



STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Mr. Dustin Duncan, Chair
Weyburn-Big Muddy

Mr. Kim Trew, Deputy Chair
Regina Coronation Park

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Martensville

Mr. Tim McMillan
Lloydminster

Mr. Jim Reiter
Rosetown-Elrose

Mr. Randy Weekes
Biggar

Mr. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

[The committee met at 16:10.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, members of the committee. Today we have a couple of items before us. I'll begin by introducing members of the committee. For the opposition we have Mr. Trew, and substituting for Mr. Yates is Mr. Quennell. And on the government side we have Mr. Weekes, Mr. McMillan, and substituting for Ms. Heppner is Mr. Chisholm, and substituting for Mr. Reiter is Mr. Bradshaw.

I want to welcome Minister D'Autremont to the committee today, and I would ask him to introduce his officials at this time.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Chairman. It's a pleasure to be here today and I'd like to say good afternoon to the committee members on both sides of the House. Before I introduce my officials from my ministry, I want to make a few general comments about our new government's first budget and ...

The Chair: — Minister D'Autremont, if you could just at this time introduce your officials. I have a few more administrative items and then we'll get to your comments.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Very well. Thank you very much. To my left is Don Wincherauk, deputy minister of Information Technology Office. To my far right is Rory Norton, the assistant deputy minister of corporate information services. To my immediate right is Richard Murray, executive director of policy and planning. And sitting at the other table is Troy Smith, senior financial analyst.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Before we begin there's a number of administrative matters before us. At this time I will be tabling on behalf of the committee a number of documents from CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], SaskEnergy, STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], and SaskWater.

I also want to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 146(1) the estimates for the following ministries and agencies were deemed referred to the committee on April 3, 2008: votes 12, 18, 82, 175, 176, and 177, Finance; vote 13, Government Services; vote 74, ITO [Information Technology Office]; vote 80, Office of the Provincial Secretary; vote 33, Public Service Commission; vote 154, Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation; vote 153, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation; vote 140, SaskWater Corporation; and vote 150, SaskEnergy Inc.

Today's agenda, committee members, is estimates for ITO. We're going to meet until 5 o'clock on that, from 4 to 5, and then later this evening from 6 to 8 is estimates for Government Services.

**General Revenue Fund
Information Technology Office
Vote 74**

Subvote (IT01)

The Chair: — First item of business is the estimates for Information Technology Office. This can be found on pages 103 to 105 of the Saskatchewan Estimates book. It's on page 103, Information Technology Office, vote 74, central management and services (IT01).

Are there questions at this time from members? Mr. Quennell.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Chair, I believe the minister had — I hope not too lengthy — comments to make. And I would defer to those comments, if it's all right with the Chair.

The Chair: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Quennell. My apologies, members. Minister D'Autremont, if you want to make your opening statement now. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Quennell.

I've already introduced my officials. But I'd like to make some general remarks about our new government's first budget and particularly the ITO budget for this year.

This budget is about keeping promises and making sure that we are ready for the unprecedented growth our province is experiencing. The budget contains initiatives that will fulfill 60 commitments our government made to the people of Saskatchewan last fall. By anyone's standards, I would say that's a pretty good record for a government that has been in power for less than six months.

While the budget contains a wide array of spending initiatives, the cornerstone is the \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative, the largest infrastructure investment in Saskatchewan's history. Whether it's our highways, our educational facilities, health facilities, or municipal infrastructure, we're taking a big step to address the infrastructure neglect of the past 16 years.

I believe that it is a wise investment that will help ensure we don't repeat the mistakes of other jurisdictions that have experienced rapid economic expansion. We need to be ready for the growth that is happening in our province.

As IT [Information Technology] minister, I recognize the importance of broadband infrastructure to our rural communities. Expansion of high-speed Internet to underserved communities will be a priority of our new government as well.

The budget also makes major investments in areas like education and training that will have a positive impact on all sectors of our economy, including the IT sector. In fact providing young people with access to more training opportunities was one of the priority areas identified in a recent round table discussion I hosted with about 40 of our province's key IT leaders. They see increased training opportunities as one of the main solutions to the labour shortage being experienced by many industrial sectors.

I was pleased with the input received at the round table discussion, which was organized by ITO. Consultation with the private sector on economic matters will be a hallmark of our government. And this year's budget allocation will enable ITO

to continue playing a role in working with the private IT sector.

Our government sees the IT sector as much more than just an industry. It is a vital enabler of growth that is occurring in all of our economic sectors. That's why building relationships with leaders in the sector is so important. I look forward to similar meetings with IT leaders that are already being planned.

I'm also excited about the work the ITO will be undertaking this budget year that will build upon past accomplishments. As members are aware, the ITO has been very busy over the last several years consolidating IT services across executive government. That task is nearing completion. The ITO now provides a full range of IT services to more than 9,500 government employees in 22 ministries and agencies. Health is now the only ministry that does not currently rely on ITO for its IT services.

Consolidation, which I supported under Minister Thomson of the previous administration, has resulted in many benefits, including a major reduction in IT spending which has decreased from \$80 million four years ago to approximately \$67 million this past year — a decrease of 16 per cent.

An independent assessment of the highly respected international IT research firm, Gartner, confirmed the value of the consolidation initiative. They noted that Saskatchewan was an early adopter of IT consolidation and has moved as far as or further than many of the clients that we've seen in this aspect. They also stated that the ITO has made progress on a very worthwhile journey, and there are further opportunities to add value.

With the completion of the consolidation, the ITO is ready to refine and further improve its service delivery to realize the opportunities identified by Gartner. It has a blueprint that will enable it to better align technology with the business needs of government. Essentially the goal is to maximize the value of our IT spending — the best value for the buck, so to speak, or in this case, the taxpayer's dollar.

This year's budget allocation will allow us to begin moving forward on that task, with the ultimate goal of providing more effective and efficient services to Saskatchewan people and other clients. The ITO has already begun work on revamping government's online service and program delivery system.

This electronic embassy project is one of the specific mandate items given to me as minister of IT by the Premier. This will represent a significant change in the way government conducts business. And so it will be a multi-year process.

The first step will be to improve and promote online access for businesses and prospective business owners wishing to come to Saskatchewan. At the end of the day, what we're looking to create is a single point of entry that will make it much easier for everyone to access programs and services from their government. I've introduced my officials already, Mr. Speaker, and in keeping with the fact that ITO is the youngest ministry in this government also along with us today, as I mentioned earlier, is Mr. Troy Smith. Troy is a financial analyst and just one of the many young professionals that have joined ITO over the past few years.

ITO is the youngest ministry in government. Mr. Chairman, we're ready for your questions.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you, Minister. Mr. Quennell.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad that you didn't make me miss that. I have to note from the minister's last comments that it may be the youngest ministry in government, but the ministers keep getting older. I think we started off with Minister Thomson and moved to minister me or my ministry and then now Minister D'Autremont who's only slightly, I think, slightly older than me in all fairness.

A couple of preliminary questions, just to set the stage. The budget for the Information Technology Office is what percentage increase or decrease from last year?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — It's a 1 per cent increase over last year's estimates that were presented by the previous administration.

Mr. Quennell: — Over the estimates, but what is it over the actual budget — actual expenses, actual expenditures?

Mr. Wincherauk: — I would have to double-check going back to the supplementary estimates, but I would think that the increase was around 300, \$400,000, but . . .

