



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT

Published under the authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



No. 1 — February 25, 2008

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Don Toth, Chair
Moosomin

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Humboldt

Mr. Glen Hart
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Mr. Len Taylor
The Battlefords

Mr. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 8 Legislative Building
9:00 a.m., February 25, 2008

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Don Toth, Speaker, Chair
Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Ms. Doreen Eagles
Hon. Donna Harpauer
Mr. Glen Hart
Mr. Len Taylor
Mr. Kevin Yates

Staff to the Board

Ms. Marilyn Borowski, Director, Finance and Administrative Services
Ms. Linda Kaminski, Director, Human Resource and Payroll Services
Mr. Gregory Putz, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Ms. Margaret Tulloch, Secretary to the Board

Officials in Attendance**Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner**

Mr. Gerald Gerrand, Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Mr. Jean Ouellet, Chief Electoral Officer
Mr. David Wilkie, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer
Mr. Brent Nadon, Manager, Election Finances

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Mr. Gary Dickson, Information and Privacy Commissioner
Ms. Diane Aldridge, Portfolio Officer
Ms. Pamela Scott, Manager, Administration

Office of the Children's Advocate

Mr. Marvin Bernstein, Children's Advocate
Mr. John Brand, Director, Advocacy Services
Ms. Bernie Rodier, Director, Administration

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

Mr. Kevin Fenwick, Provincial Ombudsman
Ms. Lynne Fraser, Manager, Administration

Office of the Legislative Assembly Service of Saskatchewan

Ms. Melissa Bennett, Legislative Librarian
Ms. Lorraine de Montigny, Director, Visitor Services
Ms. Lenni Frohman, Director, Parliamentary Publications
Mr. Darcy Hislop, Chief Technology Officer
Ms. Pat Kolesar, Assistant Legislative Librarian
Ms. Iris Lang, Clerk Assistant (Committees)
Mr. Kenneth Ring, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel
Mr. Pat Shaw, Sergeant-at-Arms
Ms. Margaret Woods, Clerk Assistant

AGENDA Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

MINUTES Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Ms. Harpauer, ordered, that the Minutes of Meetings #1/07, #2/07, #3/07, and #4/07 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 2 Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

The Estimates, in the amount of \$151,000, were presented by Mr. Gerald Gerrand, Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

ITEM 1 Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,298,825 were presented by Mr. Jean Ouellet, Chief Electoral Officer.

A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

The Board recessed for a period of time.

ITEM 3 Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,054,356 were presented by Mr. Gary Dickson, Information and Privacy Commissioner.

A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

ITEM 4 Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

The Estimates, in the amount of \$2,068,000 were presented by Mr. Kevin Fenwick, Provincial Ombudsman.

A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

The Board recessed for a period of time.

ITEM 5 Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Children's Advocate

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,531,000, were presented by Mr. Marvin Bernstein, Children's Advocate.

A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

ITEM 6 Table Item: Legislative Assembly Quarterly Financial Reports and Expenditure Forecasts — 4th Quarter 2006-07; and 1st, 2nd, 3rd Quarters 2007-08

The Chair tabled the reports.

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont:

That the quarterly financial reports and expenditure forecasts as tabled be received and approved.

The question being put, it was agreed.

Minute # 1682

ITEM 7 Table Item: Legislative Assembly Service Priorities 2007-2008 Mid-year Report on Progress

The Chair tabled the report.

Moved by Ms. Harpauer, seconded by Mr. Taylor:

That the report be received and approved.

The question being put, it was agreed.

Minute # 1683

ITEM 8 **Table Item: Provincial Auditor's Memorandum of Audit Observations for the Year Ended March 31, 2007**

The Chair tabled the report.

ITEM 9 **Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Legislative Assembly**

The Board reviewed the Estimates and action plan for the Legislative Assembly submitted as follows:

Budgetary: \$ 8,207,000

Statutory: \$14,634,000

Total: \$22,841,000

The Speaker and Clerk presented the Legislative Assembly Service budgetary priorities for fiscal year 2008-2009.

The Board met in camera for a short time.

The Board resumed public meeting at 3:19 p.m.

ITEM 9 (cont'd) A debate arising, the item was deferred until later in the day.

The Board met in camera for a short time.

The Board resumed public meeting at 7:42 p.m.

ITEM 2 **Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner**
(cont'd)

Moved by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Taylor:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$151,000;

And further,

That such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1684

ITEM 1 **Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer**
(cont'd)

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of \$1,071,000 (Statutory) be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1685

ITEM 3 **Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**
(cont'd)

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$822,000;

And further,

That such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1686

ITEM 4
(cont'd)

Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Taylor:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$2,068,000 as follows:

Budgetary to be voted:	\$1,898,000
Statutory:	\$ 170,000;

And further,

That such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1687

ITEM 5
(cont'd)

Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Estimates for the Office of the Children's Advocate

Moved by Ms. Harpauer, seconded by Mr. Taylor:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,531,000 as follows:

Budgetary to be voted:	\$1,361,000
Statutory:	\$ 170,000;

And further,

That such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1688

ITEM 10

Decision Item: Amendment to Directive #21 – Annual Indemnity and Allowances

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont:

That Directive #21 – *Annual Indemnity and Allowances* as revised be adopted to incorporate changes as affected by Minute #1652, Minute #1659, and that the date for monthly payroll payments be changed from the first working day of the following month to the last working day of the current month.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1689

ITEM 8(a)
(cont'd)

Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Budget for the Legislative Assembly

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates:

That the 2008-2009 Estimates and action plan of the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$22,841,000 as follows:

The 2008-2009 Estimates include:

Budgetary to be voted:	\$ 7,925,000
Statutory:	\$14,916,000

And further,

That the 2008-2009 amortization expense for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$90,000;

And further,

That such Estimates and amortization expense be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1690

ITEM 9(b)
(cont'd)

Decision Item: Review of the 2008-2009 Revenue Estimates for the Legislative Assembly

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont:

That the 2008-2009 Revenue Estimates for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$5,000;

And that such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

The Board adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

[The board met at 09:00.]

The Chair: — Good morning members, ladies and gentlemen. We're prompt this morning. Thank you all for all coming this morning. And we're just going to say welcome to everyone and let you know that I'm going to find this meeting interesting as well. I've never had the privilege of sitting on the board, which means I've never had the honour of sitting through a full day of budget debate for the Legislative Assembly. And now all of a sudden I find I'm somewhat responsible for a fair bit of this. So it should be an interesting day.

I know we've got a lengthy day ahead of us as we review the budgets of the Legislative Assembly and the independent officers. And we're all aware of the fact that it's our responsibility to exercise due diligence as we go over the budgets, move forward.

Just a couple of things just to bring to your attention as we look at the budgets. And as I've had the privilege of talking to a number of the independent officers and the Clerk and other individuals of the Assembly as we look at the budget, we've heard of and are aware of a directive of status quo plus 1. But I think you'll find as we go through the budgets that the budgets will be reflecting increases in salaries that the independent officers and the Legislative Assembly don't have a lot of control over, as they come down from executive government. And if you can weigh those increases and look at the overall, you'll find that the overall increase is actually not all that large when you take off the four and the four and a half per cent which comes as a result of government directives and wage agreements.

And as well we have a couple of other things I think we need to take note of. One of the issues that will be brought forward by the librarian is a position that is currently half with the additional duties and we'll get to that explanation later.

And just one other issue I just wanted to mention. As far as the Legislative Assembly — the Clerk in this province now — we do not have a deputy clerk, as when Greg assumed the position of Clerk, he used the position and the additional monies to try and fund, within the budget constraints, the extra positions needed due to the new committee structure. So we'll get into some significant debate in that area as well.

