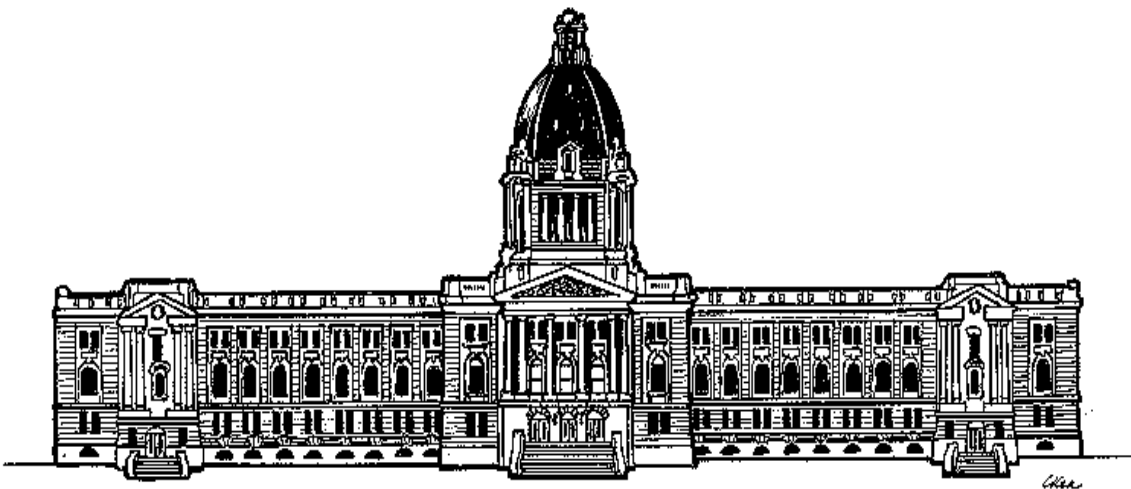




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 35 – April 29, 2014



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Seventh Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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Mr. Roger Parent
Saskatoon Meewasin

[The committee met at 14:59.]

The Chair: — This committee is now in session. I want to welcome the members. There are two substitutions today. Substituting for Scott Moe is Kevin Phillips and substituting for Cathy Sproule is Warren McCall. Members have a copy of today's agenda. If members are in agreement, we will proceed with the agenda.

The committee will now be considering the estimates for the Public Service Commission. Before we begin I would like to remind officials to introduce themselves when they speak for the first time for the purpose of Hansard.

**General Revenue Fund
Public Service Commission
Vote 33**

Subvote (PS01)

The Chair: — We will now begin our consideration of vote 33, Public Service Commission, central management services, subvote (PS01). So I'll turn the floor to Madam Minister and have her introduce her officials, and if she has an opening statement she can make it now.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to provide additional information about the Public Service Commission and its role in ensuring effective government operations and program delivery.

Before I start I would like to introduce my officials. To my left is Cheryl Senecal, Chair of the Public Service Commission; Marlys Tafelmeyer, acting assistant Chair, HR [human resources] client service and support; Norma Reynolds, acting executive director, employee relations; Raman Visvanathan — did I get that right? Sorry — executive director of employee service centre; and Lorraine Von Hagen, director of corporate services.

We've had some great accomplishments in our work this last year and I would like to highlight just a few of those examples. For the second year in a row, the Government of Saskatchewan was recognized as a top employer in Saskatchewan. We were chosen because of our commitment to providing a positive, enriching, and rewarding place to work. This designation is an important part of our ability to attract the brightest and best employees to work for the people of our province. We were able to finalize a new collective bargaining agreement with the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union that balances the rights of public service employees, the needs of the public service, and the resources of Saskatchewan citizens. We played a large role in the development and rollout of the statement of corporate culture for executive government. The Public Service Commission will continue its leadership in consultative roles to enable our employees and their leaders to serve the people of Saskatchewan to the best of their ability.

Looking into the next year, we have some exciting plans to continue this work. We will soon be implementing the enterprise learning management system to enhance employee development and access to learning. This is an e-learning

system that can deliver corporate information and orientation modules, track training and certification, and provide specialized training opportunities specific to ministry needs. We will increase our attention to the issue of safety in the workplace and, through liaison with ministry safety champions, encourage actions to reduce time lost due to injury. And we will continue to support and assist ministries with the implementation of public service renewal with a focus on a strong and healthy corporate culture to improve the delivery of programs and services to the people of this province.