Mr. Quennell: — In percentage terms?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Oh percentage terms, that would be half a per cent, if that.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. So the budget for last year and the actual expenditures were fairly close, and the increase is quite a bit smaller than other increases across government, I take it?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There were some departments such as Health that saw major increases. Others though were kept within the 1 per cent range.

Mr. Quennell: — But the average, of course, increased expenditure is 10 per cent.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well when you see items like Health, it makes a significant difference.

Mr. Quennell: — Yes. The estimated FTE [full-time equivalent] estimate for the coming year is how many? Full-time equivalents.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The FTEs for the upcoming year, for this budget year are 322, which is a restatement of the FTEs that were there before.

And I'm not sure if you noted that, but previously the FTEs were in the neighbourhood of, I think it was 252, 253 — somewhere in that area. There was a significant understatement of the FTEs by the previous administration. When the changes were first made there — if I can find my other paper here; thank you — there was a significant understatement of the FTEs from the previous years. When people were transferred when ITO took over the consolidation of the various departments, not all

of the departments transferred over the FTEs with the employees.

And I'll give you some examples. Highways, there was a transfer of 34.4 FTEs, yet they transferred 58 positions over. So there was a shortfall there of 23 FTEs that were not recorded by the previous administration. And that carried on through most of the departments as they came under consolidation. Industry and Resources transferred 21 people and 19 FTEs for a shortfall of two. Government Relations transferred nine staff, only provided six FTEs, for a shortfall of three.

Finance, they actually provided the same number of bodies that they provided with FTEs so their numbers were accurate. They transferred 23 FTEs and 23 bodies. Executive Council was very good as well. They transferred four and had four bodies to send along with the FTEs.

Learning, on the other hand, transferred 96 staff and only sent over 61.3 FTEs for a shortfall of 35 people. PSC [Public Service Commission] transferred 13 people and 11 FTEs. Environment was . . . again they transferred the proper amount. They transferred 20 FTEs and 20 staff. Justice transferred 15 FTEs and 20 staff. Community Resources transferred 31 FTEs and 39 staff. Labour transferred 3 FTEs and 4 staff.

I'm not sure how this works, but Advanced Education took back one staff and took away an FTE. Government Services, they transferred the proper amount which we have just consolidated. They transferred 12 FTEs and we received 12 staff for that so we received a total number, including ITO's provisions which was 26 previously, we received a total staff of 264 and a transfer of 344.

Mr. Quennell: — Two questions arise from that. The first is, is it the minister's understanding that while, as a result of these discrepancies that he's discussed, the ITO would have been undercounting FTEs, that the departments at the time would have been overcounting FTEs, but that these FTEs would have been counted somewhere but in the wrong place, as the minister would argue?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question on that. It's my understanding that under the previous administration some of the departments were undercounting their staff so that they weren't reporting the proper numbers to the legislature, and so that resulted in the case where they had the opportunity to transfer out staff, they transferred more staff than FTEs to ITO and then that left ITO with 79 more staff than they had FTEs for. And it was an opportunity for obviously some of the departments to rejig their numbers in a manner that perhaps made — and I don't know — but perhaps made their reporting more accurate in the other departments, but it certainly didn't make the reporting for ITO accurate in the past.

Mr. Quennell: — And I wasn't sure the minister would be able to answer the question anyways because of course he's looking at the result for, for ITO.

Second question that arises from the minister's comments is, once one has adjusted for the restatement, I think the minister called it, what growth, if any, or what decrease, if any — having adjusted for the realities that the minister has talked

about — what actual growth or decrease in employees has there taken place in ITO over the year or is expected to take place in this budget year?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well as I stated earlier, we have ended up with a total of 344 staff on 264 FTEs. Since that has been occurring over the last three or four years, there has been a reduction of that 344 down to 320 through attrition. So there was no . . . People were not let go in the sense that . . . To get the numbers to come into line, people were not dismissed. The previous administration was allowing this to be reduced through attrition.

Mr. Quennell: — So we find ourselves in 2007 at 320.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — It's currently at 322.

Mr. Quennell: — 322. Now how many employees, if any, have been terminated since November 21, 2007?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — None whatsoever.

Mr. Quennell: — None whatsoever. And how many vacancies have been filled since November 21, 2007?

Mr. Wincherauk: — We're dealing with, and it has been going on for some time, is what we are calling permanent staffing. As we collapsed all the departments into the ITO, we haven't hired permanent positions until we are finished with consolidation. Now we're in the process of hiring people into those permanent positions. So it's not like there are really vacancies there or anything. It was part of an agreement with the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] that we wouldn't staff until everybody was in, and that process is now under way.

Mr. Quennell: — So non-permanent employees would be made permanent?

Mr. Wincherauk: — They would have had permanent positions back in their old departments, but to make it fair to everybody so that we didn't pull all the resources out of departments, we held off on the permanent staffing of those, which is now being undertaken.

Mr. Quennell: — So how many positions not permanent within ITO will become permanent within ITO in this budget year?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Will be the full 322.

Mr. Quennell: — Those are all considered to be not permanent?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Basically the people on the side of the operations, which is the vast majority of our people, are not in permanent positions right at the moment.

Mr. Quennell: — As I understand the officials' comments, and I just remember from doing this before, if the official might identify themselves when they first speak, for the benefit of Hansard, that helps the process a little bit. I hope you don't mind, Mr. Chair, me mentioning that.

So as such there haven't been actually any actual vacancies to be filled since November 21, 2007. Is that a yes?

Mr. Wincherauk: — That'd be correct, yes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — One of the reasons this was done was that because, let's say, Highways came into the process early, if permanent positions had been assigned to staff coming over from Highways, then those positions would have been all filled when the latest ministries came over such as Social Services. All of those positions, the permanent top positions would have been filled. So by not filling those positions permanently, then it allowed for a fair and equal opportunity for all of the employees.

Mr. Quennell: — So just to be 100 per cent clear in my own mind, there's been no terminations of anybody's employment in ITO since November 21, 2007.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, there have been no terminations.

Mr. Quennell: — My next question to the minister is, having had the opportunity to review the essential services Bill tabled by his government — I think Bill 5 — are there any employees within ITO that would be considered under that legislation and by the government to be essential?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The legislation hasn't passed yet. And ITO is taking this under review and there are no decisions made at the present time.

Mr. Quennell: — The minister doesn't have in mind any positions within ITO that he believes would be essential under the legislation, but there may be positions. But he's not in a position right now to say, that review having not been completed. Is that a correct statement?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There's a review that will take place and a determination will be made then if any employees would be in positions where they could be deemed as essential.

Mr. Quennell: — The minister spoke about the expansion of high-speed Internet, and I wonder if the minister could advise if they had any specific locations in the province in mind for the coming budget year.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. There are three, presently three locations that are being looked at for the remaining installations. And those are Etomami Lake which would include the Endeavour and Ketchen areas which is north of Kamsack, up in that area towards southwest of Hudson Bay. Mankota and Middle Lake are the other two locations.

Mr. Quennell: — The minister also spoke about, in his opening statement, the value of the Internet and these type of technologies to education. And I wonder if the minister would agree with the important value of distance education, especially in Saskatchewan which has one of the most rural populations in the country.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Certainly that is one of the reasons why I was supportive of the ITO initiatives in community in

that, when they first came out with the opportunity to provide access to the world and the world of knowledge to those areas that are not necessarily central, and so that provided that opportunity to the smaller communities across the province. I believe that's a beneficial service provided by government to our citizens, and look forward to seeing that increased as well.