So you now have before you a proposed agenda for the day and I would ask a motion for approval of the proposed agenda. I recognize the member from Cannington.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I'll so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Moved by the member from Cannington, Mr. D'Autremont. A seconder? Mr. Yates. Is the committee agreed to the approval? Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — We also have in front of us, and you've had the opportunity to go through them, the draft minutes from meetings no. 1/07 and no. 2/07, no. 3/07, no. 4/07. And if I could have an approval or a motion from one of the members to

approve the draft minutes from these four meetings. Do we have a mover? Mr. Yates. A seconder? Ms. Harpauer. Is the committee agreed? Agreed and carried.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

The Chair: — So I guess we'll get right into the heart of the meeting and I'd like to invite forward, I believe, Mr. Gerrand. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner, I believe has asked to be first. He's telling us his budget deliberations are going to be fairly short. And so, pleased to have you this morning, Mr. Gerrand, and we invite you to make your presentation to the committee.

Mr. Gerrand: — Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen of the committee.

As in the past, the budget before you has been prepared for me on my behalf by Ms. Borowski of financial services. And she has assisted me each year in doing this. Of course, it's my budget, and I've endorsed my approval to it.

It doesn't have many moving parts. I am told that this is about the seventh occasion that I've been before this committee, either personally or having Ms. Borowski represent me. And in view of the fact that it may be the last occasion that I appear before this committee — I'm not sure about that — but I thought I'd make a few general remarks.

The budget of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is, as I have said, fairly straightforward. I've always viewed it as being comprised of three essential parts: one part, remuneration for me; a second part, payments for office space, secretarial assistance, and supplies, which item is paid under contract. The Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has no employees. And the third part are fixed expenditures which haven't varied much through the years, such as out-of-province travel, in-province travel, and legal fees. The only item that any significant increase is asked for this year relates to legal fees.

During the six or seven years that I have performed this role, I have never asked for any alteration in my remuneration or in the payments for office space. Those increases have come about by reason of economic adjustments that are beyond the control of myself, so that the increases that you've noticed over the years are sort of built in. And actually that status quo situation applies as well to the term that was served by my predecessor, Derril McLeod, the late Derril McLeod, who passed away regrettably about two months ago.

I know something about the economics of other ethics and conflict of interest offices in Canada, and it's my view that the operation in Saskatchewan is an economical operation and just as economical as any of the others in the 10 provinces and the three territories.

With those few introductory remarks, I invite you to ask me any questions you may have and ultimately approve of what I've submitted to you.

The Chair: — Committee open for questions. Mr.

D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Gerrand. I was wondering if you could answer for me . . . You mentioned your remuneration that looks like it's an increase of 8.3 per cent. How is your remuneration set? Is it statutory? And how is the increase calculated?

Mr. Gerrand: — Well I'm going to try and answer that question, and if I'm not correct I'm going to invite Ms. Borowski to correct me. I think that presently, and for some two or three years, it's been tied as a percentage of deputy ministers' salaries. And every time the deputy ministers' salaries go up, a resulting increase comes to me. And also there's some built-in economic adjustments that take place and as a result, that's how the increases occur.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So how much of . . .

Mr. Gerrand: — It's not statutory, I'm told.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. How much of the increase then is based on the average from the deputy ministers and how much is based on economic changes?

Mr. Gerrand: — I think Ms. Borowski has that figure.

Ms. Borowski: — Four per cent would be based on an economic adjustment expected on April 1, 2008. And so the other 4 would be connected to the DM [deputy minister], the average of the DM salary.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Gerrand, you also have \$8,000 here in for legal services whereas in 2006-2007 it was zero and in 2007-2008 the estimate was 3,000. What do you see as the reason for this particular increase?

Mr. Gerrand: — All of the members are aware of the fact that last April I was asked by the then president of Executive Council to provide an opinion with regard to the conduct of a certain member of Executive Council. I think you are also all aware of the fact that having simply commenced that investigation leading to that opinion, an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation ensued.

The RCMP investigation ended late in the fall of 2007. Certain steps were taken by the Department of Justice to obtain opinions from out of the province. Those opinions have now been obtained and you're aware of what those opinions are. The question now arises as to what steps I take, and in anticipation of the prospect of those steps going forward, it is my view that that figure is required to carry that out to its completeness.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you very much. Another question back on remuneration. With the 4 per cent economic adjustment in there and 4 per cent, basically, from deputy ministers, is that calculation based on deputy ministers' current salary or projected salary as of April 1?

Mr. Gerrand: — The current salary.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So the average of the deputy ministers' current salary would be higher than what your salary

is presently then. So you're bringing that up to the average of the deputy ministers, then adding on the economic adjustment of 4 per cent.

Mr. Gerrand: — Taking the appropriate percentage of the deputy ministers' salary. That's correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions from the members? Seeing no further questions, thank you, Mr. Gerrand.

Mr. Gerrand: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — For coming before the committee and making your presentation. And we will take the discussion into consideration later today. Thank you so much and have a good afternoon.

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

The Chair: — At this time then, members, we will move forward to item no. 1, a decision item, '08-09 budget, for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. I'll invite Mr. Ouellet to the table and have him introduce the gentlemen who are with him and make his presentation, and we'll move forward.

Mr. Ouellet: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To my left is David Wilkie, the assistant chief electoral officer, and to my right is Brent Nadon. He's the manager of election finance.

I have some brief comments to make, then open the floor to the members. Early in my mandate as Chief Electoral Officer, the office began to map out its course by the adoption in June 2005 of the strategic plan 2005-2011. The first two phases of the plan, short- and medium-term initiatives, had the ultimate goal of moving the office from the administration of a technical election of the past to the successful implementation of a culture of change and modernization.

Many new initiatives were piloted during the course of two by-elections and successfully expanded to the general election, such as an electronic list of electors, a comprehensive communications strategy including setting up a call centre to adequately answer the volume of questions from the general voting public, simplify newspaper advertisement directing voters to our call centre and website for more detailed information, and — for the first time — radio advertising. We also had advertising in brochures geared to Aboriginals and youth voters, a more user-friendly website, the introduction of field liaison officers to assist in giving services to returning officers on a timely basis, expanded training for returning officers and election clerks, the introduction of electronic mail for returning officers, new forms and supplies including recyclable cardboard ballot boxes, a new blind voter template as well as magnifying glasses, and the introduction of standardized returning offices hours.

The report on plans and priorities for fiscal year 2008-09 outlines the office priority for the next fiscal year, such as completion of a comprehensive post-election review and strategies to measure stakeholder satisfaction, implementation of a strategy for the election finance reporting system, addition

to our information technology strategy, enhancing our outreach initiatives, some leasehold improvements, and preparing plans to implement possible permanent electronic voters list.

Our aim continues to be to institute a culture of change and modernization in the conduct of electoral events in Saskatchewan through a made-in-Saskatchewan electoral process that responds to the need of all our stakeholders. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Ouellet. The floor is open for questions. I invite the members if they have any questions. Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. I'd like to welcome the Chief Electoral office here today, and your officials. In your budget you are talking about election preparedness for 2008-2009 to implement a strategy for election finance reporting system. What are you doing in this area?

Mr. Ouellet: — Well we would like to consult with the stakeholders rather than imposing on our stakeholders a system. We would rather they tell us their needs and then design a system that will respond to those needs.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — And so why are you estimating then that this is going to cost \$45,000 if you're looking at a system of consultations with the stakeholders — which are generally the political parties and any independents that may be . . . Doesn't that seem to be a bit high for consultations?

