



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

Hon. Corey Tochor, Chair
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Warren McCall, Deputy Chair
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Mr. David Forbes
Saskatoon Centre

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Mr. Greg Lawrence
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Hon. Paul Merriman
Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland

Mr. Kevin Phillips
Melfort

Mr. Doyle Vermette
Cumberland

[The committee met at 15:10.]

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. We'll call to order the Standing Committee on House Services for this May 2nd, 2017. I'm in the chair today as the Deputy Chair. Mr. Speaker, you're here — we'll get to you momentarily so that you might introduce witnesses — and here, of course, as Chair of this committee.

We're joined as well by members of the committee: Mr. Merriman, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Lawrence, and Mr. Phillips, and of course over on the opposition side, Mr. Forbes, for the time being.

Today's agenda consists of consideration of estimates and March supplementary estimates for the Legislative Assembly and officers of the Legislative Assembly. Pursuant to rule 139(5), the following estimates and supplementary estimates for the legislative branch of government were deemed referred to the Standing Committee on House Services on March 30th, 2017, and March 22, 2017, respectively.

The estimates are vote 76, Advocate for Children And Youth; vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer; vote 57, Conflict of Interest Commissioner; vote 55, Information and Privacy Commissioner; vote 21, Legislative Assembly; vote 56, Ombudsman; vote 28, Provincial Auditor; and supplementary estimates, vote 76 for the Advocate for Children and Youth.

So I'd referenced earlier, Mr. Speaker is here with various officials. So I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Speaker, and if you could introduce your officials.

The Speaker: — Yes, thank you very much. We are well served in the province with the different officers of our Assembly, and it's an honour to be here with Dr. Michael Boda to go over the estimates for the budget, and later on with the children's and youth advocate. So I'll turn it over to Dr. Michael Boda for further introductions of his staff, and I look forward to the questions from the committee.

**General Revenue Fund
Chief Electoral Officer
Vote 34**

Subvote (CE01)

Mr. Boda: — Yes, Deputy Chair, with your permission I would like to do some introductions, and then I have just a few short comments. So thank you for inviting us here today to discuss Elections Saskatchewan's 2017-18 budget estimates with the House Services Committee. I have here with me today, Jeff Kress. Jeff is our deputy chief electoral officer in charge of electoral operations.

And it's not often that I get to publicly thank our staff at our head office here in Regina. We are principally focused on our field leadership team and the some-10,000 people who serve us, along with you, as electoral stakeholders. But I did want to take an opportunity to thank Jeff, and Jennifer Colin who's our deputy for corporate service and electoral finance, along with our management team, for the work that they have done in

producing and implementing the last general election that was held about a year ago now.

[15:15]

We have a very competent management team which manages 122 returning officers and election clerks around the province, along with managing that team of 10,000, ramping up, being able to conduct a general election. And as a CEO [Chief Electoral Officer], I am the public face most often for the institution of Elections Saskatchewan. But I couldn't do it alone; I cannot do this alone. And I have a very competent team at our head office, and so I want to publicly thank them for the work that they've done over the last four years.

Some members may remember the first budget request that I submitted as Chief Electoral Officer back in January 2013, where I was intentional in outlining a path for renewal that Elections Saskatchewan would follow in the years ahead. Phase 1, which coincided with the remainder of the province's 28th electoral cycle, was to focus on stabilizing our province's election management body and our framework for managing electoral events, particularly our general elections.

Phase 2, which we are just now entering, involves a pivot from stabilizing to modernizing our election system, making improvements that will ensure Saskatchewan has an effective and efficient voting system for the future, and a healthy election management body to support it.

Even more than in 2013 when I first came before this committee, I am absolutely convinced that modernization is necessary if we are to sustain our provincial voting system. The administrative approach we use in the province is essentially the same system used to elect federal members of parliament. I do need to be clear that I'm not talking about the electoral system that determines how votes are translated into seats in the legislative body. What I'm referring to is the actual process of voting. Outside of voting, I can't think of a single other broad-based societal activity that exists more or less unchanged by technology.

If you enter into a voting location in a provincial election, the general set-up and procedures are almost exactly the same as they were more than 100 years ago. The current system is antiquated, and the fact is that it's unsustainable. Each of our budget priorities for the fiscal year 2017-18 are based around this overarching topic of modernization and the urgent need to begin introducing necessary changes before the system collapses.

Under the broad theme of modernization we've offered four priority areas in our written budget submission, and these are, modernization of the legislative framework. Legislators can expect my recommendation on legislative change before September. Modernization of processes, and some of these we've begun to work on through the recent by-election that was in Saskatoon Meewasin. Modernization of how we manage Saskatchewan's electoral service, the more than 10,000 people who are involved in conducting electoral events across the province. Modernization of the systems and infrastructure that support our electoral events, including an evaluation of our

election management system and completing the development of our permanent register of voters.

At this point I would be more than happy to answer questions.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much for that, Dr. Boda. Looking for questioners. Still looking. There he is, the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Great. Thank you very much. I appreciate you coming before us today and the pretty regular reporting that you do out. I do remember when you first came, and that process and the documents that you had brought forward, and of course there's been a lot of work done.

And as you talk about the pivot into the future, I have a couple of questions. One is around the 2016 election. There was going to be . . . Now you're talking about some legislative feedback that we'll be getting in before September. Is there more, almost anecdotal or procedural feedback that you'll be sharing or process issues that came out of that election? Things that . . . yes.

Mr. Boda: — The short answer is yes. Essentially, there are four volumes which constitute our report on the 28th general election. Volume 1, you have already received. That's in the statement of votes which outlines essentially the way that we voted across the province. And we were able to release volume 1, and of course, you will have noted that there was a general theme on voter turnout that was articulated through that particular volume, and we had some public discussions about it.

There are a total of four volumes that will be produced. And volume 2 will report on something that hasn't been done in the province before and is rarely done across the province, in that when we conducted the 28th general election, in parallel we conducted a peer-review evaluation of the electoral process itself, looking at the administration of the electoral event and reflecting on what our stakeholders felt about the particular general election that we were conducting.

