that activity, at least the repair of the existing elevator I think is prudent.

Hon. M. de Jong: Okay. What is the vault under the Bunker lawn, and can I see it?

Madame Speaker: Yes, you may see it.

G. Lenz: The vault under the Bunker lawn is an area that is a cavity of space where the water is leaking into. At this point we've sealed off the room because of the amount of mould and air quality in that part. It's an area that we're going to have to seal up and secure so that it maintains the strengths of the foundation of that corner of the building.

You're welcome to come and have a look, but I don't know if I want to open the door.

Hon. M. de Jong: That's fine. I didn't know what it was. Is it over by the brick bunker? Is that where it is?

G. Lenz: It's where the finance section is presently located.

Madame Speaker: If they're the rooms I have seen, it is the set of rooms off the tunnel that connect this building to the finance building.

Hon. M. de Jong: Oh, right. Okay. I gotcha.

Then below that, in talking about capital budget risk, it talks about major construction projects being too disruptive to undertake when the Legislature is sitting and would have to be done in off-hours at higher costs. The only observation I would make, and I'm sure John and Shane would have their own take on this: it's not like the Legislature is sitting 24-7, 365 days a year.

S. Simpson: The minister would be correct.

Hon. M. de Jong: I'm not sure why we are counting as a significant risk the need to perform work in off-hours at higher cost.

Madame Speaker: If I might speak to that, Minister de Jong, that would be around emergency issues — water egress, as an example. If that transpired during the course of a session, yes, we would absolutely have to take care of it because it has some kind of urgent basis to it. Everything else we would absolutely put off to a time when it would be the least inconvenience to members.

[1335]

Hon. M. de Jong: Good. My last question.... I hope this doesn't ignite some kind of fuse or rumour in the way that happened a few years ago. I'd like to know: does LAMC have a clear sense of what the mandate of the Legislative Library is? I ask that in as neutral a way as possible. I go in there occasionally and enjoy it. It serves, I think in an archival way, a really important role.

Do we have a clear sense, as the Legislative Assembly Management Committee now meeting in a far more public way, what our expectation is of the role of the Legislative Library? Is it an archive? Is it a public library? Is its priority service to the members, the public?

Maybe everyone else on the committee has a clear sense. I must confess that after 20 years I no longer do have that clear sense. If we were to, somewhere along the way, establish that, it might help guide us a little bit in some decisions that ultimately may need to be made about work that's required in the library or work to protect the collection.

Madame Speaker: I appreciate the questions, Minister de Jong. The library is governed by its own act, and the mandate of the library is actually found on page 241 of the George MacMinn book. But I am more than happy to have individuals come before the committee at the next juncture and make a presentation, because there are ways we certainly could input the future direction of the library.

J. Horgan: Well, Mike, as you said, we don't sit 24-7, so one of the functions as a capital regional district MLA that I provide periodically is I take people back there and show them the library. It's a highlight of the tour, for sure. I also avail myself of the reference librarians many, many times during the session and out of session. So as a local, I access the library more than most MLAs, I suspect.

But I take your point, and I think that it would be useful as we look at capital costs and protecting the collection, which has always got to be paramount in our minds, I think. Certainly, it's paramount in the minds of the staff at the library.

I think more clarity than a few pages of Mr. MacMinn's book and a broader discussion is appropriate. I would welcome that as well.

Madame Speaker: Any other comments?

S. Simpson: I'm a pretty active user of the library. I certainly use it, you know, probably four or five times a month anyways, and I ask them to do work for me. They do excellent work in terms of their ability to provide information and that, so I'm a pretty keen fan.

I think the library is pretty important as a centre-piece of what this place is all about. But I do think that it probably is not a bad idea to have a conversation about how the library fits in to the bigger scheme of things and maybe about how the library becomes more accessible to the public, in some ways, because it is a pretty impressive resource.

I know other libraries around the province have connections with the Legislative Library. They have linkages, and I've heard about those. But I think it might be a good conversation to have, about how we make better use of the library as an important provincial resource.

Madame Speaker: I appreciate the comments. Certainly, the technology is changing, and the library is growing with that, go-forward.

Your question, Minister, in terms of: "Is it archival?" Yes. Is it a public library? It is open to the public when the Legislature is not sitting.

There are ways for us to continue to have that discussion, and I would absolutely be open to putting it on the agenda for the next time LAMC meets.

Hon. M. de Jong: Thank you.

M. Stilwell: I was just going to add to the comment that I do look forward to the day that I get to take my own constituents on tours of the library when I'm actually to enter the library, because as of yet I have not.