Mr. Ouellet: — It reflects the original request that was made, I believe, four years ago, which was at 35. It may include computerization of certain functions at this time. If not, then obviously the funds will not be used.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well wouldn't it be better to have the consultation and gain an understanding of what the stakeholders view as being necessary and then come back with a request for funding to meet those needs?

Mr. Ouellet: — Well at the time also during the consultation we would like to bring in our computer consultants. The individual is the one that has now developed the electronic list of electors as a module to that particular system. And so, you know, there's more to consultation than just talking to individuals. We have to understand what can and cannot be done as well.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So are you talking then of tying in the electronic voters list to the financial reporting?

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely. It's a management system on the . . . We are providing in phase 2 the administration of the election, which is the nomination modules as well as the electoral staff, polling divisions, and staff and enumerators as well in that particular module.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — On the cost of improving ESPREE [Elections Saskatchewan Permanent Register of Eligible Electors] post-election comprehensive review, what are those funds, that \$85,000 for?

Mr. Ouellet: — I'll ask Dave Wilkie to answer the question.

Mr. Wilkie: — That would be making improvements to the electronic list of electors based on the experience of the general election — there's some things that have been identified by the data entry operators and automation coordinators — and also to expand to the next phase of the election management system which goes into more detail about election management as far as election night.

Right now we don't have an electronic system of keeping track of election night results, so election night results would be added to the system. So that's some more building along on the election management system.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'm not sure what the rest of the committee thinks but I would feel more comfortable if I had a better understanding of what the proposals actually were, and perhaps after the consultations with the stakeholders that might be possible. But I'm not sure what we would be funding here right now with this \$130,000 for the two areas. And so I have some concerns about that. But perhaps some of the other members have some questions.

The Chair: — Ms. Harpauer.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Going back to the 45,000 request, you said that four years ago that was also requested at 35,000. Was a review done at the time?

Mr. Ouellet: — No. That was not proceeded with because there was cuts in the budget that were done.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It was denied.

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. So when was the last time that this would have been looked at, or has it?

Mr. Ouellet: — It hasn't.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On page 19 when we look at base year estimates, operational, could you explain to me what the increases in salaries, reflect what that change is? Is that the change of reflecting percentage increases that other government employees are getting? Or could you explain to me how you came up with those numbers?

Mr. Ouellet: — I'll let Brent answer.

Mr. Nadon: — The increases are based on the 4 per cent economic increase as well as a merit increase where applicable.

Mr. Yates: — And the merit increase is . . . Could you explain that to me?

Mr. Nadon: — We've used 4 per cent as a merit increase.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. So an incremental increase as well?

Mr. Nadon: — Yes, 4 per cent for both.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any further questions from members? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, yes. I also had questions about page no. 19. As I look through this list, I see increases ranging from 5 per cent for the manager of information technology to 13.2 per cent for the administrative coordinator. There are some very significant increases here that are certainly greater than the economic adjustment of 4 per cent and even greater than the merit increases that you are indicating.

I'm not sure how everybody in an organization gets the same merit increase. Are you all that much better across the board than you were last year?

Mr. Ouellet: — I do not get merit increases. For example, the variance. The manager of information technology and register of electors is a vacant position, so we did not increase the merit in this particular position. The administrative coordinator is tied in to the minimum of the bracket, I believe. That's why it reflects 13 per cent.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if the administrative coordinator is at the minimum of the bracket, that's still a 13.2 per cent increase. And how do you justify that?

Mr. Ouellet: — We can't pay her any less than the minimum plus the merit increase.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Are these in-scope positions that the brackets are defined . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — They're out of scope.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Outside of your purview?

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct. They're out-of-scopes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — They're out of scope.

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So who defines what the brackets are then?

Mr. Ouellet: — The Public Service Commission, the MCP [management classification and compensation plan].

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Was this position previously designated as an administrative coordinator or was that a change in position?

Mr. Ouellet: — It's the same position.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — If it's the same position, then why were they not within the bracket previously?

Mr. Nadon: — As far as I know they were within the bracket before. The increase was \$5,000 for this budget. We can review that and get back to you with any details you'd like.

Mr. Ouellet: — Also included in the salary there's a new benefit, flexible benefit now, which is 718 . . .

A Member: — Seven twelve.

Mr. Ouellet: — Seven twelve, seven eighteen, that health benefit that you can use is included in those salaries as well.

The Chair: — Further questions, Mr. D'Autremont? Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Yes. You're budgeting \$5,000 for outreach strategies. I'd be interested in . . . You talk about on page 14 about the recent study that states 70 per cent of off-reserve First Nations people and 56 per cent of Métis First Nations don't have literacy skills to cope with today's society. And from that section I take it you're planning some sort of an outreach strategy to connect with the people who normally don't vote. I wonder if you could just expand on what you were planning to do with that \$5,000 and that outreach strategy, give a few more details.

Mr. Ouellet: — Sure. What we're doing actually, we're building on to our experience of the general election where we put in place a community relations officer to both youth in the schools as well as to the Aboriginal and Métis communities. What this represents is some consultation with those individuals and groups. It represents travel expenses for community relations officers to build — and so that we can deliver again at the next general election — service to those individuals.

Mr. Hart: — So are you partnering with existing services that are already, other organizations that are involved in literacy and outreach and that sort of thing? Or is this an initiative on your own?

Mr. Ouellet: — It's an initiative really of the office. It's more targeted towards voters. Obviously it's not . . .

Mr. Hart: — And who would be doing this outreach? You're talking about \$5,000 for travel expenses. Officers of your, staff of the Chief Electoral Officer?

Mr. Wilkie: — It would be the communications and community relations officer. We would also be looking at co-operating with Elections Canada. We've had some initial discussions with them to have some joint programs in Aboriginal and Métis outreach.

Mr. Hart: — Good. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification, the positions we're talking about with wage increases are tied to the management compensation plan. So the merit increases you're talking about are an in-range movement within that range . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Mr. Yates: — That happens automatically each year. And part of this also would be, the new management classification plan went into effect last year after your budgets. So part of this . . . So you're still staying within the range and you're following in the management compensation plan . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely.

Mr. Yates: — With your salaries.

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct.

Mr. Yates: — That's what I was trying to get out of the first set of questions and it wasn't clear that they're tied. So these are just tied positions and so these increases are more or less automatic, based on where the tie is. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Harpauer.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The question that I have is also on page 19. You have the manager of election operations, communications is no longer applicable and you've added two positions. So is that adding an FTE [full-time equivalent] to your office?

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct. Yes.

The Chair: — Ms. Eagles.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you. And welcome, Mr. Ouellet and your officials. On page 15, item 6 talks about preparing or planning to prepare and implement a permanent voters list. How permanent can a voters list be? I'm just judging from my constituency where it's transient and I'm just wondering how permanent.

Mr. Ouellet: — A permanent list is accurate as its sources. I would say a permanent list of electors must be composed from a last enumeration, if you wish, door-to-door enumeration. And then we must develop partnerships with sources of data such as Address Express and where one person moved and they can advise various partners of their changes, such as ourselves as well if that's the case if we have a permanent list of electors.

There's other jurisdictions, Quebec, for example, has a very close partnership with Health whereby change of address are forwarded back and forth from each organization. And they have a list that's good about 96, 97 per cent if you've got the right source of information. If you can't have those partnerships in place, then certainly you'd probably be much better to have an enumeration every time.

Ms. Eagles: — So you wouldn't just be relying on a revision period where it's up to the elector to contact officials to get their name on the list? And I realize that some of the onus has to be on the electors as well. But so you wouldn't strictly be relying on something like that then?