So this is something that we are hoping to duplicate across the country, but there were a number of individuals who came from other election management bodies from across the country — provincial, territorial, and national — to participate in evaluating the election. We began working on this a number of months in advance of the 28th general election so that we could establish a baseline of data on our electoral events. We didn't have a baseline of data as to how the process was conducted. And we will release that assessment in volume 2 with an eye towards moving towards the next general election, and we will continue to collect and collate the same kind of data and do evaluation in that regard.

So there will be more than testimonial information provided. And we went through a process of having individuals on the ground here over the election period, the writ period, and in advance doing assessment. And we also worked with the University of Saskatchewan's social science research arm in order to conduct surveys of our stakeholders after the fact. And so I worked together quite closely with the University of Saskatchewan, and actually Dr. Michael Atkinson was one of those individuals who worked on that with us, along with Mr.

Ed Killesteyn who is a senior election administrator from Australia.

Mr. Forbes: — So you've talked, and I assume that this is what you mean in terms of peer evaluation, peers to the officials. Has there been, or do you provide for opportunities for the public to provide for feedback on their electoral experience? And I'm thinking about in terms of you're talking about legislative changes, recommendations that you're thinking of bringing forward in September. Has there been any consultation around that?

Mr. Boda: — Yes. As you know, I've worked in election assessment for a couple of decades before coming back to Saskatchewan. And often what you'll find is that it's much more of an audit that's focused on purely the administration, but it doesn't reflect on what the stakeholders understand and how they viewed the process. So there is actual implementation and there's hard data that's involved in that case. And then there is perception of stakeholders as well, and they're not exactly the same.

So as a result we, from the outset, established a framework in which we determined we would speak with our stakeholders after the electoral event to get feedback from them. There were the University of Saskatchewan's survey group. They surveyed 2,500 voters across the province after the fact. There were interviews that were conducted by telephone. Then we also spoke with our business managers that were involved, our candidates, and we also did one-on-one interviews with the leaders of the political parties as well. And these items will be reported on in greater detail within volume 2.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. So what can we look forward in volume 3 and 4?

Mr. Boda: — Three is focused on statement of expenses, and this is a document that will focus on spending during the electoral event. For those who've been around quite a period of time, for more than this election, going back to 2011 and before, you would recall that there were two volumes that were put out. One was a volume of expenses on the political party and candidate side, and then there was another document which was thicker than any volume I've ever seen written that outlined the expenses of Elections Saskatchewan.

Volume 2 collates those two items in a way that we can look inside. We have a window into what expenses there were on the political party and candidate side, but it also looks at the cost of the election. And again, as we have been trying to do at Elections Saskatchewan, we're trying to establish a baseline for costs for this election. Costs have been accumulated in many different ways over the years and we're trying to establish one that is consistent with electoral best practice.

When it comes to a budget, you'll know that subsequent to my arrival in 2012, that we changed our approach to budgeting in terms of looking at ongoing expenses and then having electoral events as well. And we divided those two in terms of budgeting, and we've been doing that consistently through the time that I've been here. And we'll report in that context over the context of the four years of the electoral cycle, establish a baseline so we'll move forward with the next volume for the next election.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now I understand that just in the . . . Actually, yesterday you released a discussion paper about the next election coming up. And so I've just seen it now so I haven't really read through it. So my preliminary questions are: what kind of feedback have you got on this so far, and what's the go-forward plan with this?

Mr. Boda: — All right. I haven't had very much feedback because it was just released publicly yesterday. So I did . . .

Mr. Forbes: — You didn't get any early morning phone calls?

Mr. Boda: — I did not get any early morning phone calls. However I will tell you that in developing the discussion paper I was intentional in reaching out to municipal colleagues in order to have a discussion about how we might proceed in a manner that is consistent with electoral best practice. You will know in the letter that I shared with you that my focus was not on political consequences but simply on determining how we can move forward with a coming or a pending conflict of election dates.

We've experienced this most recently in the 28th general election, and that was with respect to the overlap between writ periods for the federal election and the provincial election. And admittedly, that was not the easiest process in terms of administration. And it was through that that there was a realization that we needed to do research in advance and help guide you as legislators who make that decision as to when the elections are being conducted, and to offer insight.

So the paper itself offers three, as I say, workable options that could be pursued but it offers a recommendation on one of those.

Mr. Forbes: — Now I believe it's within the power of the provincial government to set the municipal elections as well. And so did you consider that as well, the change in the municipal election date?

Mr. Boda: — That is one of the options within the paper. And I would say that, fundamentally, what comes out of this paper is that it's untenable to host or hold two electoral events within a five-day period of one another. And the focus is less on this being inconvenient for our administrators. It really is focused on the voter themselves and the confusion that is created by having elections at the same time.

[15:30]

There is also the issue of unsustainability in terms of conducting two elections in parallel, given that each election requires a significant number of election officials in order to conduct those elections. Each election requires a certain training and there are differences, of course, between the municipal elections and the provincial elections.

So those are the two elements. First and foremost, it's about the impact this has on voters across the province. But it's also about having an impact on the ability to conduct the election or not.

There is one general theme though. The reason I offered the recommendation I did, I think, is because it allows us to come

to a place where we are voting just once per year, and we are voting at the same time. And so voters will be able to get into the habit of knowing it is in the fall that they go to the polls. That said, once you have a chance to go through the paper you'll see that there is a change in the provincial election just this one time before we go back to being in November.

Mr. Forbes: — It would be . . .

Mr. Boda: — Sorry?

Mr. Forbes: — If the change would happen, this would be the second change because we just had an election, and you alluded to it because of the federal overlap. So this would be the second time we've changed.

Mr. Boda: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — But I get what you're saying. And I guess the other elephant in the room, and you know I say this lightheartedly but not, is of course the American election which I think is at the same time. And that is, I noticed particularly in the municipal election, everybody was cued in to the American election. And you know, for some reason they all knew the Trump/Clinton. They were following that and then trying to in some way get pumped about the municipal election and it wasn't quite transferring. They weren't watching the local news.