We have CommunityNets II and II. As well CommunityNet II provides expanded wireless service. And I see that as being a huge opportunity still for those areas that continue to be underserved by high-speed Internet, and look forward to working with the private sector and SaskTel to further expand CommunityNet II across the province.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Minister. Can the minister advise or any officials advise if the Information Technology Office is involved in or in any way aware of monitoring email communications by public employees?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There is no monitoring going on of civil service or of public service Internet or, excuse me, emails.

Mr. Quennell: — Or certainly your ministry and your office is not being used to do that.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No. It's not happening, so we're not doing it.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. The next subject that I want to come to and just sort of, I guess, briefly touch on — more as a personal interest than anything else of course — is the Wi-Fi [wireless fidelity] project, the free Wi-Fi project that took place in Moose Jaw, Regina, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon. And I wonder if officials could give me and the committee a brief update on how that is going — and I appreciate there was some technical bugs as late as the election period, whether those have been worked out — and perhaps if the ministry has any considerations about expansions of the free Wi-Fi service.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The free Wi-Fi service is in place in, I believe, the four cities — Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and P.A. [Prince Albert]. And there's been some costs associated with that, \$1.3 million of capital cost with an ongoing operating cost of \$340,000, which provides service to about 8,100 unique users a month at the present time.

There has been some up and down in those numbers, although a general trend would be to seeing an increase in unique users across the province, across those four cities, but you'll note a change though, based on the season or the month. Some months are up, some months are down, and it seems to be a service that is utilized by travellers in large part. I would have to assume that they're using it to access their emails because it's a service that is not a great connection if you're looking for major downloads or if you're looking for downloads with lots of video or lots of picture content in that sense that anything with high megabytes is not easily downloaded on Wi-Fi.

Mr. Quennell: — The minister talked about the access to the service varying by season, and I note that in Saskatoon that much of the riverbank downtown of course would be available sites for access to the Wi-Fi. Is the access going up in the spring

and summer when people are outside on the riverbank, or is it dropping and going up in the winter?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well we don't have a long period of time to judge this on. It only went back to last August. Once it was put in place there was a rise towards October and then dropped off in November and December, and then started to increase again back in January. Well it went up in January, back down again in February. And maybe because February's a short month that may have had an impact on the numbers counted because there'd be less days there, but increased again in March.

So it seems to fluctuate perhaps more with the number of students or with people coming in from out of the province, based on holiday times so that there would be perhaps more travellers that might access it over Christmas and New Year's or on the statutory holidays, when people are coming back into the province from Alberta or Manitoba.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. Is it possible to determine relative use of Wi-Fi as between the business district areas and the post-secondary areas? In other words, whether it's better used on campus or better used downtown.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — We do have figures for the U of R [University of Regina], not for Saskatoon. Regina, are these general numbers totalled? Are those total numbers?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Yes

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Regina total numbers for September, as an example, were just over 2,000 users. And out of the University of Regina, it was just slightly under 550. So about a quarter of the total number at that time were at the university.

Mr. Quennell: — At one time ITO paid SaskTel for website blocking services for CommunityNet. Is that still the case?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, the blocking services for gambling sites or inappropriate sites is continued to pay for, for all government employees so that they cannot access those sites.

Mr. Quennell: — What is the cost of that now? Or what . . . the cost of that in this budget?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The cost of that is approximately \$230,000 a year.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. That's the estimate for the 2008-2009 . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. The 2009 budget year, yes.

Mr. Quennell: — That is a cost that's risen considerably. Is the service grown or is SaskTel just charging more money for the same service?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That seems to be, according to the officials, the rate that basically they have been charged since the beginning for that service.

Mr. Quennell: — At one time ITO had work terms targeted at Aboriginal post-secondary students. And I believe one summer, or one year, that was expanded up towards 10 students. Is that program still continuing? And if it is, how many students are in the program?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Those numbers haven't been developed yet for this year, but we do continue to participate in student hiring programs such as the co-op program and the summer student hiring program, as well as sponsoring Regina business student functions as well.

Mr. Quennell: — Is there a specific program remaining targeted at Aboriginal students?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, specific targeting for Aboriginal students continues under the co-op program.

Mr. Quennell: — And the number last year, your most recent number?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Last year we had 10 students, but they're not identified as being of any particular ethnic grouping, so I don't know. We could get back to you on that.

Mr. Quennell: — The best information that the minister has available now doesn't identify Aboriginal students, but I would ask the question as to how one can target Aboriginal students if you don't know what is the ethnic breakdown on the students. How do you know you've targeted Aboriginal students, and how do you know that you've accomplished any kind of target?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — It's just that the information that we have available today doesn't identify them in that manner.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you. Then if the minister could provide the information as to how many students in this past budget year and how many students are anticipated, targeted, for the upcoming year — those two numbers — that would be great.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, we make the commitment to provide that information.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — We'll provide it to the committee.

Mr. Quennell: — I know I should know this, but how many departments and agencies are now in the delivery partnership with ITO?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There is a total of 22 ministries now.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. And we discussed . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — And agencies.

Mr. Quennell: — Now we're at 22. And we discussed the addition in supplementary estimates of which ones? Refresh my memory.

Mr. Wincherauk: — Don Wincherauk. We brought in Government Services just recently, and the only one that is outside is Health.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Wincherauk. I'm told that they have a seating plan, so my concern was misplaced. Thank you.

Now at one time ITO had a number of, I guess, desired initiatives on the part of the officials in the ministry, not necessarily the ministers. You know, it's sometimes the ministers as well, I suppose, are persuaded to bring these forward. One is the enterprise security model, and that arose in part at least because of issues raised around government IT security by the Provincial Auditor. Could the minister or his officials provide me with an update on the status of addressing those concerns of the auditor around government IT security.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I would ask that Rory look after that one.

Mr. Norton: — Yes, we continue to address those concerns and move along a maturity path. Again you know, it can always be quicker when possible, when funding and that is available, but we continue to monitor our maturity every year and do assessments on where we're at and target the key areas that need to be taken care of in that respect.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. Are there funds specifically set aside in this budget for that purpose?

Mr. Norton: — Funds for security, I mean, all parts of IT includes funds for security, so yes, we have a funds that will relate to security initiatives, be they with desktop or server environments. So there's definitely funding in there. Is it identified as a separate line item itself? No.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay so there's no line item for the enterprise security model, but perhaps the Provincial Auditor might have interpreted as calling for.

Mr. Norton: — I don't think the Provincial Auditor was calling for an enterprise security model. I think, again, key pieces such as intrusion detection, how our policy is developed and the procedures and controls in place are his concern. I think most of his concerns have been satisfied with some of our recent projects.

Mr. Quennell: — And again at one time . . .

Mr. Norton: — Yes and then as well we participate in the audits with the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Quennell: — And again at one time there was discussion around a disaster recovery site. It's located some distance away from the main data centre in Regina — I think the minister wants to address this himself — and I had the opportunity to tour the data centre in Regina. Does the minister or the ministry see a need for a disaster recovery site, and are there any plans in that vein?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you. I think the member must have been reading the old *Hansards* of my questions because I was asking the very same questions last

year and the year before about the disaster recovery sites and the plans in place because that's always a concern with ITO and all of the ministries and agencies we serve — to ensure that the service that we provide to them is maintained, is safe, and that whenever disaster should happen, whatever that might be, that we can have all of the ministries back up and running as quickly as possible, especially their essential services that are need to maintain the proper information and access to the information that we all hold secure.

I don't know if the officials want to respond further.