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct. You cannot. And your list, within the first year, you've got about 20 per cent of your list that is obsolete — people move and people die and new people come on board as well. So yes, you need sources.

Ms. Eagles: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Next, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much. On that same subject and then another subject as well, what is the operational plan for the next year with regards to the permanent voters list? What do you intend to do over the next 12 months?

Mr. Ouellet: — Well the permanent list was first mentioned back in 2005 when the government in place indicated that they would like to see movement towards a permanent list of electors. At that time we then took the action of putting into place infrastructure that would allow receiving this particular data and treating it. We used it during the general election and it was quite a success. We are now in the process of finishing inputting into the system revisions that occurred during the election as well as any person that swore a declaration on election day so that we can provide the political parties with this new information. It's going to be a far more complete list that we've never had before.

Mr. Wilkie: — But we still . . . Back in 2005, the all-party committee recommended that movement towards a permanent list but we need some either new legislation or regulations to do that. So we put in place the electronic list of electors — the infrastructure — but we need the legislation or regulations in order to collect birthdates, in order to make agreements with the Health department or SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] to get any change of addresses put into the system. So until we get that, we've gone about as far as we can go.

Mr. Taylor: — Are you waiting for somebody to do something, or are you aggressively pursuing regulation or legislation? Have you drafted language?

Mr. Ouellet: — We're going to give the new government a chance to feel comfortable first and there's . . . We're preparing . . . This year's going to be different. In the past, Elections Saskatchewan provided the statement of votes after the election as well as the record of contributions and expenses. This time we will have the third volume which will be change that we would like to see to the elections Act. And included in that would be this particular issue to be addressed.

Mr. Taylor: — Are you also, over the next 12 months, evaluating enumeration procedures that were taken from the most recent election? How do you normally evaluate enumeration when it's completed?

Mr. Ouellet: — We are conducting consultation with our returning officers as to the delivery of the election. We will also consult with our political parties. Certainly we'd like to hear from the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] as to, you know, their feeling about it. We always welcome comments. And yes, we will consult with all the stakeholders, on not only the enumeration but the whole delivery of the election.

Mr. Taylor: — We're almost three months plus since the election. Have you had any preliminary analysis done of the enumeration?

Mr. Ouellet: — We are consulting on March 4, 6, 11, and 17 with the returning officers. We're also conducting in-house staff review of the election, and probably some time in April or May we'll consult with the advisory committee of the political party, the registered political party.

Mr. Taylor: — Okay. I'm glad to hear that. If I have any complaints, the enumerations that I've heard have been done very poorly. The biggest complaint during the election was finding people who are not on the voters list. And why? They lived in a house. There were not many complications.

One of the things in the priorities listed on page 6 is measure stakeholder satisfaction. On 16, no. 7, it talks about the request for \$30,000, but also indicates this was requested previously but decreases in budget removed that. Could you explain what is meant by measuring satisfaction? And secondly, I'm assuming that this means you're bringing it back into the budget for our approval this year.

Mr. Ouellet: — That is correct. There is no significant cost involving consulting with our stakeholders with the exception of the voters, and to consult with the voters we need to conduct surveys. And that would be the \$30,000. That was the purpose of this particular amount of money last budget that was cut — to consult voters. Those are more difficult to reach.

Mr. Taylor: — And just to clarify that, this is satisfaction with the electoral process?

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Mr. Taylor: — Because if you read carefully the language in the priority on page 6 — measure the satisfaction, measure stakeholder satisfaction of MLAs — I mean obviously you're not measuring whether I'm doing my job or not. You're measuring whether the electoral process is being conducted fairly.

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely. Correct.

Mr. Taylor: — Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely.

The Chair: — Do we have further questions from committee members? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Along the same line of questioning, when it comes to a permanent voters list, how do you determine on, for that voters list, who is eligible to be on there as an elector?

Mr. Ouellet: — Those would be qualifications that appear in The Election Act.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — But how do you verify that those are actually, that the person is actually a Canadian citizen and that they are resident in Saskatchewan for — I believe it's what? — six months prior to the election?

Mr. Ouellet: — Well during the course of enumeration, going door to door, the enumerators do ask those questions. They do

not ask for proof of it. People that would register following any enumeration would need to demonstrate proof of identity and proof of residence.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So in the past election the enumeration that was done, all you needed to do was declare that you were a citizen and a resident of Saskatchewan for the proper amount of time.

Mr. Ouellet: — Over 18 and so on — correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — But henceforth to be on the permanent voters list, you would have to demonstrate by providing proof of citizenship and/or residency?

Mr. Ouellet: — Proof of identity and proof of residence. That's correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So you don't have to . . . you just . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — You don't have to prove your citizenship. No.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — You just have to prove that you're a resident.

Mr. Ouellet: — This is your name and this is where you live — correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — But you have to be a citizen to be eligible to vote. Is that not the case?

Mr. Ouellet: — Yes, you do make a declaration to that effect.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So they would have to make a declaration still.

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely, same as individuals that have on election day came to the poll and their names were not on the list of electors. These were the procedures they have to follow to be added to the list of electors.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — And once a permanent voters list is established, how do you propose to track those voters in the sense that I'm resident in one location and then I'm a resident in another?. How do you make those transfers?

Mr. Ouellet: — Well if the individuals do not advise you of that, there's various sources you can obtain that information. For example on your driver's licence — if you do have a driver's licence — every year you have to pay your amount of money and then if there's a change of address, then that information could be passed on to the register of electors. Similarly one of the most sacred trusts of an individual is the health care system. Therefore whenever they change address, generally people advise Health of the change, and therefore those changes could again be passed on to the register of electors.

So there's various sources — SGI, SaskTel. There's sources in this province to maintain currency of an address of an individual.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — And so that's what you were talking of when you stated that there was a need for either legislative or regulatory change to enable that kind of information to be made accessible.

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. I'd like to go back to page 19 again, to salaries. Is the same explanation as provided for the administrative coordinator the reasons why the assistant chief electoral officer salary is increasing by 11.5 per cent?

Mr. Ouellet: — That's correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So that would be the case for all of these positions.

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — On page no. 20, code no. 529000, you're asking for an increase to \$80,000 for general contractual services. What are those for?

Mr. Nadon: — The increase there is largely made up of the items that we're adding to the budget for electoral readiness. It's made up of the 45,000 for the finance reporting system, 5,000 for outreach strategies, and an additional 35,000 that we've already discussed as well.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. And on page 21 you had printed forms in there of 135,000. That was for last year, was that the case? For the election year.

Mr. Nadon: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. What is your non-election-year FTEs for 2006-2007 and then 2007-2008?

Mr. Ouellet: — Six and seven respectively.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. And under the new budget, what will your non-election-year FTEs be? Will they be eight now with the additional one?

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. I think that's all the questions that I have.

The Chair: — I recognize Ms. Eagles.

Ms. Eagles: — Speaking of the election directly, fixed election dates, do you see that as a significant saving overall?

Mr. Ouellet: — Yes, for many reasons. Obviously we know when to print, when we have to go to print. One of the greatest difficulties in the last general election, returning officers were losing five, six, seven, eight offices because we could not rent those particular offices at a definite time. With the advent of permanent date for elections, then we know exactly when we can pass our contract with those individuals, we know exactly when we need the space. So there's savings that will result obviously from planning the whole cycle.

Ms. Eagles: — And just one other comment that I would like your comment on is going back to permanent voters lists again. I'm sure it'll be much easier to do in the cities. In the rural areas where, you know, if you're using health cards for a reference when they give a mailing address rather than a physical address, that could be a nightmare.