And it would be interesting . . . I don't know if there's been any studies or research done on that, but I think that it's hard to compete with somebody like Trump in terms of news, whether it's real or not. He's quite the guy when it comes to that. I don't know if you have any thoughts about that in trying to get out from other major events that may actually impact on local events.

Mr. Boda: — We do mention the American election in the paper. And it's clearly an issue no matter what country you're in, that going up against the time period when a presidential election is being conducted, it will prove difficult to get the attention of your voters.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well I'm sure the government side probably has some questions. I don't know if they do. I'm good. Thank you very much and I want to thank the officials and Dr. Boda for his time here. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank the member from Saskatoon Centre for the questions. Any questions from the government side? Mr. Merriman.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, very much. I'm just wondering if you could give me an accurate number on how many people were working within the total election in . . . Was it up or was it down from the previous year? And my apologies if you answered this question. I just had to step out and take a personal phone call. But I'm just wondering if you can give me what you're seeing as the strength of . . . Are more people coming out for the elections? Are you getting more staff or is it dwindling?

Mr. Boda: — Well, first in terms of the requirements for

election officials, essentially it's broken down that for every 300 voters that we have in the province, we require two election officials. And so the number required between 2011 and 2016 actually increased, and that's just simply based on population numbers.

So when we go through a boundary delimitation process, of course we break down each of the constituencies — as you well know and as a participant — into these things called polling divisions, and each polling division is constituted of about 300 individuals. So as a result, that number was around the 10,000 mark for 2011, and when all was said and told for the 2016 election, we were at just under 11,000, I think it was. So it was closer to the 11,000 mark. I had been quoting 10,000 throughout the cycle, but ultimately we don't know what those numbers are until we get closer to the election and we do our hiring.

Now in terms of sustainability, I think you've offered a very good question here because this has consistently been a problem for us to be able to recruit workers. And frankly we want the best of the workers because we want to run the best election possible. So increasingly we're finding it difficult to find workers.

And during the last electoral cycle our approach has been twofold. One has been to . . . We introduced a new program called Take Part, and Take Part involved in us recruiting in advance, getting people to sign up for an email list that are people that are interested in working with us and they're interested in the democratic enterprise and they're interested in being part of this overall process.

And ultimately we were able to sign up 14,000 people onto our list in order to work with them. And we did it as a pilot and we will continue to work on that during this cycle with an eye towards engaging. We're not going to engage with 14,000, but if we're able to engage in 5,000 and be able to send messages back and forth and draw them in to more fully understand what it means to run a general election, what a polling place looks like, to do some of this advance work. Because ultimately, we have a very short time — and Jeff is fully aware of this — we have a very short time to train these individuals and to get them ready to conduct the electoral event.

So that's the one thing that we're doing. On the other hand I've talked about volume 4, and volume 4 in terms of legislative change will be greatly focused on modernization. And not to tip my hat in terms of the publication itself, but I think what you'll see is we're trying to focus ourselves on determining how we can be more efficient with our workers so that we don't require as many.

Obviously the legislation requires two officials for 300. What can we do in order to make this system more efficient? It will likely involve technology and we'll have more of a discussion on that in the weeks and months ahead. But fundamentally we're looking at how we can be more efficient with the number of workers, not just because it's very hard to get 11,000 workers but so that we can use our resources more wisely as we move ahead. These things take a full electoral cycle, two electoral cycles, and actually up to three in order to institute so we'll be offering more insight on that.

And on both sides of the aisle and with the four other registered political parties, we have been engaging quite carefully with your chief official agents and they are fully aware of some of the ideas that we've been putting forward in terms of how we might make the system more efficient. Ultimately, you as legislators, that is your role and your decision to make, though.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — I believe my colleague has more questions.

Mr. Phillips: — Dr. Boda, you had mentioned during the Saskatoon Meewasin by-election that you had made some changes. Can you just refresh my memory on the changes you made?

Mr. Boda: — This again, we took the opportunity during the Saskatoon Meewasin by-election to communicate, first of all to our registered political parties in terms of what pilot programs we could put in place while remaining entirely consistent with the legislation. And so the primary item that you saw in place was that we did a parallel poll book. Because of the legislation, I ran the election in a way that was consistent with how we have traditionally run by-elections and how we've traditionally run elections, but at the same time if you were in a polling place you would find that we, for the first time since the founding of our province, had a computer in the polling place. And that was used to test whether we could do an electronic poll book.

So all the striking off that you've seen with the rulers over the years still continued to take place, but at the same time an individual would bring in their voter information card. Their number was taken off that voter information card, it was put into the computer and all the information that was on the list would pop up on the screen as well. We were able to manage it quite quickly. And that allows us to have a baseline and to compare it against.

And so we did that intentionally to determine whether it could be an effective means of moving forward, and we will be reporting back on that.

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you very much.

Mr. Boda: — Sorry, that was only one of a number of items that we pursued. Jeff, do you want to talk about some of the other ones that we worked on?

Mr. Kress: — Sure, I can give you a snippet on a couple of the other types of things that we worked on. One of the things, going back in time the ballot boxes have all looked the same. And they're rather large cardboard boxes; you know, quite often when you have people going to hospitals or other locations, it could be quite cumbersome all day to try to carry around a box of materials. You've got a giant ballot box.

So for the first time ever we used fabric ballot boxes, you know, you could put over your shoulder. They still have the same type of security controls in place. So instead of a sticker that goes on the outside of the ballot box, what you have is you have a zip-tie seal with the same unique number. So the processes and the controls are still the same, but we're trying to make an easier experience for our workers.

Another thing that we did was with registering people at personal care homes, and that's always a challenge. And the registration happens shortly before the election just because of the nature of personal care homes; you know, people come in, leave. So we want to make sure the lists are as accurate as possible, and trying to make sure that those voters get the voter information card so that they're not confused that they need to go and vote elsewhere.