Having the right people with the right skills doing the right work is an essential part of any organization's success. The role of the Public Service Commission is to ensure that this organization is successful, and I am proud of the work done today and the plans for the future. And I am happy to take any questions that committee members might have.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, officials. Good to see you here today for the consideration of vote 33, estimates attached to Public Service Commission. I guess off the top we'll work with a bit of an overview and then drill down a bit more specifically into certain subject areas.

But I'd be remiss if I didn't say for the record if you could extend — I realize this is Central Services — but if you could extend our best wishes to Mr. Dedman as I presume he goes into retirement. I would appreciate that.

I guess off the top though, Madam Minister, Public Service Commission, being what it is, should be the flagship in terms of public service practice, HR practice. You've got a fair number of acting positions in your leadership team here today. When do you anticipate those being shored up as permanent?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. The first position that I mentioned is acting assistant Chair. That one is in competition as we speak, with the estimated date of completion in about two weeks. And the other one, acting executive director, a decision is expected to be made by the end of the first quarter.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that, Madam Minister. Working through the subvotes of vote 33, central management and services, page 108 of the Estimates, could you describe what is entailed in the \$5.5 million of estimated expenditure contained therein?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — The 5.5 million is the total under central management, executive management, which is . . . The Chair's office is 481,000. Central services is 1.8 million. Accommodation is 3.2, and then salaries is just over \$1 million.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister. In terms of tasks in front of the central management and services, any new projects coming forward this year in terms of work for that suite of employees?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — That part of the vote, the 5.5, is not a

program delivery vote. It's corporate services, communications, Chair's office, those sorts of things. So it's status quo for the year ahead.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister, and officials. Moving on to employee service centre, again you've got expenditure of \$11.3 million anticipated, up slightly from the year previous. Could the minister describe what's entailed in that expenditure?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Part of the increase is due to a standard across-the-board salary increase. And the other part of the increase — I touched on it in my opening remarks — is the Enterprise Learning Management System. It's a professional development tool, but online, so employees don't have to leave their offices, go to a meeting, that sort of thing. They can do this online in their own offices for specialized training pertaining to whatever ministry they happen to be in.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of Enterprise, is that fully rolled out? Is it fully engaged? What is the status of that project?

Ms. Senecal: — Cheryl Senecal. The Learn management system has actually just been launched within the Public Service Commission. And between now and October 2015, we will proceed to implement that program across government in each ministry. And we have an implementation plan that involves a managed approach that basically, on a monthly basis, we will bring in another ministry into the system. So we do a ministry per month over the next number of months in order to have full implementation by October 2015.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. Was the program bought off the shelf or was it developed or could you tell us about how the program came to be with the PSC [Public Service Commission] and then deployed?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the question. Marlys Tafelmeyer, acting assistant Chair. Learn itself, being an Enterprise Learning system, we did purchase from a vendor, a platform system known as Learn. We have customized it to address the learning and the training needs specific to government. It has allowed us to ensure that our training that we are providing is going to be relevant. It is very interactive, and it's current.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Was the vendor selected through an RFP [request for proposal] or how did that come about?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Yes, it was. It's a Canadian vendor known as Intrafinity.

Mr. McCall: — Where's that vendor headquartered? And given that we don't have the ITO [information technology office] here, please don't say on the World Wide Web.

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — We do not have the ITO here, and unfortunately I'm not sure where they are actually headquartered. But we could certainly . . .

A Member: — It's out of province.

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Yes, it is out of province, but I'm not sure which province.