Mr. Ouellet: — For your information, when one registers for Health, one gives both the residence address, including the legal land description, as well as a postal address. It's the most complete . . . You could build an entire register of electors from the health data. They even collect citizenship.

Ms. Eagles: — And will you be allowed to use that or . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — The legislators . . . [inaudible] . . . I certainly would be a proponent of that.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you very much.

Mr. Ouellet: — Although my colleague from privacy may have a different view.

Ms. Eagles: — All right. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. The question on page 19 again. Returning officer. I'm assuming that would be the annual salary of a returning officer if they were employed for the entire year.

Mr. Ouellet: — There's a little more than that. There's a stipend. They get a stipend of \$768 every year, whether they do work or not. However one of the recommendations of the audit committee back in 2005 was to give returning officers greater training. And obviously this one, 768, includes three days of training to returning officers.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So this would be cost for training for returning officers, so not just one returning officer, but all returning officers.

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. I was assuming this was salary for one returning officer, so . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — That would be nice. They would be very pleased if that . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — What are field liaison officers?

Mr. Ouellet: — Field liaison officers are individuals that do the bridge between our office and the returning officers. They have six or seven returning officers, and they will advise on various statutory provisions, on follow-up. For example, if on a given day a returning officer must provide us with the number of names on the lists, rather than our office having to make 58 calls, we make calls to six or seven field liaison officers. Then in turn it's the tree, if you wish. They do make that bridging and correlation between our office and returning officers.

Mr. Wilkie: — And the field liaison officers are former returning officers, so they have the experience; they've generally had a couple of elections under their belt. And they make visits. Whereas we don't have the time to go out and visit all the returning officers, they make visits during the election to make sure things are going okay. If they need to have extra assistance, then those people provide that assistance and keep us up to date on how things are going.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you. Are they employed just at election time?

Mr. Ouellet: — That is correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — On the question that Mr. Taylor raised about the survey, in the past the government has conducted polling. Have you looked at tying your request to the polling the government has been doing on the quarter?

Mr. Ouellet: — No, we have not at this time. However if we were ever to need the service . . . a survey, we would have to proceed through Executive Council.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Because \$30,000 for a survey seems like a fairly extensive survey. How many questions would you be looking at asking, or is that would still be to be determined?

Mr. Ouellet: — It's still to be determined. Obviously we didn't have time to work on it the last time because it was cut from us. And as you get further and further from an event, the recall is also more difficult.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Sometimes that's a good thing. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Further questions from members, committee members?

I have a couple of questions, Mr. Ouellet. First of all, it's been probably a couple of elections since the electoral boundary change and I just don't recall the details around boundary review. And I guess the one question I would raise . . . And maybe that would come from the survey. I know the last time around and previous too, most of the boundaries had been determined by the RM [rural municipality] boundaries, and it seemed to work quite well. The last time around we split RMs, and I know even this time I had ran into constituents between myself and my colleague to the south, and people had no idea where they were supposed to vote. And it created complications, and I guess that comes back to even trying to get a very clear voter ID [identification] and getting it out in time so people have a clear understanding of where they would vote.

So first of all, are we close to having another review, are you aware of, regarding electoral boundary changes that may be coming forward?

Mr. Ouellet: — We have a statute on the books which is called Constituency Boundaries Commission revision. It is done every 10 years based on decennial census data. The last time it was proceeded with was in March 2002 when the data was received from the 2001 decennial census. So the next one will occur in

March 2012, so every 10 years.

In Saskatchewan we have found a quirk inasmuch as we have a very tight variance as a result of a court case back, many years back. Most Canadian jurisdictions, provincial and federal, would have a variance of plus or minus 25 per cent of population of a quota that is determined once it's divided. That would allow you certainly to follow RM boundaries. But in Saskatchewan our variance is 5 per cent, so therefore is extremely tight, particularly in rural areas. You have to cover large areas, and then at some point in time you have to stop because you've got your quota. And that's why, you know, we are no longer following the RMs; we're following sections of land.

The Chair: — When you talk about variance, wasn't there a time period where the variance or the calculation was based on electoral voter versus population?

Mr. Ouellet: — Not to my knowledge. It was always on census data. But the variance was plus/minus 25 and therefore it's very different. So 5 per cent is a very, very difficult task.

The Chair: — Right.

A Member: — Except for the two northern . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Yes, the northern ones are never touched.

The Chair: — Right, that's correct. I have one final question, and I guess . . . And I'm not sure if my colleagues are the same way, but I just want to make sure we're clear. When we're looking at the overall budget, what's your overall budget request for this year? Is it that 4.5 on page 27? Are we looking at the right . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — That would be on page 22. The bottom line is 1,298,825. These are not all expenses. The actual expense is 1,213,825. The other one is the capital. You need funding for capital assets acquisition.

The Chair: — On page 27, you're saying the 4.5 . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Page 22. Sorry. Page 22.

The Chair: — Okay. Page 22. This is your actual request — 1.2?

Mr. Ouellet: — 1.298,825. Correct. That's the funding.

The Chair: — And so what's the 4.570 on 27?

Mr. Ouellet: — On page? I'm sorry.

The Chair: — 27.

Mr. Ouellet: — 27. That would be the cost of a referendum. We provide estimates for various electoral events just for the information of the board. We've provided a cost estimate for a by-election, provide cost estimate for a time vote. We also provide cost estimate for a plebiscite.

Not included in this particular one is an estimate for a general

election, since none are likely to be occurring during this fiscal year now that we know we have permanent date of elections. So we're not requesting 4.5 million.

The Chair: — So the item on page 24 would be an estimate of what it'd cost to prepare yourself for a by-election then?

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct. More or less, that's correct.

The Chair: — So one point two nine eight two five is what you're basically looking for in this year's budget request.

Mr. Ouellet: — That is correct, sir.

The Chair: — And how does . . . Of course that's difficult to ask how does that compare to last year because we were into an election this past year. But how would it compare to other non-election years?

Mr. Ouellet: — Generally our operational budget is usually somewhere around between 800 and 1 million, depending on, obviously, the needs.

The Chair: — Okay. So if we're talking between 8 and 1 . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Yes.

The Chair: — And you're at 1.2. What are the significant costs this year, just . . .

Mr. Ouellet: — Well some of the costs are already identified in the election preparation estimates. That's \$143,000. There's also the new position that is created, creates a \$60,000 difference. So there's your 200,000 right there.

The Chair: — Thank you. One of my colleagues talked about returning officers, or the current committee members. The current number of returning officers, do many of those returning officers stay on? Or once the election's over and they file their report from their constituency, they step aside. Or I guess what I'm asking is what the costs are. How many stay around? You probably wouldn't mind if a few more would become involved just to keep some continuity, but I guess my question is, how many would continue to be involved and helping coordinate through your office preparing for the next election?

Mr. Ouellet: — Sure. They tend to stay till the year of the election because we offer a stipend every year. So obviously they have some interest. We have 58 returning officers, reflecting our 58 constituencies. Prior to the last general election we replaced 31, I believe, so that's about half I guess. We will lose a few again this time because, as I say, it's a question of age. We have some that have been there over and over for quite some time and, you know, it's hard to predict how many. We shall see. We're here to make them up to par, to train them, and to make them available to conduct electoral events at any time.

Mr. Wilkie: — Under the legislation they're in place until the next boundaries commission changes unless they don't do their job well or they resign or move out of the constituency.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Any further questions from the committee members? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Go ahead, Mr. Yates.

The Chair: — Okay. Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The final figure of 1,298,825, how much additional dollars does that reflect over the actual request for 2007-08 that was approved? I want to make sure my math is correct.

Mr. Ouellet: — It's about . . . Let me look. Bear with me.