What we did is we did the registrations online using a computer and printed off the voter information cards right there at the facility. So when we left there, the voters that were in those facilities would not need to worry about, is mail coming in? Did I receive it? If it did come in, where did it go? It just made the process for them in meeting the identification requirements on voting day that much easier.

So there's always lots of things that we try to do. You know, one of the things that is in the budget is to look at our processes, things that are in legislation. And part of really our values is to try to look at how can we constantly do things better than we're currently doing them.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, committee members. And thank you, Dr. Boda, Mr. Kress, officials, and Mr. Speaker. That concludes our consideration of vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer, which can be found on page 123 of your Estimates.

The Chief Electoral Officer, subvote (CE01) in the amount of \$4,242,000, there's no vote as this is statutory. And non-appropriated expense adjustments in the amount of \$384,000, again non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd urge we take a brief recess to line up the next set of witnesses, and again restate our thanks to Dr. Boda and officials from Elections Saskatchewan.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[15:45]

The Deputy Chair: — All right. Welcome back, House Services Committee fans. We'll carry on with the consideration of this year's estimates. I'd like to welcome, joining the committee, Mr. Vermette who is a sitting member of the committee on the opposition side, and also joining as a participating member, Ms. Rancourt.

General Revenue Fund Advocate for Children and Youth Vote 76

Subvote (CA01)

The Deputy Chair: — And we've now arrived at consideration of the estimates for the Children's Advocate. And with that, I turn it back over to the Speaker to introduce his witness and to get the consideration under way.

The Speaker: — Yes, thank you, Deputy Chair, and to the

committee members. It's a pleasure to be here with our relatively new Children's Advocate, Corey O'Soup. As many of the members here were also on the Board of Internal Economy that went through the hiring process, we will be well served by this individual. It was an esteemed group of people that put their names forward, and clearly the choice of Mr. O'Soup was the best individual for this job. And I'll turn it over to Mr. O'Soup for any comments that he might have.

Mr. O'Soup: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks everybody for allowing me the opportunity to come here today and to speak to you. I apologize for being a little late. I know I was not supposed to be on first, but I was told 3:30, and I'll take the blame for that. My watch is literally broken.

But just a few opening comments. We did table our annual report on April 25th, 2017 here in the House, and I'm hoping that you all had a chance to at least take a cursory read of it and to check it out. I want to point out a few things from there, particularly the vision moving forward. So we've changed our direction just a little bit as, you know, my term starts and as I lay out my vision for the future.

So you know, typically we do annual reports and we do special investigations and we do different things like that. But what I'm hoping to do is we will continue to do that work, but I want our organization to become a solutions-based organization that works with its partners to find proactive solutions, and more so focus on the preventative side of the child advocate's position, with all the same goal in mind of reducing the number of children and youth coming into care, and particularly with reducing the number of children dying and being critically injured in care. So my four-point sort of vision for the future has that goal in mind as we go through the next five years.

So the first thing that I felt that we needed to do, and we need to do better, is we need to foster more positive relationships with our First Nation partners and our Métis partners, particularly because those children are the majority of children in care that we are serving. They're the majority of kids that are incarcerated as well, and they're the majority of kids that are taxing our social welfare systems. So I feel like we need to build better relationships with our First Nation partners, especially if we're going to come up with creative solutions.

We can't just do for our First Nation and Métis partners anymore. We have to work alongside in partnership, in collaboration, with a particular focus in the North. Just because of the time that I spent there working in La Loche and La Ronge and also with the suicide crisis that we've been working on, I really want to focus on our relationships in the North. And you know, the first few months some doors have been opened that previously weren't open to our office before, so I'm really thankful for our chiefs and our councils and our people in the North that have opened the doors for us that we're able to come and explain what our office does. So that's the first piece that we need to do.

The second piece is really preventative and solutions based. It's focusing on education. As most of you know, my background is in education as a teacher, as a superintendent, as a special adviser — many different roles in education. I truly feel that education is the key for our children moving forward and

breaking this cycle of abuse, trauma, pain, hurt, drugs, alcohol, violence. You know, we can keep feeding into more counsellors and more psychiatrists and more psychologists, and we'll always continue to need those, but until we actually break that cycle, then we're never going to be able to have enough money to fix the problem.

We have to break that cycle. And for me the key to do that is through education, which leads me into my third point of my vision moving forward is increasing our mental health supports. And we all know that mental health is a serious issue for the children and youth in the province of Saskatchewan, not only Saskatchewan but across the country. And right now we're focused in the North on that crisis. But with mental health, it doesn't matter the colour of your skin. It doesn't matter how much money you make, or which side of the tracks you live on. Mental health is an issue that affects all of our children. And right now we're just focused on the suicide crisis, but I believe that we need to increase mental health supports in our system to better meet the needs of kids.

So one of the things that we're suggesting as a solutions base is taking some of the mental health supports — social workers, counsellors, psychiatrists, whatever you want to say — and taking them from the stone cold buildings that we're asking our kids and our families to go and try to navigate, and taking them and possibly putting them into our school system where the kids are, where the families are, where our kids don't have to miss a half a day of school or a day of school, where our parents don't have to take time off of work if their work allows them to.

You know, some of us are more privileged where we can take that time, but some of our families, you know, they don't have the choice between taking a day off of work and taking their children to a mental health appointment. You know, their employers are saying, well you have to choose between your job or your kids.

If we put those supports right into our school system, those supports will be there for the kids and the families. The kids might miss a class here and there. You can schedule it into their day; those supports are right in the schools. The children are building relationships with those people. They're walking down their halls and getting to know them better. So that's just one of the ideas, I mean, about increasing mental health supports. But that's one of the topics that I want to talk about moving forward.

And the fourth part of my vision over the next five years is empowering youth to be change makers within their community. And what I mean by that is giving them their voice back. I truly believe that we are the voice of children and youth in the province of Saskatchewan at the advocate's office. We have a platform and that platform, I believe, should be the children's voice.