Mr. McCall: — Just out of curiosity, were there any Saskatchewan applicants in the process or any Saskatchewan vendors capable of providing the service?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — I'm sorry, the officials here today were not actually part of the RFP process. So I'm sorry, I don't know who all of the submissions came from. However, we do have a local Canadian, Regina developer that has built all of our e-learning content for the system.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Would it be possible to get an undertaking from the minister or officials to provide that information? I appreciate that time goes on and officials do too, but that would be much appreciated.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Absolutely, we'll get that information to committee members.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Madam Minister, in terms of again anything else that you'd like to add regarding PS(06), the employee service centre expenditure?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Nothing to add. The two increases that I highlighted, those are the only two. And then the learning management system is the new initiative in that particular subvote.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that, Madam Minister. Moving on to corporate human resources and employee relations, (PS04), again from the description provided, the \$3.3 million of expenditure entailed there, it's pretty much a marginal increase from last year. In terms of the work outstanding for that unit, what's outstanding in terms of collective bargaining agreements? I guess if you could answer that off the top, and a couple of other questions.

[15:15]

Ms. Reynolds: — Thank you for the question. The Public Service Commission represents the Government of Saskatchewan. Oh sorry, Norma Reynolds, acting executive director, employee relations. The Public Service Commission represents the employer for the Government of Saskatchewan with two unions. The largest union is Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union. And we have a second union that represents employees within our Social Services and Central Services ministries, and that is represented by CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees]. Those individuals are represented by CUPE.

We finalized the collective agreement with SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] last year. A collective agreement was signed, I believe in May. We reached a tentative agreement with CUPE in March of this year. And we have just signed the collective agreement as of last week. So our own collective bargaining has been completed.

We, however, in the labour relations branch of the employee relations division also provide bargaining assistance to a

number of treasury board agencies, Crowns, and commissions. There are, in fact, eight employers. And currently all but two of those agreements have been settled.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, and welcome to the committee. Which two remain outstanding, if you might?

Ms. Reynolds: — Water Security, the Water Security Agency and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

Mr. McCall: — Do you anticipate conclusion of those agreements any time soon?

Ms. Reynolds: — The actual bargaining has not commenced with either table, but we are very close to that. We do anticipate having those agreements settled within, I want to say the next three to four months.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Minister or officials, if you could describe for the committee — and thank you for that discussion of the work involved around the collective bargaining process, both within the direct public service but the other agreements as well — if you could describe for the committee what involvement, if any, the Public Service Commission has with the conduct of broader labour relations in terms of the discussion of grievances, and the like.

Ms. Reynolds: — If I could just have a clarification on that question please. In terms of that broader group, are you referring to the agencies for which we provide collective bargaining assistance?

Mr. McCall: — Yes.

Ms. Reynolds: — Thank you. We have a very limited role with respect to the other employers. The majority of those employers have their own human resource services. They have their own staff that can support them and provide advice, so our role is really very, very limited.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I had suspected that was the case, but just looking to keep my information current. In terms of, with regards to compensation and the broader sort of collective bargaining strategy of the provincial government, how does the PSC interface with the cabinet? What is the mechanism? Is there still a cabinet committee on public sector compensation, or how is that achieved?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — To the member's question, there still does exist a committee. It's a public sector bargaining committee. It is made up of staff from the personnel policy secretariat, which is housed in the Ministry of Finance. There is representation from the Public Service Commission, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, and CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. And the other members on the committee are cabinet ministers, and I am one of those.

The Chair: — I'll just note, Ms. Chartier is now chitting in, substituting for Cathy Sproule. Ms. Chartier.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you very much. Very briefly here, Madam Minister, if you could talk a little bit about what the workforce planning looks like, the workforce planning,

research, and evaluation services.

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the question. Workforce planning, certainly within the public service, is a very important and a critical aspect for us in terms of planning and managing our workforce today and into the future. And it certainly is premised on the intention to have the right talent to be able to support the goals and objectives of government and to deliver the services of our province.

So in terms at a very broad level, we certainly take a look at where our demographics are, where our retirements are occurring, and the types of competencies, skills, and abilities that are needed into the future to be able to continue to fill those positions and continue to deliver on the services that are needed for the province.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. Could you tell me a little bit about the research and evaluation services that take a look at that? So you're doing workforce planning, but could you talk a little bit about the research and evaluation services that go along with that?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Thank you very much for the question. With regards to the research that goes into workforce planning, we take a look at our historical workforce indicators over usually a three-year period to give us a sense of where retirements have been occurring, where retirements are anticipated to occur across ministries, but also across occupational groups as well. We take a look at where the demand is going to be in certain positions, certain occupations. So we try and do some trend analysis in that regard. So we will look at it by ministry, but also globally.