Mr. Wincherauk: — As you know, we have a state-of-the-art facility right at the moment. We've looked, the last couple of years, of a backup date, a centre outside of Regina. The costs in this area have escalated so much that we've come up with a backup plan which would be to take the data centre that existed in Government Services and turn it into our second and our backup site. And I don't know, Mr. Norton, if there's anything else you'd like to add to that.

Mr. Norton: — And as well as that, for applications of higher criticality we will be entering into likely an agreement with a vendor to provide that off-site service.

Mr. Quennell: — Well, Mr. Chair, I hadn't thought of just reading the minister's questions back to him. That's an intriguing idea and I will have to sleep on that. I guess to the minister: can he now tell us the concerns that he had expressed when he thought that such an disaster recovery site was needed have now been allayed because of how he's been briefed by his officials, or does he still believe that it would be a desirable project to undertake?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Again cost is always a factor in any of these things, but as well now that the ministry has taken over the operation of Government Services IT there is another site available that is separate from the ITO site, so we do have a redundancy built into the system with that capability now. Now what we have to do is ensure that we have the supports in place to make sure that if one site is down that the other one still can provide the maximum service possible.

Mr. Quennell: — And the Government Services site is located where?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — It's in Regina as well.

Mr. Quennell: — What was the reason for wanting a site 200 kilometres from Regina, which obviously the Government Services site is not? Cost aside.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That would be best practices because you can come into the situations where you have electrical problems or some other major disaster in the one centre such as we are. While we don't normally get tornadoes, that is a possibility in this province. And those are the kind of disasters that, while you certainly hope don't happen, they have to be part of your considerations.

Mr. Quennell: — Regina has certainly had at least one very famous and destructive tornado in its past.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Absolutely, and my wife's grandmother was one of the people involved in it.

Mr. Quennell: — So it would be desirable, I think the minister is saying still, to have the disaster recovery site located outside of Regina for reasons that he's just outlined, because problems that strike the one site in Regina could very easily strike the other site in Regina. And the response seems to be — Mr. Chair, if I'm not being unfair in weighing this — that the escalating costs outweigh the benefits of reducing a relatively small risk but still a very real risk. And so my next question is, what are the estimated costs of such a separate disaster recovery site a good distance from the capital?

Mr. Wincherauk: — A site similar to what we have right now could run you well over 30, \$40 million. And you know, at one point we thought there was an opportunity to partner with some folks on this, but I think this is one thing you're seeing across the entire industry right at the moment. One of the options would be — we believe we've got an adequate backup now — is that at some point some of your critical data will be stored out of province at a facility elsewhere, which would allow us to get it back up and running and everything. And we're looking at that right now as a viable option.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. Thank you. Now again I appreciate some of this is almost nostalgic, but at one point ITO was calling for initiatives to identify, through the call-for-IT initiatives process, for corporate IT projects that have government-wide benefits. And the Ministry of Finance had a general aversion to dedicated annual funding pools. I wonder if (a) the government policy in respect to dedicated annual funding pools has changed? And if it hasn't changed generally, has it changed in respect to ITO's request? Or does ITO no longer see the desirability of having such a dedicated annual funding pool?

Mr. Wincherauk: — We believe the funding pool is still an important initiative. It was just with the change in government and transition and everything, the opportunity to bring it forward this year, it wasn't the right time. And we will be bringing that initiative back in the next budget cycle.

Mr. Quennell: — Maybe if I could, if the minister wanted, felt inclined or had a view — maybe he doesn't have a view — to provide a government view as to policy in respect to dedicated annual funding pools. And perhaps his officials could get some idea of how likely they'll be successful when they bring forward a request next year.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I like to keep them in suspense a bit. It's not something that has been considered yet. Obviously we're very new at . . . This is a new government, only been in place for just over four months, five months. And so we're still learning our way around and what's going on in the department. So that particular item has not been come forward for consideration yet.

Mr. Quennell: — In respect to citizen service pilot projects, are there any in place now?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — What we're looking at is the electronic embassy which would provide one-portal access for

people to access government services. So that would be the first initiative that we would be looking at.

Mr. Quennell: — Is there in place a service catalogue for Saskatchewan government programs and services provided by ITO?

Mr. Norton: — The service catalogue is just finishing, completing it right now. So this year, the ITO will be using the new service catalogue model to deliver services to their clients.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. Well at this time, Mr. Chair, those are all my questions. I don't know if my fellow committee member has any questions or not but . . .

Mr. Trew: — I actually have one.

The Chair: — Okay. Mr. Trew.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you, colleague. Minister, earlier there was a question around your department withholding gambling, for example, not allowing users to see a gambling site. And I recall, having enjoyed the position of being minister responsible for Gaming for some 13 months, and my ministry in this building could not access the Cable Regina, cable Moose Jaw website that we were the minister responsible for. And I'm wondering if that has been corrected.

Mr. Norton: — Again with the system that they used to block, we can allow people who need access to particular sites. And again if a site is being inappropriately blocked for people, we can then make sure that it's opened back up. A request would have to come forward for that though.

Mr. Trew: — Okay. That's good news. So if that's the situation today, for whoever the minister is today, all they need to do is request access. And that would be reviewed and presumably in that instance agreed to.

Mr. Norton: — Correct. Again there just has to be access granted for the individual. We would then take what's called an IP [Internet protocol] address, which is kind of how the Internet talks and that, and allow that to go through to any particular site. We have these instances where people are working on, you know, child things and that, that we have to open up sites for that.

Mr. Trew: — Yes, I want to be clear. I support the prohibition, the ban in general terms. It just made it particularly awkward for us at a period of time, and I didn't think was conducive to particularly good governance, but through no fault. I'm certainly not taking out a blame thrower on that. Thank you for the answer. That's my questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Trew.

Mr. Quennell: — I have a follow . . . [inaudible] . . . to that if that's all right.

The Chair: — Do you have a statement or an answer to that? Okay. Minister D'Autremont to answer that.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The member from Saskatoon was asking previously about the number of Aboriginal students. The ministry sent over a response that last year four students were targeted, but unfortunately only one was obtained. This year two are being targeted, but they comment that the Aboriginal IT job market, there's very few applicants in that area.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Chair, I would only note that that's a decrease and encourage the ministry to attempt to come back up to previous numbers which were as high as 10.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — If I can comment though that certainly last year the previous administration targeted four but were only able to obtain one student. So if you look at that, that's a doubling of the numbers if we can get the two this time. But I'm told that there is very few available, and we're certainly doing our best to try and get even two.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Chair, I'm not suggesting there aren't a lack of good intentions. I'm just putting on the record that — and I'm sure the minister doesn't disagree with me — that as much effort as reasonable should be undertaken and with the best result that could be possibly achieved.

Now my follow-up to Mr. Trew's questions are brief, I hope. And the request to have blocking removed of any type of site or any particular site, I assume that would have to come from a certain level within a ministry, and could you tell me what level that would be?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — To remove a blocking on a particular site would require the deputy minister's signature from wherever that was coming from.

Mr. Quennell: — Okay. And I guess my last point on that is, although everybody of course would realize this, I wasn't the minister responsible for ITO when Mr. Trew was having his difficulties, and neither was the current minister. But yes, I think the answer in respect to where the request has to come from is the appropriate answer and the appropriate policy. Those are all my questions now.

The Chair: — Okay thank you committee members. And thank you to the minister and to his officials for appearing. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank them for being here this afternoon. And this committee stands recessed until 6 p.m. this evening.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Good evening, members of the committee. Welcome back. I want to thank the minister for appearing before the committee and his officials for being here this evening.