So I was talking about the report on suicides. So when that report comes out, what I've told my staff is, you know, over the next few months if you don't talk to another adult, I believe you're doing your job. And when that report comes out, I want it to come out strictly in youth voice, youth recommendations, youth focused. So if they say it, I believe they mean it, and we must print it. I don't think it's our job to interpret or to take

their words and to try and, you know, create what we think is best for them.

You know, I have five children of my own, and on the best of days I think I know what they're thinking. And especially with my teenagers, the three of them tell me, Dad, you have no clue what I'm talking about. You know, and then we try and create solutions for them, and most of the time it's exactly the opposite of what we're trying to do for them. You know, so I think that that's what we need to do.

And you know, there's lots of positive examples out there about youth taking back their communities. I was just in Lloydminster maybe two weeks ago, and they have an amazing youth council in Lloydminster that just started up, I think, late last year in the fall of 2016. And there was about 20 to 24 youth that are on this youth council, and what they're doing is they're having fun events too. They're having dances and different things like that, but they're also bringing in professionals to teach them about drug awareness, about mental health awareness.

And these youth are taking back their community. So they're the ones that are leading this. So their first event, I think they said maybe had 30 or 40 kids in it. The last event that they held had over 300 kids attending. And this was put on by the youth, planned by the youth, for the youth.

You know, we can get up in front of a group of youth, any one of us, you know. I'll say we're all at least 30-plus, you know, years of age being generous. I'd say 40-plus, but then that would age me as well. But you know, we can get up in front of our youth and we can talk to them. And we can have the most compelling message that we've ever had, and it'd be the best speech we've ever given, but this 14-year-old or 15-year-old kid, it'll go in one ear and out the other just because of how old we are. But if you get one of their peers up there talking to them, challenging them to make a difference, that has way more impact than anything you or I can say or do.

You know, so I really want to give our voice back to the youth moving forward and having them be the ones that are change makers in their community. And I think that's going to be one of the most powerful things that we can do in our communities.

We have a really amazing example from a group of youth up in Hall Lake as well. You know, they're bringing back the drum. They're bringing back walks to their communities. They're doing different things that, you know, they've never done before in their community. And they're the ones that are organizing it, that are driving change. So I believe that it's our job to promote those positive stories.

Yes, we have to report on children's deaths. We have to report on the children being critically injured in care and the number and all the stats and stuff like that, and we'll continue to do that. But I want us to focus on the positive, the preventative, the solutions-based ideas moving forward so that we can reduce the number of kids dying and being critically injured in care, and reduce the number of kids being taken away from their families. And I think that this four-point vision will take us there.

And you know, I think that this is what we're going to be doing for the next five years. I know we're just talking about it right

now but, you know, for me it was really important that I share that with each of you so that you know the direction that our office is taking moving forward.

You know, I think we presented our budget, you know, kind of changing directions here. Basically it's a non-growth budget, so no new positions or anything like that. Our request was for \$2.684 million: 2.378 was non-statutory and 228 K was for statutory. So there was a little bit of an increase there, 78,000. I think we talked about that; 50,000 was for rent. That was negotiated by the . . . Not by us, so it was an uncontrolled expense that we didn't have. And then 28,000 was for eligible in-range adjustments.

So I think I'm going to pause there and just open the floor for any questions.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much for that, Mr. O'Soup. The floor is open for questions. Chair recognizes Nicole Rancourt.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. And first of all, I want to say thank you to Mr. O'Soup for making time to come today. It's really important to have these discussions, and I'm looking forward to having some discussion with you. I also want to thank all the work that you do and all the officials in your office. I've had a chance to get to meet some of your staff. And I know with working in front lines previous to this, I've had colleagues and parents and children that have contacted your office, and they always say that your staff are very professional and compassionate, and they get services in an adequate time frame. So I appreciate the work that your office does.

And I did read your most recent report, and I thank you for the issues that you've addressed in this report. I think it's really important that we highlight some of the challenges that children and youth have in our province, and I think you did a really good job with highlighting some of those issues and where we need to go as a governing body to address some of these issues. So again, thank you for all the work that you do.

One of my first questions is, we have the provincial child and family services and we have also the First Nations Child and Family Services. And I was wondering what the role of your office and your agency is with working with the First Nations Child and Family Services to oversee that kids in care are receiving the services that are needed.

[16:00]

Mr. O'Soup: — Thank you. Yes, our role with our First Nations Child and Family Services is the same as with our provincial agencies. So they've been . . . Our Social Services delegates authority to them, which in turn allows us and gives us the authority to actually supervise and be the accountability body for them.

So I mean there's a couple of ways we can go about doing that, right? You know, we can bring the hammer down and say, you know, we're here and we're going to be looking over your shoulder. And some of the first few meetings I've had, that was the experience that they've had with our office was that, you know, the child advocate is calling, you better pick up that

phone. And there was a sense of fear, right, because we're coming and we're going to look over and we're going to, you know, take your work and go through it with a fine-tooth comb.

That's not the experience that I want to give our First Nations partners in particular. I want to work alongside them. I want to provide them with supports. And you know, once we get past that and they understand that, you know, we're here as a support for them, we're here as another resource for them, and that we have the same goal in mind: the safety and protection of children. Then, you know, we get beyond all of that other stuff. And they recognize that, yes, with that delegated authority we are their accountability body. So we do investigate any injuries or deaths, and we do take phone calls from on-reserve, and we follow the same protocols that we do when we are working off of reserve.

But for me, the key piece here is building relationship and building partnership and moving forward, and letting them know that we are not this scary body that's coming there to drop the hammer on them, but we're there to support them and work alongside them for the safety and protection of their children.

Ms. Rancourt: — So whenever there's a serious incident with the child and family services, and I'm thinking, like I'm quite familiar with the provincial child and family services, and I know they report to you when there's a serious incident. So with ICFS [Indian Child and Family Services], do they have to report to your office when there is a critical incident that occurs?

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, all ICFS agencies and provincial agencies have to report to us. So within 24 to 48 hours is the time frame that they have to report to us. So they are required to do that as well.