Mr. Yates: — I'm talking about '07-08 approved by the Board of Internal Economy and the '08-09 request, the difference in dollars.

Mr. Ouellet: — If you look at on page 4, where we compare the original 2007-08, the revised from the board and the estimates, is where you would see the difference and where they occur.

Mr. Yates: — Correct. I've done the math; I just wanted you to put the number on the record. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Correct me if I'm wrong, Monsieur Ouellet. At the end of the day your budget is statutory.

Mr. Ouellet: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — And so what you spend is what we pay even though we may agree or disagree over the individual budget items. Is that not the case?

Mr. Ouellet: — Over time, the office has respected the wish of the Board of Internal Economy. We try not to overspend. Unless there is really an emergency or some unforeseen circumstances, we respect the board.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I just wanted it clear to anyone who might be listening though that you can run an election, pay the bills, whatever the case may be to do it properly, and that the board at the end of the day approves those budgets.

Mr. Ouellet: — But the board may accelerate my retirement, that's the danger.

The Chair: — Well I have one further question, if there are no other questions. You talk about a review of the election and how it went over. In that review as well, will you be making some inquiries regarding the returns of candidates? I know there were a number of questions and different MLAs or different candidates were struggling to understand exactly what the office was expecting of them in filing their returns.

And I think it certainly seemed to me that even though I had a gentleman I think was quite knowledgeable, had done it once before, years ago there were a lot of questions that were back

and forth, and I was raising as well. And so I'm hoping that we can simplify the process and there is a very clear outline of what is required of candidates when it comes to candidate expenses. So will that be part of what you're trying to put together as well in your review?

Mr. Ouellet: — Absolutely. This time, prior to the filing of the returns by the candidates, various candidates, we did provide our business managers and the candidates as well with the lessons learned — where the pitfalls may occur in filing the candidate's return. That was the first time we did that. Obviously there's room to revise our guides, make them more user-friendly, certainly. We have time to do that now.

Mr. Wilkie: — The request to do a review of the electronic filing system is also that currently, because it's all done manually, sometimes there's just simple math errors that complicate things. So if it's all done in an electronic format, it should make it a lot easier for candidates and business managers to complete them. So that's something that a lot of provinces have done. That's what we look forward to doing if that's approved.

The Chair: — Seeing no further questions from committee members, thank you, Mr. Ouellet and Dave and Brent, your staff, for coming and sharing your budget with us this year.

Mr. Ouellet: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — If I could have your attention for one . . . But seeing as it's just shortly after 10, I understand Mr. Dickson has . . . Do you have a PowerPoint presentation you're going to be preparing for us?

Mr. Dickson: — I do, with your leave, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Okay, that's fine. Maybe we'll just take a quick 5-minute, 10-minute break. Five minutes might be too short. Ten minutes pronto and we'd like Mr. Dickson to get ready. Thank you.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

The Chair: — If I could have the members' attention. And we've got a couple that should be joining us shortly, but we don't certainly want to keep our guests waiting as well. First of all we'll now move on to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and pleased to have with us Mr. Gary Dickson. And I'll ask him to introduce his staff. I think we know them already, but so we all know who they are. And then please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Dickson: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, and good morning to members of the committee. With me this morning, firstly on my left, is Pamela Scott, who is our manager of administration. She has brought her trusty calculator to help me answer the tough questions with respect to finances and the financial part of our office. On my right is Diane Aldridge, who is our director of compliance. And she's here to help with some of the substantive questions about the work of our office.

I thought this would be an excellent opportunity also, Mr. Chairman, to introduce to the committee . . . We have three other members of our staff here. We have Kara Philip, who is an administrative coordinator, behind me — and I'll ask her to at least wave as I call out your name — and our two newest portfolio officers, Angela Markel and Cam Moore. Angela is a graduate of the College of Law at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and we've recently managed to repatriate her from Edmonton where she was working with Alberta Municipal Affairs. Cam Moore has just very recently retired after a distinguished career with the Moose Jaw Police Service. So our office is much stronger with the addition of these two new portfolio officers.

After four full years as Saskatchewan's first full-time Information and Privacy Commissioner, I guess this is also my fifth appearance in front of the board. Since this is a new board with some new members, I intend to offer some context before turning to the specific dollars in our appropriation request. And in a moment I've got a couple of slides I will show you. You've already seen them in the budget booklet but it may be easier that we're all looking at the same slide at the same time.

I've worked in this area, Mr. Chairman, for a number of years. And one of the things that I find remarkable is both the scope and complexity of the statutory mandate that's defined by the three particular laws that my office oversees: the first one, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or FOIP [freedom of information and protection of privacy] for short; the second being The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or LAFOIP; and the third one being The Health Information Protection Act or HIPA.

It's interesting — the Supreme Court of Canada, in a number of landmark decisions, has described these laws as special kinds of laws because they actually define democratic rights of citizens. They've been described by the court as quasi-constitutional and generally when they conflict with any other legislation, with a few exceptions they are paramount.

The other thing that's remarkable in Saskatchewan is the scope of our mandate. It's very broad. We oversee more than 3,000 different Saskatchewan organizations. At the provincial level that would be all of the ministries in executive government, all of the Crown corporations, all of the provincial boards, commissions, and agencies.

At the local level that would include municipalities, regional health authorities, schools and school divisions, libraries and library boards. And then as a consequence of HIPA, we oversee many, many, many health information trustees. You think of every physician in his or her private office — and it may be a pharmacist, a dentist, a psychologist, a physiotherapist. We have — and Mr. Taylor may remember better than I — but we must have well over a dozen different health colleges and disciplines, professions. And each one of those professionals or health care providers in their particular office then is a separate trustee. So that's how we get over 3,000. In fact on page 26 of the estimates booklet we've listed them, because it does tend to be a long list.

And that's not to forget we can't simply focus on those 3,000 organizations because we're explicitly mandated to provide

direct service to your constituents. If your constituents have concerns that their privacy has not been respected, if they're unhappy with a decision by a public body to deny us access, they're entitled and we're mandated to respond to those complaints and requests.

And I might add, over four years what we've seen are the people in our province are becoming increasingly engaged with access and privacy issues. The last week I've been doing my turn at doing intake, if you will. And I'm still impressed with the fact that to get 10 to 12 calls in a single business day from your constituents or maybe people working in public bodies trying to figure out what is . . . What we've created is a fairly complex web of privacy laws and regulation. That's time then not available to do some other things.

My mandate is particularized on pages 1 and 2 of our estimates booklet. You'll find 12 bullets there, but let me quickly summarize them, if I can, in four points. This is what we're mandated to do.

The first one would be, at the request of your constituents, to review the decision of one of those 3,000-odd bodies I've mentioned to deny your constituent access to some public records. We have very broad powers in terms of being able to take evidence under oath. We get to see virtually all documents. We apply the law. We hear from both sides. We always drive to try and find a mediated or a negotiated settlement and in over 80 per cent of our cases, we're successful in doing that. In those cases where we can't, for a variety of reasons, then we publish a full-text report on our website with our specific findings and our specific recommendations.

The second part, the second summary of our mandate would be this. When your constituents feel that their privacy has been violated by a Crown corporation, a Crown utility, or the local school division, or any of those other bodies I've identified, they similarly have a right to complain to us, and we have a parallel process to do the investigation.

Once again, heavy emphasis on trying to mediate these matters and resolve them informally. And as I say, it's a tribute to Ms. Aldridge and her staff that the portfolio officers at most cases were able to do that. And there's a report if we're unsuccessful.

The third summary point of our mandate, Mr. Chairman and members, would be education. We have provided in the last four years over 500 education presentations in more than 30 different Saskatchewan communities. I can give you an example of how that goes.