**General Revenue Fund
Government Services
Vote 13**

Subvote (GS01)

The Chair: — The item of business is the estimates for Government Services that can be found on page 83 of the

Estimates book, and it's vote 13. I would invite the minister, if he has an opening statement, he can make that at this time.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to be here. I'd like to also say good day to the members of the committee. With me today I'd like to introduce my acting deputy minister, Mr. Phil Lambert, to my immediate right; Mr. Donald Koop, the assistant deputy minister for accommodation services, to my left; Ms. Shelley Reddekopp, director of financial services, to the far right. Behind me at the table is Ms. Helen Huber, director of the Regina office for accommodation services; and Mr. Rob Isbister, director of purchasing branch.

I'd like to thank them for appearing with me before the committee this evening to answer the questions related to the ministry's financial estimates.

Government Services provides accommodation and support services to other government ministries and agencies. This centralized approach allows others to focus on their specific programs, services, and provides for centralized expertise, coordination, economies of scale, and greater consistency within government. And while accommodation is the largest activity, we also provide vehicles, mail, purchasing, office supplies, warehousing, records management, air services, telecommunications, and much more.

In addition the ministry has been able to take a leading role in reducing the government's environmental footprint. By purchasing more fuel efficient cars, by improving energy efficiency in government buildings, and by designing and building new facilities to meet the leadership in energy environmental design, LEED, standards, the ministry has made significant strides in reducing energy consumption. All new vehicles purchased by CVA [central vehicle agency] will be within the top 20 per cent of fuel efficiency for their class. Two high-profile projects we are working on right now — the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre and the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory — will both be LEED certified.

The replacement of the 1913 section of the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre is on schedule and on budget with completion anticipated this summer. This new facility will provide a safer and more efficient working environment for employees while considerably upgrading the living standards and programming capacity for inmates. The construction of the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory has just begun with completion expected in the summer of 2009. The new laboratory will meet Saskatchewan's future needs by improving testing capability and speeding up intervention in the event of a public health crisis such as a SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] or an influenza pandemic.

These building projects, along with other projects across the province like new courthouses in Meadow Lake or La Ronge, will go a long way to building a sustainable infrastructure to keep pace with our growing economy. With that I welcome any questions you may have on the estimates of the Ministry of Government Services.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister D'Autremont, and I would ask that if your officials could just identify themselves before

answering their first question, and then just for the sake of the members, they know who's answering the question. Government Services, vote 13, central management and services (GS01). Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My first question has to do with central management services (GS01). In executive management, we see an increase of about \$150,000. Could you please explain to me that increase?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question. On this particular issue, the \$156,000, Government Services is the lead agency in the ministry that I represent, or the ministerial capacities that I represent. Therefore the \$128,000 relates to the minister's share of the salary, which in turn is then billed back to SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] as a portion thereof. And the remaining 28,000 is primarily increases in staff within the deputy minister's office.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. The next area, central services is seeing a decrease of about \$1.2 million. Could you give me some information about that decrease, please?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay that relates to the transfer of staff for the HR [human resources] component which was within Government Services and now has been moved off to the PSC. So that actual transfer decrease was 1.345 million, but there's an additional increase of 52,000 related to the funding of salary increases as negotiated last year.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Now I'm going to go into a series of questions regarding some of the services provided by the department. You started this evening talking about all future vehicle purchases would be in the 20 per cent fuel efficiency for their class. Could you give me some additional detail on how many vehicles we intend to purchase this year? How much of the fleet will be replaced? And how long it will take before the fleet will reach all the vehicles being within that 20 per cent?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question. This year the plan is to purchase 639 vehicles. Using the statistical averages, it will take about eight years to roll through the entire fleet. But you have to keep in mind that with the improvements that are happening within fleet efficiencies, seven, eight years down the road the ones purchased this year may not be any longer within the top 20 per cent.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. My next question has to do with how many of the 639 you're anticipating purchasing are going to the hybrid?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — In the upcoming year the plan is to purchase seven hybrid vehicles for SaskEnergy.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Why only seven?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Because the hybrid vehicles are fairly new, we're not going out and buying a complete fleet of them. We're doing testing under different conditions to make a determination of where they work well and where they do not work well.

The seven that are being purchased for SaskEnergy will be used

in town where the use of the electrical motors will be most efficient. So far what has been found is that for the long-distance highway travel, the hybrids that we have had have proved to be not as efficient as the high efficiency vehicles that are not hybrids.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. What particular brand and model hybrid are we purchasing?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There is no change from the ones that were purchased previously. Again in 2008 we're purchasing the Ford Escape Hybrids.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Has there been any changes to the tendering policy for vehicle purchases since November 21, 2007?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, there has been no changes, although as the new minister I took the opportunity of sending a letter to all of the automobile manufacturers inviting them to submit tenders when the RFPs [request for proposal] were put out in place. And so we're receiving responses back from them.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Was that not the practice previously?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — What had happened is that only a number of the manufacturers were submitting tenders. And so we wanted to ensure that they understood that we were looking at the top 20 per cent of the vehicles in all the classes and that if they wished to submit, they would be considered.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Does that include all manufacturers or just North American manufacturers or?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That was all manufacturers. Most manufacturers now have some North American component.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Is it a criteria to have some North American content or component?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No it isn't.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. Could you lay out for us what the current criteria is for selection of vehicles?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question. One of the criteria is obviously to be in the top 20 per cent fuel efficiency of the class, but after that we try to match the vehicle to the client, the best vehicle to the client for their requests. Obviously they have different requirements and different specifications, but we can provide you with the technical specifications if you would like.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Have we in the past ever purchased other than North-American-built vehicles?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question. There's been very few non-North American vehicles purchased over the period of time. There was a time back in, I believe, the 1970s where some offshore vehicles were purchased. And I know talking to some of the older employees, they were not

happy with those particular vehicles.

But currently what we're almost totally buying is North American vehicles. Part of the requirements is that they have service dealership networks available because the CVA vehicles can be found anywhere across the province, and there is a need to have access to service.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Are you anticipating making any changes to the criteria in the future?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — What we're hoping to develop the best fuel-efficient fleet that we can do so and still continue to match and meet with the clients' needs and their special technical specifications that they need for the different applications they use.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Are there any plans to currently . . . All vehicle purchases and maintenance of the fleet is done under the auspices of the department. Are those your plans to continue or is that . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — We're using the same model that was in place when we formed government. There's actually two different categories. One is a lease to the clients. They make their own determinations then on maintenance which can be through their own auspices, such as the Department of Highways may have their own maintenance services or they might tender that out to private suppliers.

We also provide full maintenance within CVA which is then in turn tendered out to various private suppliers on a tendered basis.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Are the cost of fuel increases going to result in lease cost increases in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The fuel costs are based on a cost-recovery model that is passed on to the clients, so that would be on to the other departments or the NGOs [non-governmental organization]. Obviously those costs escalate up and down, and so it's averaged.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I now want to move on to another subject area. I want to . . . purchasing. Do you anticipate any changes in the tendering and purchasing policies?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Nothing specific, although we are obviously . . . any time, any government should be looking at their efficiencies and streamlining the process to make it best for government and best for those that are tendering on government RFPs. So it's to try and make it more efficient and more accessible.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I then would like to move on to accommodation services and talk about, at the moment, space. I'd like to start with how much approximate space do we now lease, how much do we own, and how much of what we both lease and own is unoccupied or unused at this time.