S. Simpson: It's coming soon.

Madame Speaker: Thank you so very much. Some of you will know.... Many of you have observed the construction of a new ramp leading from the revolving doors on the chamber to the library. I am passionate about this accessibility agenda that we are engaged in, in terms of not being able to accommodate all of our members in a place where, typically, we would have used the Ned DeBeck Lounge for those purposes.

With the indulgence of the library, we have formed, I think, a great partnership. And when this House opens in February, members can leave the chamber, go up that new ramp and actually have a gathering place for members of the Legislature that is not the Ned DeBeck Lounge, which today precludes attendance by many members.

I welcome you to that new place. Certainly, that ramp will allow all members of the chamber easy access to the library. Today that is absolutely not the case, and today it's not possible to access the library in that the elevator is currently not functioning.

Thank you for putting that on the table. I would invite you all, in the next few weeks, to try the ramp.

[1340]

Any other questions, thoughts, concerns?

Hon. M. de Jong: Sorry, just one more. Again, I'm on the budget submission document, page 3. I just want to make sure I'm reading it correctly and confirm that the committee is comfortable with this.

The proposal is for a 2014-15 Legislative Assembly budget providing for total operating expenses of \$69.9 million, almost \$70 million. That's described as an amount that is unchanged from the prior year's approved 2014-15 planned target.

Then it describes it as "\$5.6 million lower than the current fiscal year blue book estimate" — and, I think, here's the important part — which, it seems, equals a 2.5 percent lift from the revised 2013-14 budget, excluding election costs for May 2013.

Am I reading that correctly, then — that at the end of the day, what's being proposed is a 2.5 percent lift in the Legislative Assembly budget from '13-14 to '14-15?

H. Woodward: Yes, after taking into account removal of the election-related costs in 2013-14.

Hon. M. de Jong: Okay, so I guess, then, the question one might ask is: does the finance and audit committee feel that we have taken all steps necessary...? Candidly, I think of the branches of government and, until recently,

employees of government that have been asked to move from year to year at, in some cases, a zero percent lift.

Are members of the finance and audit committee satisfied that that's the best we can do? Or can we drive that number down further?

H. Woodward: Sorry. I just wanted to make reference.... You did make comment earlier to this. It is consistent with the prior year's plan. So when the outer-year projection targets for '14-15.... When the budget submission was put forward last year, the \$69.9 million was the 2014-15 target.

Hon. M. de Jong: No, I understand that. No one is suggesting something more than what was contemplated in last year's budget. I think part of our job is to ask, though, whether or not, upon review and taking into account some of the changes and improved processes that LAMC and we are adopting....

This may be more of a question for committee members than for supporting staff. Do we think we can do better? Do we think we can move the budget lift down below 2 percent?

E. Foster: As I go through these and add and subtract and so on.... As the Finance Minister has said, we've asked all departments through government to absorb wage increases that were allocated to the civil servants.

[1345]

As I read through this, we have a couple of spots where it speaks to that. That's a result of increased salaries. I guess I would ask the senior staff within these ministries if we can't have a look at this and ask them for the same thing we've asked other government departments to do: to find efficiencies within their operation to absorb these additional wages.

C. James (Clerk of the House): Just for the information of members and, certainly, for the Government House Leader, the Minister of Finance, there are ways in which the budget could be reduced. The budget is built on an 81-day sitting schedule, so if there's an intention to reduce the number of sitting days — and that's one of the reasons why we do have a surplus at the end of each fiscal year — the numbers could be reduced in that regard. But that's not something that we can do.

There is a contingency reserve of \$747,000, which could be pared back. Members should be aware of the fact that the majority of the budget is actually formula-driven. I do know that the various Legislative Assembly branches have done their absolute best to pare back costs over the forthcoming fiscal year, but we can certainly revisit it if that's the wish of the committee.

J. Horgan: I want to say that I've been a member of this committee.... This will be entering into my third year

in 2014, and this is the first time I've had an opportunity to review a budget of any kind at all. Again, I want to make the case that this is a first for members of the opposition: to be working with the Speaker's office and the Clerk's office to put forward something that is a consensus document.

I don't disagree with Eric's contention that there may well be more beans to be counted and hived away in this document. But it appears to me that if we make assumptions, as the Clerk suggested, this will be a robust Legislature, as others legislatures in Canada are. These costs seem appropriate, based on previous years.