So by ministry for example, there will be some very specific occupations where we may have to be much more intense in terms of our research. And we look provincially, we look inter-jurisdictionally across the country as well to see what the trends are telling us. So in areas such as engineering, where we know there's a high demand in the province, there's also going to be a high demand in the public sector for that particular occupation. And then we start building plans around what our needs are going to be, say three and four years out, based on the types of retirements that we're going to have and the kind of competitiveness that we might be facing in the market.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you. Thank you for that. So you've spoken to engineering. I'm curious, what are some of the trends showing you with respect to the workforce here in Saskatchewan and the public service? What is some of that research showing you in terms of the demographics and what some of the emerging issues will be?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Certainly one of the positive things for the public service, thank you very much for the question, is actually our average age across the public service has remained quite constant over the last three years. Our rate of turnover, our retirement rates as well have remained relatively constant over the last couple of years. However in certain occupations, that's a little bit higher than in others. In terms of the trends going forward, there will be certain occupations that we will continue to face some challenges, engineering being one. It's a very professional occupation in high demand across the province in

many areas.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. The average age you've said has remained, of those in the public service, has remained constant over the last few years. What is that average age?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — The average age for fiscal '13-14 was just a little over 44 years of age.

Ms. Chartier: — And has that . . . You said it's remained constant over the last three or four years looking back. When you look at other jurisdictions, is that sort of middle-of-the-road, or where does that fit?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — In terms of the average age, our average age is quite comparable to other public sector organizations across the country. Certainly research has shown that private sector organizations are perhaps a little bit younger, and that's just given the demographics.

Ms. Chartier: — With respect to the retirement rate or the retirement age, what is the research showing you?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Our average retirement age here in the public service averages around 59 years of age. That has remained relatively constant, around 58 to 59 for the last couple of years. That again is quite consistent with what we're seeing in public sector organizations across the country.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. Another thing that I understand here, that this unit or area does corporate programming to build leadership, management, and organizational capacity throughout the public service. Can you talk a little bit about the corporate programming that you engage in?

[15:30]

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank the member for the question. On the issue of corporate programming across government, it really comes down to leadership development. We do fund the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy, and for those more on the executive level, that includes policy development, leadership development, and courses along those lines.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister. If you could identify what the expenditure is for the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — It's \$250,000 a year, and I believe that has been in place since 2007.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister. In terms of the work that is done around government-wide human resource and public interest disclosure policies and the access privacy legislative services to the commission, but particularly with human resources and public interest disclosure policies, any new endeavours on the part of the Public Service Commission in that regard?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. The Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner just issued his first annual report last summer. He made four recommendations.

The first recommendation was building a seamless response. There are various avenues for folks to go when they've got issues or concerns or complaints. And part of implementing *The Public Interest Disclosure Act* is education, making sure that employees understand what issues should be addressed to which different offices, whether it's office of the Privacy Commissioner or public interest disclosure or whatever other avenues there might be.

The second recommendation is the commissioner had asked that we expand the Act to include the health sector. We've had discussions with officials from the Ministry of Health on that about the implications and ramifications of including health authorities in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. Those discussions are ongoing. We need to know what we're agreeing to before we agree to that, so we'll continue those discussions with the Ministry of Health.

The third recommendation is the role of the Public Service Commission, and again this goes to education. The Public Service Commission is responsible for the Act and making sure that those who are responsible and those who are coming to us with issues and concerns know the avenue and the steps to take.

The fourth recommendation was on public reporting and to make sure that people are aware of the issues that have come before this Act. And we have a good working relationship with the commissioner and are working our way through this, as this is relatively new, to make sure that there's a full understanding of the Act and making sure that if there's areas of the Act that need to be strengthened, that we can work with the commissioner on those recommendations.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that answer. Moving on through the subvotes, human resource client services and support, (PS03), again in the description it talks about providing human resource consulting and advisory services to all ministries including recruitment, assessment and selection of candidates to public service employment. The overall expenditure entailed is slightly down from the year previous to just under 14.5 million. Can the minister or officials describe activities undertaken around the recruitment, assessment and selection of candidates to public service employment undertaken by the branch or by the commission? And I guess if you could provide a general description in that regard, that would be great.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. You had asked about initiatives. There's nothing new in regard to this particular item. Our hiring process is as it has been, which is an open competition process. And the priority of the Public Service Commission is to ensure that the hiring process is seen as one that we ensure the integrity of that process, that people have a fair shot at government jobs, and making sure that it remains an open and transparent competition.