Mr. Koop: — Donald Koop, the assistant deputy minister responsible for accommodations. In answer to your question, as at the end of March the total inventory of rentable space was 907,812 square metres. The breakdown between leased and owned, leased was 247,065 square metres, and owned is 660,747 square metres.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. How much of that space, if any, is currently unoccupied or unused?

Mr. Koop: — The amount of vacant space is 27,596 square metres.

Mr. Yates: — And do we have a breakdown of that — how much of it is leased and how much of it is owned?

Mr. Koop: — I believe I gave those numbers to you; 247,000 was leased and 660,000 was owned.

Mr. Yates: — Pardon me, Minister. Minister, of the unoccupied space?

Mr. Koop: — Oh. No, I don't have that breakdown.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. The next question has to do with . . . do we have any projections as to our future requirements?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There has been a decline in the amount of space that government has either been owning or leasing, and that decrease is about 10 per cent. It's dropped down from 997,000 to 907,000 square metres.

But in main, that drop is related to the disposal of the Souris Valley at Weyburn and the Echo Valley or Fort San, just east of Regina, has been the main part of that decrease in space.

It's worth noting that the vacancy is 3 per cent of the current owned and leased space which is a decrease from 3.2 per cent last year.

Mr. Yates: — Thanks very much. My next question deals with . . . There have been a number of policies in place particularly in Regina and in some other communities about where government space would be located, particularly in the core area of the city and in the downtown area. Are all those policies going to remain in place?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you for the question. There has been no change in the policy regarding space in downtown Regina or across the province for that matter. We're aware that there has been a policy to encourage space in downtown Regina, and that hasn't changed.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. The next questions have to do with energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. Could you give us an update on where we are in regards to projects and retrofitting for energy efficiency and if there are any new projects being thought about or anticipated.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay thank you very much. It should be noted that most of the major buildings have already had the upgrades and improvements done to them for energy

efficiencies.

There are 15 buildings that are on the list this year for improvements and that includes the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre, which is under redevelopment. The buildings that are included in this is the chem lab at Air Ronge, the PIP shop and storage at Air Ronge, the equipment storage building at Air Ronge, Mistasinihk Place in La Ronge, brick provincial office building in La Ronge, the geological laboratory in La Ronge, the fire cache in La Ronge, carpentry and maintenance shop in La Ronge, the fire control hangar at La Ronge airport, the fire control storage at La Ronge airport, provincial office building in Weyakwin, the environmental storage at Weyakwin, the environmental bunkhouse at Weyakwin, the environmental kitchen at Weyakwin.

And the work that is being done on these locations includes lighting refits, control upgrades, installation of high-efficiency motors and variable speed drives, water conservation initiatives, conversions of furnace and boilers from propane and fuel oil to natural gas.

And when the work is completed, Government Services anticipates that at least a 10 per cent return on investment.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. I'd now like to move on to project management. And, Mr. Minister, if you could give us an update on the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. And as I understand it, there has been a change from the original plan to now upgrade the kitchen?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. The Regina Correctional Centre is scheduled to be completed next August, although the expectation is that we will be turning over access to the building to Corrections in July for them to do a shakedown, get things ready. The project is 87 per cent complete at the present time. And the old 1913 buildings are expected to be demolished in the future with mostly likely date sometime in '09 or 2010.

The kitchen project was not originally part of the funding for the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. This is being done though this coming year, but it's not actually being paid for through Government Services. It's being dealt with through the client, which is Corrections and Public Safety and Policing. They are dealing with that through their budgets.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. And now could I have an update on where we are in the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory, the new provincial lab?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Actually I was mistaken on that. We do pay for the upgrades to the kitchen, for the development of the kitchen, but it's simply a flow through to Corrections and Public Safety, and they pay for it.

Thank you for the question about the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory Building. This project is a \$52 million project, and the funding was first approved in October 2004. The expected finishing date on that is in April 2009, so approximately a year from now. And there are about 40 trades on-site working on that particular job. It's out by the university, so people driving past on Wascana Parkway would see that

construction taking place.

And what is happening at the present time is that the second floor concrete slabs are being completed and the columns, and the third floor slabs are currently being formed. So the project is about 16 per cent completed and with the completion date, as I said earlier, for April 2009.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Do you anticipate that project being on time and on budget?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — At the present time it's on budget and on time although with the construction demands that are being placed on it right now, if there are any holdups or any changes, that the possibility is always there. But there's nothing occurring at the present time, so from this point looking forward it would seem that there should be no unexpected increases.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Could you now give us an update where we are in regards to the voice over Internet protocol project?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. The voice over Internet protocols, or VOIP, is being done in collaboration with SaskTel. SaskTel is the carrier being used. The project is currently on hold because SaskTel is suffering some technical difficulties with it. There's some noise difficulties on the system. We currently have about 1,500 phones in place and in use. Our expectation is that SaskTel will resolve the technical difficulties within a month. You have to keep in mind this is relatively new technology and new technologies quite often have bugs in them, but the expectation is that SaskTel will get this resolved.

When this project is completed, which we believe will happen by March 2010, it was designed to have a three-year roll up with a completion in March 2010, and we have no reason to believe that we can't maintain that schedule. There will be over 10,000, actually 10,800 telephones in the system once the entire system is up and running. And we certainly look forward to that happening and believe that there will be some significant savings to Government Services and to the government and the people of Saskatchewan when this project is completed and government in general is on the VOIP system.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Could you now give me an overview of the capital projects in your \$100 million capital projects that are the responsibility of Government Services?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. I have the list here of the construction projects that are taking place.

We have, as previously mentioned, the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre, which will be slated for completion August of this summer to be turned over to the Corrections and Public Safety. The Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre is also having some work done on it. It's approximately 10 per cent complete at the present time, with occupancy on schedule and expected to occur in the fall of 2008. As we mentioned earlier as well, the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory is 16 per cent completed, with anticipated April 2009 completion.

The nursing education program is taking place both at Regina and Saskatoon SIASs [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. Those are expected to be continued through 2008, 2009, 2010.

One that the member may be familiar with . . . coming into the building, the Legislative Building, is the repointing of the exterior of the Legislative Building. That work has just commenced in December 2007, and the test phase is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2008. At that point in time a determination will be made what needs to be done with the rest of the building, how extensive the damages are or may be, and what kind of a project needs to be put in place to deal with the exterior of the building.

Obviously this building is almost 100 years old. To my knowledge no significant work has been done on the outside of the building up till now, although the interior of the building and the building itself has been raised over the last number of years, major reconstruction in that area. This is, I believe, the first time that the exterior of the building has had any work done on it, and this could be a major project depending on what is found. And then there are the possibilities of work that has been contemplated for a number of years done on the interior and that. There has been no determinations done in that area whatsoever.

A couple of other projects that the ministry is working with is Cooper Place. This has been an ongoing refurbishing that has been taking place over a number of years. This is scheduled actually for completion in September 2008. As well the Walter Scott Building continues to be refurbished. We're just starting in that particular building, and it will be an ongoing project over a number of years.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. You had mentioned interior work in the Legislative Building. Could you give me some idea what particular interior work you're talking about?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There has been a proposal come forward to put in place a washroom for the female members of the Assembly so that work is being looked at to determine what location would be the most appropriate and how to go about doing that. There is no program in place to do that yet, but that work is being looked at and considered.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Do you anticipate moving forward with that in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, this project is just being looked at so there's nothing in the budget for it this year.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Could you outline for me what the decision-making process would be around implementing such a program?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. In making a determination on this particular kind of project, the question would be the priorities within the Legislative Building itself, where the criteria was placed, where the need was, as well as this kind of a project, its priority and need within the province as a whole.