Ms. Rancourt: — And is there any other requirements that they have to report to your office?

Mr. O'Soup: — Right now it's just critical injuries and deaths. So that's all that we report on, and that's all that they're required to do.

Ms. Rancourt: — And if a family member or a youth that is being taken care of by ICFS have a concern about their care, are they able to contact your office and you'll do an investigation based on that?

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, so anyone can contact our office. You can contact our office — a social worker, a professional, a teacher, a parent, a child, or a youth. If you look in our report, it actually details the type of person that actually contacted our office. The majority is family and youth; I think about 70 to 80 per cent if you add up all of that. But anyone can contact our office.

So what happens is actually we have what you call, two of our advocates are called early resolution advocates. So they take all of the intake calls and then they determine, at that level, whether they can fix the problem right there. And I think about 80 per cent of our calls are, I guess, taken care of at that early resolution stage. And then the other 20 per cent, they either go

into our investigations side or they go into further advocacy because we have two sort of streams within our office.

So if the early resolution advocates determine that it's an investigations piece, then we send that to our investigators, but if it's determined that further advocacy needs to be done, then they'll go into the advocacy piece, and then we will do a full investigation. So any critical injury or death, we do a full investigation on it. Some of them become public knowledge, some of them become public reports, and some don't. Some are internal that we work with internally with our child and family agencies, or with the ministry depending on where it happens, or with Justice or Corrections.

But all of them are fully investigated. You just see the ones that we do special reports on.

Ms. Rancourt: — And how do you determine which ones should have a special report done?

Mr. O'Soup: — You know, that's based on conversations with the people that are being affected and also internal conversations. So I think the ones that are easily, you know, taken care of are the ones where everything's been followed and it's determined just to be, you know, an accident or things like that. Every policy and procedure was followed.

But the ones that have the biggest gaps, you know, where there's egregious . . . You know, just you can tell that something has been done wrong: policy wasn't followed or there's a huge gap in policy that if this sort of policy was in place . . . Then those are the types that we will take into further investigation.

But there's also those types too that don't warrant a special report. So I think it really depends on the severity, the number of, you know, policies that were maybe not missed, and the number of gaps that aren't there. You know, so basically what's in the best public interest.

Ms. Rancourt: — And in your report you talked about some of your concerns with persons of sufficient interest. And when I had an opportunity to talk to the Minister of Social Services, they indicated that they were implementing some of the changes that they've done within the legislation, and so they could change some of their regulations on how they manage that.

They couldn't speak though for First Nations Child and Family Services as well. Do you have some concerns about the procedures of the PSIs [persons of sufficient interest] with regards to ICFS services?

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, you know, one of the legislative amendments that government is proposing is around changing the PSI into a kinship model, which is something that we support.

You know, I think the main concern that we have with the person of sufficient interest model is the amount of contact that Social Services would have with the person of sufficient interest. So I think after . . . They did change some of their policies and their procedures, that's my understanding, requiring a little bit more on the front end.

But basically after a year, these people are legal guardians and they are not obligated to have anything to do with Social Services — which is the big concern for us, right? — and which does not allow for follow-up. So they're not required to follow things that foster parents or group homes or other people have to do. So that's the biggest concern for us.

So we'll say for instance, if a person of sufficient interest . . . If a child is placed with someone, they don't have to follow all the same rules. So one of the rights of children is to see their biological family and to visit with them. That right could be thrown out the window essentially because there is nobody ensuring that that's being followed through that process. So we feel that a kinship care model, properly resourced and properly researched and worked out between all the partners, would be a better model.

Ms. Rancourt: — So what is the difference between the kinship care model?

Mr. O'Soup: — I think that, you know, we'll have to figure out what all those major differences are. But I think that the biggest thing is that, you know, we'll be putting a lot more trust in our families, but we'll also be making sure that the rights of children are being looked after. So a little more contact, but also a little more trust. So things that we'd have to work out, which I believe the minister is talking about, we have to take the time to make sure that we do it right. But we've been taking a lot of time already, so I think, you know, the time is now for that to happen.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you. Your agency has been asked to do an investigation on the increase of youth suicide in the North. Can you tell me a little bit about your plan for the investigation?

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, day one on the job, I believe, right here on these floors, both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition asked our office to look into the crisis because four or six young girls in the span of four weeks between the ages of 10 to 14 committed suicide.

It was happening before, and it's happened since, so those aren't the only young people. You know, I just heard a story from one of our First Nations just a couple of days ago. A young girl, age 14 in grade 9, committed suicide again. You know, those are stories that we hear all the time. So you know, we are focusing on a snapshot in time of those six young girls.

So I think it was the third day on the job that I went up into our community in the North, into La Ronge and Stanley Mission where some of the stuff had happened, and we did determine that it was important that we do a report on the suicide crisis in the North. So the initial stages were meeting with community leaders, chiefs, councils, mayors, different CBOs [community-based organization] within the towns, and the communities that were affected. We also were hoping to meet with the families. We haven't done that yet. But right now what we're focused on, and we have staff out there today that are actually in our northern communities meeting with children and youth. And that's the focus right now.

So like I myself, once I leave here today, at the end of the week

I'll be up in La Ronge meeting with children and youth in our schools up there and talking about the report. So the whole focus here now, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, is getting youth voice. We have lots of research across the country — nationally, internationally, provincially — around why children and youth commit suicide, right. And there's so many different, you know, items on that that we can talk about.

But the key piece that we found the biggest gap in when we did our initial research was that youth voice was really not apparent. You know, it happens in pockets here and there, but we found that the biggest gap in the reporting out there around youth suicide was actually getting their voice involved in the report. And I believe and I feel that that is the most important thing that we can do with this report, is getting their voice.

So I can't share exactly what they've been telling us yet because we're going through a process. So we'll get their voice and then we'll do a draft preliminary report. And actually what we're going to do is we're going to take it back to the youth that we spoke to and say, is this what you meant? And then at that time that's when we'll be able to share what they're talking about.