Mr. McCall: — Does the Public Service Commission . . . Is there any difference between the work that the PSC does for in-scope positions or out-of-scope positions, management versus other positions?

Ms. Tafelmeyer: — Thank you for that question. With . . . [inaudible] . . . to the recruitment of in-scope versus

out-of-scope staff, it is the same process, that competitive, open process. The one difference would be, with regards to in-scope staff, we adhere to any seniority provisions that would be applicable through the relevant collective agreement.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that response. Is there any utilization of human resource recruitment contractors, headhunters for lack of a better word?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Yes, we have used executive search companies to look for candidates at the executive level — deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister describe the extent of that activity in terms of the corporations or the contractors involved, the kind of dollars on the contracts, the number of positions under consideration?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — We have used recently three different firms for six competitions. The majority of those six were ADM [assistant deputy minister] levels. We don't have the dollar values here, but I am happy to get that information to committee members.

Mr. McCall: — I'd appreciate that very much, Madam Minister. Is this historically the practice of the Public Service Commission to farm this activity out to private contractors or has this previously been something that the Public Service Commission has aided executive government in accomplishing?

Ms. Senecal: — I think, in the past, it has been something that has been predominantly done from within the Public Service Commission. And honestly, the number of competitions that occurred this year, particularly at the ADM level, we found that it was important for us to be utilizing some external resources or looking at that as an option. As you can appreciate, this was a new approach for the Public Service Commission. And we are actually looking closely at that approach and considering how we continue to use that going forward or to what extent.

So it's not necessarily a change in practice, but we felt that, with the nature of some of the competitions, it was important to be using expert advice and bringing in expert resources that would help us identify strong candidates. That being said, we are now evaluating the effectiveness of that and the value of continuing to do that going forward into the future.

Mr. McCall: — Does the minister or officials anticipate a certain point at which that decision will be made — whether or not the experiment was a success or failure — and a new practice being employed or reverting to previous practice? What's the timeline on that, Madam Minister?

[15:45]

Ms. Senecal: — I would anticipate that, you know, in the course of the coming year we will have some more definitive information with which to make a decision. In all honesty, I do not see this being an approach that we would use categorically. It is something that would be used when it makes sense to do so and on a case-by-case basis. I wouldn't suggest that this is an approach that would replace the work of the Public Service Commission or the fact that we want to make decisions that are

based on the best information possible. In some instances that may involve the use of some external resources to help us. In other instances it will not.

Mr. McCall: — Just so I'm clear in my understanding, Madam Chair, what has brought about this new practice or this use of external contractors? I guess, is it the number of positions under competition or what? If you could expand on what makes this point in time different from years previous.

Ms. Senecal: — There were a large number, as I mentioned, a large number of competitions have occurred in the past year particularly at the ADM level. A number of those positions we knew were reaching into areas that were in very high demand. Engineering backgrounds for example is one that in the Highways competitions — and we had a few competitions there in the past year — that we knew that we needed to have a broader net out there in order to identify potential candidates that we could attract to the public service.

So in the past year I would say the most critical factor has been the number of competitions that we were dealing with combined with, in some areas, very high demand for limited high-skilled resources.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. In terms of the selection of the contractors, how has that been accomplished?

Ms. Senecal: — It was an RFP process. It is my understanding that, you know, there were numerous applications made. They were assessed. There was five organizations that were identified as being potential resources that we would access. Since then we have accessed three of the five who were deemed meeting the criteria.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Were they contractors from within the province or outside of the province? If you could tell us a bit about who they are, where they come from.

Ms. Senecal: — I'm advised that all of the shortlisted operations have offices based in Regina.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Is the minister or the Chair able to provide to the committee the name of the contractors involved and a bit more detail on the individual contracts? If that undertaking could be made, that'd be great.