You have to take into the account the things like OH&S [occupational health and safety] requirements and fire codes, etc. Not only here but across the province and those kind of needs would be prioritized.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Well as you're aware, this has been a fairly longstanding issue with some of our colleagues for a number of years, so I anticipate it won't go away.

My next question has to do with the reconstruction of the fourth floor and the need to . . . in order for that to be usable space, the reconstruction of the staircases and elevators. Can you give me an update where that may fit in in the planning stages?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. This, like the other, becomes a priority item and how do you allocate the limited funds that are available.

What needs to be done for the fourth floor to be usable? We need to meet the life, safety, and fire codes for the fourth floor which are very minimal, I would suggest, right now because there is no usage of that space at the present time.

The elevator would need to be extended from the third to the fourth floor to meet accessibility standards. A second stairwell would be required to meet life safety egress. The sprinklers and fire alarm systems need to be relocated according to the tenant floor plans. All mechanical and electrical systems need to be upgraded and installed to meet air quality requirements. New construction, base building fire codes to meet the meeting room requirements. And new sound recording, lighting, furniture to meet program requirements of the legislative committee rooms would need to be put in place and funded.

The space up on the fourth floor has already been demolished, and so it's in a ready state for construction. And I know the member is familiar with this because we've both been arguing or supporting some reconstruction over the last number of years which, like the female members washroom, has not proceeded in the past even though there was lobbying for it to occur.

So we're looking down the road when funding is available for that. And as the member knows that funding priorities sometimes become difficult to achieve. He was never able to achieve that when he was a minister of the Crown, and I'm still working on it.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. So I anticipate you don't have a time frame in which to complete this?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, there is no time frame yet, and there is no outstanding project although we continue to move forward on this as we can.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Are there any other projects in which the department is responsible for in the overall capital funding?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, I believe we listed all of them so far. We'll just check and make sure, but I believe that they have already been listed.

Well thank you very much. Actually there's a fairly extensive list. They're termed as maintenance cost rather than actual capital costs, so I believe though that they could include some of the capital costs that we've already discussed. There's five or six pages of it, perhaps one more page as well. I can certainly go over this if you would like to me to, to outline what we have.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Only something that would be very major in scale.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I'm not quite sure what you want to term as major, but perhaps 500,000 and up.

Mr. Yates: — Yes, thank you.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay thank you. ERD [equipment repair depot] in North Battleford; the Sturdy Stone Building in Saskatoon; the men's correctional centre in Saskatoon; the McIntosh Building in Prince Albert; the Walter Scott Building here in Regina, I had already mentioned that one previously. The Legislative Building which is taking place already on the exterior, I mentioned that one; another project at the Sturdy Stone Building; another project at the men's correctional centre in Saskatoon; Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw; courthouse in Weyburn; SIAST Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw; another project, Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw.

A project at the men's correctional centre in Regina that deals with the demolition of the 1913 building and the restoration. Another project at the SIAST Palliser Campus which is the replacement of boilers; Kilborn Hall in Saskatoon; District Care Centre in The Battlefords, which is a roof replacement; SIAST Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, replacing a boiler; Wascana Centre, repairs to roadways and infrastructure; Queen's Bench court in Saskatoon, repave the parking lots and landscaping; SIAST Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, replacing switch gear.

SIAST Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw — I don't know what this is but it says T-block, exiting stairwell. I gather the T-block is a building on campus. Walter Scott Building in Regina; Wascana Centre lands, repair to roadways and infrastructure; 815 Dewdney in Regina; more work on the Walter Scott Building; the Legislative Building, the repointing package that is happening presently outside the building. And that's it.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I'd now like to ask a few questions about the costs of upgrades and refurbishment of this building since November 21, 2007. We've seen what the costs are. We've seen new carpets in several areas of the building and office painting and upgrades. Could you give us some estimate as to what those costs have been?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. There has been approximately \$90,000 spent on the ongoing maintenance costs within the building, which would have included some carpet replacements and some window covering replacements.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Are there any plans to continue the upgrading of the offices and office space area in this building?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — It's just as the ongoing maintenance of the building as has proceeded in the past. There

will continue to be upgrades to office equipment and facilities as has normally been occurring throughout the past and will continue into the future.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. There have been a number of issues raised over the last few weeks and months regarding everything from curtains to desks and other equipment, much of which is 20 to 30 years of age. Are there any plans or any schedule in which to look at replacing any of that furniture and equipment over the next number of years?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. Government Services as a ministry is responsible in this building for window coverings and flooring, and so we will be continuing with the replacement of the window coverings that was commenced last year, the last budget year. For office equipment, that's split between basically three different entities in this building.

The Legislative Assembly is responsible for most of the office furnitures in the building, including in the members' . . . the two caucuses is responsible for their own office equipment. And the ministries, the individual ministries are responsible for the equipment in each minister's office.

So the costs of those are associated to someone else and not through Government Services. Government Services are responsible for the window coverings and the flooring, although Government Services will do refurbishing of the equipment — the desks, the chairs in the building — for the tenants such as the legislature or the caucuses or the ministers' offices.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. So just to clarify, purchases of chairs and desks and those types of things are done in ministers' offices by the departments, in MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] offices and that by caucuses, and in the Legislative Assembly by the Legislative Assembly by itself.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That's my understanding of it, yes.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My next question has to do with . . . There seems to be in an ongoing change from the former provincial emblem of the wheat sheaf to a new emblem, the coat of arms. Could you tell me are there any costs associated with that in Government Services? And if there are, what are those costs to date?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. There has been some cost associated, not so much with the change from the wheat sheaf, but rather change from use of the term department to ministry. That cost has been \$8,942. The changes from the wheat sheaf to the provincial coat of arms on stationery was simply done as a matter of reordering. When new paper needed to be reordered, it was ordered then with the coat of arms on it rather than the wheat sheaf. So there was really no incremental cost associated with that.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Are there any change to signs or placards that are the responsibility of the Ministry of Government Services that there was an associated cost with as a result of the change from the wheat sheaf to the coat of arms?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. There were

some very, very minimal costs associated with that with Government Services, perhaps a couple of hundred dollars to change the sign at the headquarters from Saskatchewan Property Management to Government Services. There was costs for some door signs, wall signs, various buildings across the province, but just doing a very quick read of the numbers here that would come out probably to the \$8,000.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. So those costs were associated primarily with the change to the term ministry and the change in name of the department.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes.

Mr. Yates: — All right. Thank you very much. I now have a series of questions with the anticipation of essential service legislation in the province. Can you indicate to us what, if any, positions within the department may be designated as essential services?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you. The ministry has looked over its programs to make a determination of which programs would be considered to be essential, but not which people within those programs. And so the programs that would be considered to be essential by Government Services would be the air ambulance program, the legislative power plant, water testing, and building access and security.

Mr. Yates: — Okay so air ambulance, the legislative power plant, building access and security, and I missed the fourth one.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Water testing.

Mr. Yates: — Water testing. All right. A couple of those program areas are obvious as to why they would be — the air ambulance. Could you please tell me why the legislative power plant would be?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The legislative power plant provides power and heat not only just to this building but also to the Wascana Rehab Centre. It's needed there for the patients that are in that facility and to as well provide sterilization of equipment for the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory. This plant needs to operate 24 hours a day, so it would be considered, because of the Wascana Rehab Centre, an essential need.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. In the area of building access and security, could you give me some indication where that is an issue?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The building access and security that would be considered essential is the monitoring process that takes place on the major government-owned buildings, those that have the monitoring service in place and those that have the card access. So there would be a need to continue to monitor those security measures.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. My next questions have to do with the legislative power plant. There have been significant concerns raised about decommissioning or taking out or off line one of the major units and the amount of time that it takes for a boiler to reach readiness.