Just before Christmas I went to Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region and so we went to the health centre and we provided a HIPA orientation and presentation to health care workers in their health centre. We then had a second separate presentation with a little different focus to their privacy team and their senior administrators. We then had a neat opportunity to meet with the full board of the health region and their senior administrator and give them a somewhat different presentation and respond to their questions. And they had lots of them.

Since we were in La Ronge, what we also then did is we met with the Northern Lights School Division board and their senior

managers and provided a presentation on LAFOIP, the law that bites as far as they are concerned. Then we went across town; we did a presentation to the town manager and the senior administrators at the town of La Ronge. And then before we left, we met with the two individuals at Northlands College who manage LAFOIP and access and privacy responsibilities.

In addition, in terms of education we produce a free newsletter. We've now I think put out 47 different issues, all archived on our website.

Our website has turned out to be an enormously useful resource. Sometimes when somebody will ask me, so do people in Saskatchewan care about privacy or access, I'm pleased to point out to them that in 2007 our website attracted 254,000 hits. What's interesting is that's a 30 per cent increase over what we'd received in the calendar year 2006.

And actually on page 15 of the booklet, there's a number of stats in terms of how long people visit and how many are visitors, and unique visitors, and so on. So that's detailed in your estimates booklet. But my point is just that there is considerable public interest and your constituents certainly have plenty of questions.

The fourth and final summary point in terms of our mandate would be this: it's what I'll describe as advice in commentary. This is in most cases working with public bodies — 3,000-odd public bodies — most often in a proactive way to encourage building and better access and privacy features.

And you know, one of the best examples I can offer, seeing the former minister of Health here, is we had a very successful collaboration with Saskatchewan Health on The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act. We were able to work with people in the department to build in significantly enhanced privacy and access features for the benefit of young people and their parents, and that was reflected in the amending Bill that was passed last year.

So we have more and more of those kinds of files. So instead of waiting for problems to come up after the fact, it's really rolling up our sleeves, working with public bodies who in our experience really want to do a better job. Sometimes it's useful to have some help. We do have some expertise. I think we're the one office in the province that in this narrow niche this is all we do — access and privacy day in and day out.

I should just say, you will have seen . . . We send letters, we send reports to the Assembly. And I just want to be clear. We always are mindful and respectful of the fact the legislature is a sovereign body; MLAs have been elected to make the tough decisions of legislation and on privacy. Our concern is making sure that MLAs have the benefit of whatever advice we may be able to provide that's relevant as they're wrestling with those tough questions and before they make those decisions. But at the end of the day, it's for the legislature to deal with those matters as they see fit.

This slide simply shows some recent headlines that you've seen in print media in Saskatchewan that relate to access and privacy issues. What I wanted to do now is spend a minute telling you I think we can predict what some of the headlines are going to be

in 2008 and 2009. We see some trends appearing and it means we have to be able to respond to those. They're certainly going to impact our business plan.

Some of these relatively new and uncharted issues . . . Let me give you the example under HIPA of orphaned health records. We had in last few months a physician who died after practising in one area for about 30 years. At the time of death he leaves in his office and in his building several thousand of patient records, all of the people he's treated in a large area over that lengthy period of time.

What happens is we're inundated from calls from constituents concerned about what's going to happen to records, the rumour they're all going to be just tossed in the garbage bin or are they going to be destroyed. Some people want access to those records. So we worked with the college. We worked with the regional health authority to track down the legal representative of the estate, who's in another province. We had to remind that individual that HIPA still bites even if you're not a physician. The college has no jurisdiction over them but HIPA does. We pointed out very substantial fines that exist in HIPA for non-compliance. And then in a constructive way we've worked with that executor to develop a plan to ensure the records are firstly safe, that they will continue to be safe, that they'll be available to constituents who want access to those records, who want to correct errors.

What's more, we've identified, as more physicians die, retire, and move from our province, this will be an ongoing issue, so we've offered some advice to the Minister of Health in terms of how to deal with orphaned records appropriately on a province-wide basis rather than dealing with them just one-off.

Another example, Minister D'Autremont in his portfolio has, seems to me, kind of a front-row seat on the explosion in information technology that's going on not just in Saskatchewan but right across the country. And I have to tell you we struggle, but we need to struggle to keep abreast of new technology, whether it's radio frequency, r.f. ID, radio frequency identification tags. We have a municipality that's looking at GPS [global positioning system] to track their municipal vehicles. We have cheaper video surveillance techniques that then become more popular. We have the development of something called patient portals that will give patients a new measure of control over some of their information, potentially. Somehow we have to keep pace with these new developments. Coupled with that there's a growing awareness on the part of people in Saskatchewan around privacy and I think heightened expectations of your constituents that they want their privacy protected.

And then the last thing that I think is going to generate headlines in the future — and we will all be wrestling with you as legislators, us as an oversight office — is tied in with the development of electronic health record. I can tell you that this combines the complexity of information technology with a fairly tricky piece of legislation, in other words HIPA. It also highlights the fact that HIPA actually was designed for a model which we no longer have for health records.

Back in 1997 when we were expecting SHIN [Saskatchewan Health Information Network] was going to have one centralized

database for all our health records, we built our HIPA around that in terms of an accountability model and so on. That's no longer the case. We now have this distributed database of personal health information which means we have to invent a new definition and a new approach in terms of accountability on the part of trustees.

And I can just tell you last Wednesday I joined for a half day with the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority that was meeting in P.A. [Prince Albert]; I joined them by a video link. They were sitting down with a privacy officer from Sask Health, band council representatives, a host of consultants, technology people, and imagine the challenges that come up trying to sort out that electronic health record and the HIPA piece, and then the constitutional issue around First Nations and how we manage the privacy piece for First Nations members and throughout northern Saskatchewan, at the same we're rolling out what is a pretty complex piece of technology.

Our 2008-09 appropriation request is based on our three-year business plan. Mr. Chairman and members, we delivered to MLAs in early January a revised version of our business plan. I'm coming up to the end of my five-year term, so the business plan only goes from 2007 to 2009. It sets out the five core businesses which are already defined by our three statutes. We set out 12 goals and we set up 56 performance measures. I think this is really important Mr. Chairman, because it's sometimes difficult, I think, for the board to evaluate what we're doing — whether we're doing an appropriate job, whether we're delivering those things that we said we'd be delivering the last year. And so we attach a lot of importance to this. We rely on feedback from MLAs, and we've certainly got it with our past iterations of that report. As of December 31 of '07 — so this is the first nine months of the fiscal year we're finishing up — I can tell you we exceeded one of our key performance measures. We achieved 13 others. We partially achieved five, and we're unlikely to achieve eight, and that's all set out in our plan.

Of greatest concern to me, and I expect to the members, would be we have a backlog of 168 reviews and investigations, and that's set out in detail on pages 11 and 19 of our plan. I'd be happy to go through and explain how we've got to that, what that backlog is made up of, and some of our specific ideas to manage that. But that's a concern. And when I talk about 168 reviews and investigations, some of those investigations were started three years ago.

So I mean it's obvious we're here to talk about our budget appropriation request, but I think what's also important to recognize: whatever decisions are made, they directly impact that service to your constituents. And I guess, we've come up with a plan. We don't think — and in fact I've shared this with the board before — we don't think your constituents should wait longer than five months for most of our access reviews to be completed. We think that's a reasonable period of time. In some provinces it's considerably shorter, but we think that's a reasonable kind of goal. That's what we've been working towards the last couple of years.