But you know, our leaders are talking about some other things, you know, like the community leaders: drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse. You know, different things like that, violence in the communities. And you know, for me some of those are symptoms of the root problem which is really what we're hoping to get to with this, you know. What is the root of this? Why do you drink? Why do you do drugs? You know, like why are parents abusive? And it goes back a long way, right?

So we're hearing stories about the residential schools, right, and how it affects our kids today, and even further back, the impacts of colonization on our children today, and how that impacts our kids. So we're going to take it where the youth take it. You know, we're not going to come into there with any presupposed ideas, but wherever the youth tell us to go we'll tell their story, and wherever the community leaders tell us, we'll tell their story as well.

Ms. Rancourt: — So how many staff do you have that is responsible for organizing this report?

Mr. O'Soup: — So right now we have dedicated two advocates, two investigators, our management team, and myself. So there's seven of us that are working on the report right now. There is a core team of about four that goes into the communities, like when I can't be there or when our managers can't be there. But they're the ones that are in the communities talking to kids and talking to community members, so they're the ones focusing on this.

I did hope to, I was pretty optimistic and I thought, you know, when we started in November, man, we'll have a report out by March, but communities kept approaching us. They wanted their voice to be heard. They wanted the voice of their children and youth to be heard. So we thought, well maybe June we'll have it done. But the lists of communities, and the lists of youth voice, and the lists of youth groups that want to talk to us, we won't be able to get it done. It'll probably be done early fall, and that's when it'll be coming out.

Ms. Rancourt: — And do you have any outside agencies that are helping you with gathering this information and collecting for the report?

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes. So for us as the children and youth advocate going into particularly in our North, they don't know who we are, right? We're this group coming from the South, from Saskatoon or Regina for as far as they're concerned. So we just can't go into a community and say, we want to talk to your youth. First of all, that's wrong. Second of all, those kids won't listen to us or won't open to us because they don't know who we are. So every community we go into, we leverage our partnerships that are already existing in there, with the people that know us, and particularly with the people that know the children and youth and that the children and the youth trust.

So we work with schools. We work with friendship centres. We work with the local health authorities. We work with our First Nation health authorities to provide supports for aftercare for when we're there and when we're not there. So different things like that.

And we'll work with anybody where youth are. So we're working with our ECIP [early childhood intervention program] agencies up there, you know, anybody that has relationships with youth that we have a relationship with, because it's . . . They won't open up to us. They don't know us, so we have to leverage those relationships in the community. So yes, we work with all of our community-based organizations to have them help us get youth voice.

Ms. Rancourt: — And when you say the North, can you define that a little bit to me?

Mr. O'Soup: — You know, we've gone as far south in the North as Montreal Lake and Makwa and Big Island, you know, and then it's all the way up, you know. So from there, I guess, that's kind of the . . . Those are communities that have reached out to us. So you know, there's a sort of invisible line north of P.A. [Prince Albert] so we don't include P.A. when we're talking about the North. We talk about further north, so as far down from Uranium City to as low down as Montreal Lake right now, is where we're working. So we've got communities northeast, northwest, north central, and you know, a little bit south of north, as well.

[16:15]

Ms. Rancourt: — As I know you are aware, that's a large population, a large area to cover, so . . .

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, that's why it's taking us a lot of time too. It takes a lot of time to travel, you know. Our staff was in Sandy Bay last week. From Saskatoon, that's a six- to seven-hour trip. You get there, that's a whole day gone, right. So you meet with kids. They attended a community feast and gathering. They met with community. And then you go into the school, you talk to the school, and then you meet with the kids in the evening. So to go for a one-day trip, essentially it takes three to four days just because of the travel.

So that's been part of why things are taking a little bit longer, but we want to make sure that we're doing it right. So that's

why we're taking the time and making sure that we do it right, recognizing that the amount of time that it takes to travel up there.

Ms. Rancourt: — And I think we really appreciate the time and effort that your agency is putting towards this because this is a very serious matter that we need to get some answers for, and we appreciate you're doing your due diligence on that.

One question I had was, we know that youth suicide is high and, like I think you indicated in your report, it's not just the northern areas. It is all of Saskatchewan. And losing one youth is one too many. So is it possible for your agency to investigate any or all of the youth suicides?

Mr. O'Soup: — I know we've talked about that in our office, and we feel that there may be a part two coming to this report. You know, this first report is focused on those six young girls in the North and then trying to get that northern voice first. But we have talked about that this is not just a northern issue and it's not just a First Nations issue, but it's a Saskatchewan issue.

So I think, you know, we have had discussions about what that would look like and making this a provincial issue. So, yes.

Ms. Rancourt: — And again we appreciate all of the recommendations that you put forward, but what role does your agency have to hold this government to account to implement some of those recommendations?

Mr. O'Soup: — As you know, none of our recommendations are binding on government. So we do many different things to hold the government to task. The first way that we do is we have regular meetings with our ministries. So we have quarterly meetings, say, with Social Services and Justice and Education and Health, and a standing item on there is the status of recommendations. So that is our first way that we try and hold the ministries to task to make sure that they're following the recommendations.

You know, the other way that we have as an independent organization is, you know, we go to the public, right? We have the ability to put out to the public forum through media, reports, and also news releases asking on the status of recommendations if they're not being met to our standards.

So I think those are the two biggest ways that we do that. And I think that, you know, there's a record of the last six years, there's different numbers in there, but I think a lot of them are being met. There's a handful that have been refused, you know, and I can't really speak to all of those because that happened before me. But those ones are specific, you know, things that are bound by policy and for various reasons why they couldn't meet them.

But I think ongoing, we'll continue to do it that way. Yes, I mean having binding recommendations of course would be, you know, what every advocate would want. But I don't know if we'll ever get there.

Ms. Rancourt: — Your report indicates concerns regarding the looming closure of the North Battleford youth facility. And we know that there was two other youth facilities that were also

closed which you indicated in your report as well. Has your agency been working on a plan on adjusting the impact of this closure?