My understanding is that Government Services had recommended a significant change. The Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union and the employees sought outside professional engineering analysis of the change. I have a very detailed report that would indicate — by some of the leading experts in the country — that the change that was being anticipated could in fact leave the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre and/or the provincial lab without adequate protection in the event of a boiler breaking down.

I'm just wondering (a) if you're aware of the report that was done by this engineering firm and whether or not that program is going to move forward.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. Yes, this has been an issue that has been carrying on for some period of time. In fact this was a project that was started perhaps as much as 25 years ago to make changes to the boiler systems and the power systems throughout government-owned buildings. In the past, one of the first ones to have this change made was the Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford where that change was made 25 years ago.

Since that time, Valley View in Moose Jaw had the downgrade of the power plant done in the last few years. The review of the operations were completed under the previous administration in 2006, which concluded that the capacity of the plant was well in excess of the needed load, of the connected load. So the proposal is to reduce the classification down to a second-class steam plant. As I said, this project has been going on for a number of years.

To date there has been no problems with the system, and that goes back 25 years. So there is no reason to believe that a change in this particular power plant would result in any different results than what has been achieved either with the change at Valley View or the change that was carried out at the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

One of the things I think that's important to note and is critical is that if this change is to take place, there would be no impact on the job classifications of the employees involved. They would carry on as is.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That isn't the concern that was raised in the reports that were done about the possible implications, moving forward. It had to do with the capacity and the time lag in order to meet the heating needs of the services it provides. Now the engineers that did this second assessment that was paid for by the union are credible. They have a long history. And I'm just wondering if that has been reviewed by the department, that report.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. Yes, we're aware of the concerns that SGEU has raised on this particular area. And we do have a copy of the report that was presented to them. The deputy minister has responded to that concern in writing and has in fact has given SGEU an invitation to meet with the technical people within Government Services. And we're still awaiting a response from them.

The review that was done by Government Services outlined that the secondary boiler would remain on-site — it's not

disappearing; it's not being torn out. But there would be a small boiler kept on standby. And that standby boiler, based on the studies and using proper load management, would be able to maintain the buildings in a safe mode until such time as the standby boiler could be brought up online.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That was the concern, is the lag time to bring the second boiler online, the time required. I do appreciate you've had the opportunity to look at it. That was what my questions were. And I appreciate that you're going to meet with the employees about it.

So with that, Mr. Minister, I am going to move on to my next line of questioning. Now I have a series of questions we're asking of all departments. How many, if any, employees have been terminated since November 21, 2007 in Government Services?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. There have been four employees that have been terminated. One in Regina with the discontinuation of the copier program. That program was becoming obsolete. Most of the users were utilizing the four-in-one machines that did printing and faxing and scanning all in one.

Three of the other employees that were terminated were in Prince Albert, at the purchasing office there. One of those employees is retiring. The other two employees will be exercising their options under the collective bargaining agreement, although it's expected that they will all find employment in all likelihood — based on whatever options they choose — within the Prince Albert area. And the three in Prince Albert is a result of the closure of the purchasing office there.

With the changing in the purchasing environment and the capabilities, it was felt that the Regina office could deal with all of the purchasing needs that were dealt with by the Prince Albert office; that with the new technologies that are in place, that centralizing the services into Regina was a much more efficient way of dealing with the purchasing.

Mainly the purchasing arrangements dealing is done with the clients of Government Services, which would be the other departments. They would have set up their technical needs and transmitted that to Government Services then to be put out on an RFP. So Government Services is generally not dealing with the actual sellers of the product, rather the ministries are. But Government Services would be doing the tendering process for them.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Now would all four of those positions have been in scope of the collective agreement?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, they were and they will all have therefore the options under the collective bargaining agreement.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. No positions were eliminated or no terminations out of scope in the department?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There were an additional four that were within the ministerial offices previously. So you asked

about November. So these were actually let go by the previous administration in the case of the three ministerial assistants that were in the minister's offices. And the deputy minister of Government Services was terminated as well in November.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Of those positions terminated then, I guess I'll ask a few questions about the deputy minister's termination. The four in-scope employees, of course, would have their rights under the collective bargaining agreement. The deputy minister's position has not been filled permanently?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That's the case. There is an acting deputy minister in place.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Do we have a time frame in which we can expect the position to be filled?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There is no time frame at the present time.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. When it's filled, will it be filled through open competition?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That is still being considered by Executive Council.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. If it's not filled through open competition, could you explain to me what process will be used?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Executive Council is determining those kind of circumstances and the processes that will take place.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. How many severance packages have been paid or offered to those employees? I assume that the only one would be the deputy minister but I'm not . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The three ministerial assistants that were terminated by the previous administration on their way out provided them with severance packages which totalled \$42,000 for the three. The deputy minister's severance is still being negotiated.

Mr. Yates: — Do you have any estimated costs for the deputy minister's severance?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I guess that will be determined by negotiations.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Have there been any claims filed in the court of law as result of severance packages, terminations related to this ministry.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — None that we're aware of.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I now would like to ask a number of questions about executive air and the executive air services. Have any of the rules of utilization of executive air services changed since November 21, 2007?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — No, they have not.

Mr. Yates: — Is there any anticipated changes to aircraft or the policy regarding utilization of aircraft since November 21, 2007?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There's no plans in place at the present time to make any changes, although certainly in the future there certainly could be, depending on the needs and the circumstances in place.

There is, I believe, one possibility that . . . I'm not sure if it's policy or practice, but in the matter of how the costing is allocated from Government Services executive air to the various ministries. In the past the numbers there were not reflective of the actual costs of the operation. They were not transmitted back to the ministries as to what the actual costs were in the past, and that is being looked at.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. So as I understand what you just said to me, you may look at changing and putting the system so it's not averaged out and make it actual costs for utilization back to each ministry?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — That is one possibility is being looked at. The service, presently the way it is being configured in the past doesn't reflect the actual cost of the operation of executive air, and it's my belief that the operation should reflect the actual costs. Whether that cost would be then in turn itself averaged out between the ministries or on a per usage basis charge has not yet been determined.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much for the clarification. Is there any plans in progress to change or purchase any new aircraft or change the service delivery in any way?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There is no plans at the present time to make any particular changes. I believe there was a, the 350 King Air just came on line not that long ago, the refurbishing of it just this past fall. Yes, two of the planes just last year, the 200's were configured for executive air use, so those are relatively, they're upgraded aircraft from what their previous use was, so those are basically the only new or changed equipment that we have in place.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Are there any purchases or changes planned for air ambulance?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — There were two King Air 200's purchased for air ambulance last year. And it was the old 200's from air ambulance that came to executive air that were upgraded that are now being used. So there's no contemplation of any additional aircraft at the present time.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That would conclude my questions for this evening. So I'd like to at this time to thank the minister and his officials for their work and we very much appreciate you taking the time to answer our questions fully this evening.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and to your officials and to the members of the committee. At this time I would ask a member of the committee to move a motion to adjourn at this

time. Moved by Mr. Yates. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed to. This committee stands adjourned. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I would like to take the opportunity to thank the committee members for their questions and I look forward to any future meetings that we may have.

The Chair: — Thank you. This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 19:33.]