Ms. Senecal: — Yes. And so that along with the cost associated, right?

Mr. McCall: — Yes please.

Ms. Senecal: — Yes. Okay.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much. In terms of the work in the human resource client services and support function of the PSC, again the description talks about coordinating and delivering corporate organizational effectiveness initiatives. What sort of dollars are devoted to those activities in the work of the Public Service Commission and what sort of FTE complement is attached to that work?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for your patience. We were

doing some math. Under organizational development there are 13 FTEs [full-time equivalent] allocated and just over \$1 million — 1,040,000.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister. And again, I've always got patience for good math, getting the right numbers, Lord knows. In terms of the . . . Again I appreciate that there are different activities under the heading of Central Services, and certainly my colleague was able to spend some time with the minister yesterday in estimates talking about lean initiatives.

As the Minister Responsible for Lean, has this been one of the sort of flagship enterprises of this government as regards human resources in the public service? I guess, is this where lean fits into the Public Service Commission's activities, or how does lean fit into the work of the PSC?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for that question. Lean is being applied across government in every ministry. And so the Public Service Commission has their own lean initiatives that are undertaken. I'd stated yesterday, and I believe the deputy minister responsible for lean did as well, that the initiatives that are undertaken by each ministry are not directed outside of that ministry. The ministry's come up with their own. They're the ones doing those particular jobs, and so they determine where efficiencies can be found.

There's been a lot of work done in the employee service centre. I was at a meeting with public service staff, I think that was before Christmas. And they were examining just the basic hiring processes and getting people into the system and on payroll, and some of their frustrations how things aren't working, and then just a brainstorming session on how they could do things differently.

So there's different initiatives across the ministry, just like every other ministry in government is taking on their own lean initiatives.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Minister. I guess, here we are at the Crown and Central Agencies Committee though, and Public Service Commission of course being the central agency when it comes to human resources work on the part of the government. How is it that the Public Service Commission doesn't take more of a leadership role in the lean activities of this government?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — That's not their role to be in charge of lean. The way the lean initiatives are structured within government, there is a deputy minister, Dan Florizone, who is also the deputy minister of Education. He is the deputy minister of Education and the deputy minister responsible for lean. And in that role and capacity, he is responsible to me for his work in that area. But the Public Service Commission is not the overseer of the lean initiative across government.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I guess I don't . . . Just from an operational standpoint, I find that kind of involved in terms of having . . . You've got the Public Service Commission and then to tack on to that a deputy minister responsible for something that's so profoundly about human resources and organizational development within an executive government, I just find it odd

that that's not somehow squarely within the purview of the Public Service Commission. But again governments make choices, and fair enough.

In terms of the 15 per cent workforce reduction, can the minister update — and I believe this is something that has been overseen by the Public Service Commission in terms of the workforce reduction — can the minister or officials provide an update to committee as to the status of the workforce reduction strategy of this government?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — The Public Service Commission is not responsible for government-wide . . . the workforce strategy. There is a corporate projects group which had been housed within the Ministry of Central Services, which is now in the Ministry of Education overseen by Deputy Minister Dan Florizone. There is also a deputy ministers' working group that gets together quite regularly to go over government-wide initiatives on the workforce adjustment, but it's not an initiative that's housed within Public Service Commission. We have our own, I guess, targets to meet under this initiative, but we are not the leading government in this initiative. It's not housed within Public Service Commission.

[16:00]

Mr. McCall: — Again I guess, I find that sort of peculiar, but again governments make their organizational choices, and fair enough. We've hit pretty much the end of time that we've got for consideration of the Public Service Commission estimates, so I thank the minister and officials for consideration of these public dollars, these public policies, and thank my colleagues for their patience in this as well. And with that, Mr. Chair, I'd turn it over to you to do with as you will.

The Chair: — Thank you, member. I'll ask the minister if she has a closing remark.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — I would like to thank members of the committee for their questions this afternoon. And to my officials, who I know work so very hard every day, and I want to thank them publicly for the support that they offer to me as minister. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and thank you officials for appearing before the committee. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Mr. Hickie: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Hickie has so moved. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee now stands adjourned until the call of the Chair. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 16:01.]