Mr. O'Soup: — Like I mentioned, when we do talk within those quarterly meetings, it is something that we bring up as a concern because the impact of the children and youth in these facilities is going to be . . . It's not only going to impact them. It's going to impact the other youth in the other facilities. You know, it may lead to overcrowding and, you know, especially when there's crisis. And it takes our children and youth further away from their families, which they have a right to, you know. So there's a number of different things that are going to impact kids and that are going to affect them by the closing of a facility like that.

So I mean all of our kids in the North — and I just said what the North was, north of P.A. basically — they're going to be housed in Saskatoon or Regina. So are they going to have access to their family, right? Are they going to have access to those visits? I mean it's a challenge enough for our families to come down and shop and do other business. So they're not going to be able to have that access, which is one of their basic rights. So that's a big concern for us. And then with the possibility of that closing and overcrowding and leading to unsafe conditions within our current facilities, that would be a future concern as well. So we will continue to bring those up at our quarterly meetings and our meetings with our ministers.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you for bringing attention to that because that was one of the big concerns that I know has been a just . . . to our officials here, and that's with having only Saskatoon and Regina being the location for anybody, any youth that's north of Saskatoon. It gets to be a hard time for the family to have that engagement. Just like you said, they have that right to have that family contact, and also programming. And it sounds like your office is very well aware of all of those issues.

Mr. O'Soup: — Yes, and the big thing that we steep our work in is the rights of children and youth, right, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. There's 54 articles in there, and that's what we base our work on, is those rights. Are those rights being met or not being met? And any time that those aren't being met, then that's when our office goes into action.

Ms. Rancourt: — Well thank you again, and that's all the questions I have, Mr. Chair, so thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Rancourt. Any questions, further questions for the Children's Advocate? Again this process builds on fairly significant work that's done to consider the budget submissions on the part of the independent officers, so in addition to that, we have this opportunity today. And with that, I would thank Mr. O'Soup for the work that the Office of the Children's Advocate does, and wish him much success in the important work that is done there.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for bringing these witnesses before the committee. And with that I would move, in the case of vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, subvote (CA01) in the amount of \$2,456,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, committee members. The motion is carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustments in the amount of zero dollars. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount to be voted there.

And I will also ask the member to move the following resolution concerning Advocate for Children and Youth, vote 76, \$2,456,000. I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for the Advocate for Children and Youth in the amount of \$2,456,000.

Thank you, Mr. Merriman. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thanks for that, colleagues.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Advocate for Children and Youth
Vote 76**

The Deputy Chair: — We now turn to supplementary estimates, March 2017, vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, page 11 in the Supplementary Estimates, Advocate for Children and Youth, subvote (CA01), in the amount of \$30,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

With that, Mr. O'Soup, I think I'd give you leave to carry on about your busy day and again, thank you for attending the committee. And we'll carry on with the estimates as they present. Mr. Speaker, always happy to have you stay, but Mr. O'Soup, if you need to go, thanks again.

**General Revenue Fund
Conflict of Interest Commissioner
Vote 57**

The Deputy Chair: — Committee colleagues, estimates, vote 57, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, found on page 125. Conflict of Interest Commissioner, subvote (CC01), in the amount of \$539,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Conflict of Interest Commissioner in the amount of \$539,000.

I'm looking for a . . . Mr. Lawrence, thank you very much. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

**General Revenue Fund
Information and Privacy Commissioner
Vote 55**

The Deputy Chair: — Okay, on to vote 55, Information and Privacy Commissioner, found on page 127 in the Estimates. Subvote (IP01) in the amount of \$1,451,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — There are also some non-appropriated expense adjustments in the amount of \$18,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only, no amount to be voted.

So I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Information and Privacy Commissioner in the amount of \$1,451,000.

Mr. Harrison. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Agreed.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislative Assembly
Vote 21**

The Deputy Chair: — Okay, moving right along. Vote 21, Legislative Assembly, central management and services, subvote (LG01) in the amount of \$3,304,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Office of the Speaker and Board of Internal Economy, subvote (LG07) in the amount of \$382,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Legislative Assembly Services, subvote (LG03) in the amount of \$5,152,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The motion is carried. Payments and allowances to individual members, subvote (LG05) in the amount of \$15,355,000. There's no vote as this is statutory. Committees of the Legislative Assembly, subvote (LG04), in the amount of \$418,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The motion is carried. Caucus operations, subvote (LG06), in the amount of \$2,148,000. There is no vote as this is statutory. And non-appropriated expense

adjustments, in the amount of \$68,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

And so on vote 21, I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Legislative Assembly in the amount of \$9,256,000.

Mr. Phillips. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[16:30]

**General Revenue Fund
Ombudsman
Vote 56**

The Deputy Chair: — Moving right along. Vote 56, Ombudsman. Ombudsman, subvote (OM01), in the amount of \$3,753,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for Ombudsman in the amount of \$3,753,000.

Mr. Vermette. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — With enthusiasm.

**General Revenue Fund
Provincial Auditor
Vote 28**

The Deputy Chair: — Whipping right along. Vote 28, Provincial Auditor, Provincial Auditor subvote (PA01) in the amount of \$7,922,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Unforeseen expenses, subvote (PA02) in the amount of \$539,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Provincial Auditor, vote 28, \$8,461,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, the following sums for the Provincial Auditor in the amount of \$8,461,000.

Mr. Lawrence again. Well played, sir. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The motion is carried. Thank you very much, colleagues.

We now need to consider a motion regarding the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Merriman. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Well with that, on behalf of all committee members I'm sure, I'd like to thank Clerk Kathy Burianyk for her able assistance helping me put the crayon in the right place. And certainly on behalf of myself, thank you to committee members for bearing up and getting through this. And, Mr. Speaker, thank you to you.

Any closing remarks from other colleagues? Seeing none, I'd entertain a motion to adjourn. Mr. Merriman. So moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Finally, something we can all agree on.

[The committee adjourned at 16:34.]