I would hope that, come January, we can finalize this with as little of an increase as possible. It appears we're flat right now, and I think that the finance and audit committee should be commended for that work. I'm not on the committee, but I know that it wasn't easy to get to this point. I'm comfortable with this document, and I'd be prepared to stand behind it.

Madame Speaker: Any other comments? I will say, on behalf of my office, I am more than happy to look to for savings, and have done so since assuming this role. I welcome the input and advice from all members. I do think it is a collaborative exercise. I do think the safeguarding of this institution of parliament is something we all share.

Will I suggest that it's contingent on whether or not we find another half a percent in savings? No. I actually believe we could probably find half a percent of savings. If the Finance Minister's advice to us is to get it down below 2 percent, we will absolutely do our best to achieve that goal.

Hon. M. de Jong: Madam Chair, not to put too fine a point on it, my submissions on this are more as a member of the committee and an MLA than as... I mean, I actually agree. It's the first time we've applied this measure of bipartisan scrutiny.

I just shared my observation, or asked the question, that like every other division of government, we take every step possible to reduce the increase and — to the extent that you're suggesting we have some time between now and January; and that is true, insofar as finalizing the budget — that we do so. There's no magic in the number I suggested. It was merely to probe and ensure that people are comfortable. Like John, I'm not on the finance and audit committee. If we think there are any other further savings that we can extract or squeeze out of this, then I'm sensing that we're anxious to do it.

Madame Speaker: Well said. Any other thoughts or suggestions with respect to item 5 on the agenda? Certainly, I think the Finance Minister has given us advice in terms of what we do on a go-forward basis. Unless it's the will of the committee to vote on the budget today, we'll spend two or three or four more weeks pondering

as we go, and revisit mid-January.

In your role as Minister of Finance, Minister de Jong, when is the final date you would wish receipt?

[1350]

Hon. M. de Jong: Well, I think the middle of January is kind of key just in terms of finalizing both documents. I can get you the date and get the committee members the date, but if we think about the middle of January, we should be all right.

Madame Speaker: We will meet a January 15 submission date to you.

Hon. M. de Jong: Very good.

Madame Speaker: And I will ensure that each of the committee members has further opportunity. Thank you so very much.

That brings us to item 6, the Legislative Assembly Management Committee annual report.

Legislative Assembly Management Committee: Annual Report, 2012-2013

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): Thank you, Madame Speaker.

In your binders, under the purple tab from the last meeting, you will find a copy of the draft annual report of the Legislative Assembly Management Committee for your continued consideration. The report was drafted to cover the time period of your work from January 2012 through to January 2013.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions that members might have with respect to the annual report. Should it be the wish of the committee to proceed to formalize its adoption of the report today, I have prepared the appropriate motion for your consideration.

J. Horgan: Pursuant to section 5 of the Legislative Assembly Management Committee Act, I would like to move that the committee adopt the annual report for 2012-2013 and, further, that a copy of the report shall be deposited with the Office of the Clerk and that the Speaker shall present the report to the House at the earliest opportunity.

E. Foster: I would like to second.

Madame Speaker: Mr. Foster, thank you very much.

Motion approved.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk): Thank you, Members. That's wonderful. Thank you.

Madame Speaker: We're on item 7, other business.

Other Business

C. James (Clerk of the House): Just for the information of members, MLA disclosure is coming up for the end of December. December 31 is the cutoff for posting — now the first Friday in February, we are anticipating. I will be circulating a note to all members to that effect, shortly.

Madame Speaker: Any other items under other business?

J. Horgan: First Friday in February?

C. James (Clerk of the House): Yes, the first Friday in February, for the end of the December.

Madame Speaker: You were not available for the discussion this morning, but apparently, the cabinet submission comes almost five days later than the MLA submission, and in terms of combined MLA-cabinet travel, we wanted to be able to present both at the same time. It caused some confusion last time, so we're basically extending it by five days.

J. Horgan: Okay, good.

Madame Speaker: Any other thoughts, concerns? Anything else under other business?

I'm going to invite the committee to stay as we move in camera for but a moment, and if I can ask the members in the gallery to excuse themselves, I would appreciate that.

The committee continued in camera from 1:53 p.m. to 2:14 p.m.

[Madame Speaker in the chair.]

Madame Speaker: We are now returning to consideration of the agenda. We're on item 7. Any other business?

A Voice: Adjournment?

Madame Speaker: That brings me to next meetings. January 6, by telephone — I'll arrange a time with the members. February 25, from nine to ten, for finance and audit. And March 11, eight to ten, for LAMC.

Motion to adjourn? Mr. Horgan? No seconder is required.

Motion approved.

The committee adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

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