Now if we look at this — is it slide 4? — this slide, it just helps, I think, explain where the requests come to our office for service. You will see the biggest part of the graph described as inquiries. That's really when your constituents pick up the

phone or send us an email and say, you know, I want to know if I'm under The Mental Health Services Act. Do I have a right to access my daughter's health record or my health record?

Some of the calls actually are easy to deal with. They've got the wrong office. We send them off to the federal privacy commissioner. Some of the calls are simply, how do they get a copy of the FOIP Act or what's our mailing address to send a request. Some of them, though, tend to be particularly thorny.

To be an inquiry, it's something that we can resolve within 24 hours, and so typically most of them we just deal with over the phone because our portfolio officers are well trained and they can provide that kind of turnaround. The bulk of our work is really in the four small pieces of the pie, and those really correspond to the four pieces of the mandate I'd summarized earlier.

If we go to the next slide, this is to give you kind of a sense just in terms of the inquiries, the volume of calls we're getting from your constituents and from public bodies and trustees. If you look to the far right, that bar for 2007-2008, you could add to that, I think . . . What are we up to now?

A Member: — Usually another 250.

Mr. Dickson: — Yes, there'd be about another 250 inquiries that would be added to that graph. So it still is an increasing demand on our office for service.

If we go to the next slide this is . . . When your constituents call in, what kinds of things are they raising, what kinds of things are they talking about? And you can see there we refer to the four pieces of legislation that we have. Sometimes people . . . We've made it actually quite complex in Saskatchewan because all our government institutions are subject to both HIPA and FOIP at exactly the same time. So we're doing a WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] investigation, we sort of have to do one analysis on FOIP and then another analysis on the responsibilities under HIPA, and they're quite different.

So privacy is often more general where you've got a couple of different statutes involved. General would be more often questions about our office and our procedures and operations. Okay. Next slide please.

Now we open lots of files in our office and I know some of my colleagues in other jurisdictions, when they come in front of the counterpart of the board, they're talking about every file they've opened. The only files we tend to talk about here are two kinds of files. One, if we do a formal request for review on an access denial, we talk about that as being a formal review file. When we open a formal investigation file to respond to a breach of privacy complaint, that's a formal investigation file.

So I don't want anybody thinking this is the extent of the files we open — just these tend to be the biggies. These are the ones that involve a lot of time and effort. It also doesn't reflect single complainants. When we did the prevention program for cervical cancer report a couple of years ago — we had over 100 women that had concerns about that — that was really one file in our office. So I just make that point.

If you look at the 67, so those were files opened so far in this fiscal year. But then you have to recognize we have over another 100 files not opened in this current year, but that have been carried forward from the last three years. So when I talk about a backlog of 168, I suppose to be clear, that would also include files opened in the current year. Probably shouldn't be discussed as part of the backlog, but from our perspective they're all people looking for responses and answers.

And as I've suggested before, one of the troubling parts is we find some of your constituents who are in the middle of a WCB claim. They're in the middle of a program of health treatment and they raise a complaint with us. And then they say well, but I need a response before I go back to see the specialist or I'm not going to continue with . . . I won't share this with WCB until we get this resolved.

I have to tell those constituents of yours there's no way we're going to be able to turn this thing around in 30 days, 60 days, 90 days. I tell people I don't want anybody to compromise their care by forgoing treatment, postponing seeing appropriate health care providers. But then they will say to me, quite fairly, well what's . . . How much help is it to get a response after the information is already gone and they have access to all kinds of information I don't think they should see? So it's something we continue to wrestle with and it's when I think of the consequences with that backlog and as the backlog gets larger.

So this is just a breakdown in terms of those two kinds of files we open. And you can see here the largest number deal with access request decisions under FOIP.

The next largest — and this is a fairly new development — investigations under HIPA, 27 per cent of those files. That's been a significant increase. And you know, I think all members appreciate health information. It's sensitive. It's prejudicial. There's probably more people that legitimately need access to health information than anything, any other kind of information. I mean, we want information to be shared appropriately between our provider and the specialist and the lab and the pharmacist and all of those folks. But it just generates lots of questions.

We've never done in Saskatchewan what's been done in other provinces, and that's produce a comprehensive manual with decision trees and checklists and specimen forms, to make it really simple for harried and busy health care workers to understand exactly what all of those provisions, general provisions in HIPA, mean. That's one of the reasons why I think we have a high number of HIPA breach of privacy investigations. So anyway, that's really just to give a bit of a flavour in terms of what's happening there.

The next slide I've already, I think, previewed. Eighty-three per cent of these formal files that we're doing are resolved through mediation. And as I've said to the board before, we'd like to be 90 per cent. I mean that's, you know, I think the way we want to resolve those things.

We can dismiss requests for review that are frivolous and vexatious and that's the 3 per cent that we can say, look this is just we think an abuse of the process; we're just not going to deal with it. And then 14 per cent of cases we're issuing reports.

I can tell you what's interesting enough. In the first few years we were here, it all seemed very warm and very collaborative. We were working with trustees and public bodies in terms of how to build up things that you do to build up their capacity, and were talking about best practices.

As time goes on, then in fact you find you get some push-back from some bodies that say, thanks very much, Dickson, for the information but you're only an ombudsman. You can only make recommendations. We don't like this; we're going a different path.

So those are the kinds of cases we're issuing a report where public bodies are in fact not responding. We do track that in our annual report and that's kind of one of the foci in the report.

So this is our org chart right now in our office. With the staffing, I think once our three portfolio officers . . . We have another portfolio officer in addition to the two I've introduced to you in the room who has been on extended leave. She'll be coming back though in '08-09, so we'll have our three portfolio officers. Hopefully they'll be fully trained up.

It takes, in our experience, about seven to ten months. You simply cannot find people in Saskatchewan that have the kind of expertise in terms of access and privacy. And public bodies have found this too, Mr. Chairman, in trying to find FOIP and HIPA coordinators. So it's a question of an intensive training program internally once we hire those people.

We think that we can make some real progress in terms of our backlog of 100 and plus files but we certainly can't achieve the goal that we've been talking about, which is turning around 80 per cent of the reviews in five months, 70 per cent of the investigations . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's that? Oh, 60 per cent of the investigations in the same five months. That's just because breach of privacy complaints, each one is different or more complicated.

And so then the next slide is, this is what our office would look like if we received what we're asking for. You will see two new positions, and those are research intake officers. Up to this point in our past business plans, we'd said we needed a fourth portfolio officer. We've decided, and the recommendation from our director of compliance is, we actually would be further ahead to simply to make the existing portfolio officers more efficient by having two research intake officers that would be able to do work to, frankly to better leverage the higher level of training and experience that portfolio officers would have.

And then the other new position is an administrative support position. As we produce more reports, we do more investigations. You will have seen, I think, some of these reports are long. Our WCB report that was delivered of the House, it was probably 70 pages long. These things take some time to produce. It means there's more work required at the front end in terms of formatting them, copying them, all of those kinds of things.

This slide is . . . the only reason this is on is I remember Minister D'Autremont, when he used to be on the board, often would ask questions about how do we compare with other jurisdictions. And this isn't to say we have to follow anybody

else's path — this is a unique province — but I thought members might be interested to see. If you look at British Columbia . . . So we looked at the other Western provinces and the one Eastern province that's a comparable size in terms of their office. So British Columbia, they oversee . . . And this is a change I think in the handout. It only showed BC [British Columbia] commissioner having one privacy law. In fact they have a private sector law, PIPA, the Personal Information Protection Act, and FOIP. Interestingly they have no health information Act in British Columbia and that's the thing that makes for the greatest amount of work.

Alberta, they have 34.5 per cent individuals, FTEs, and they oversee both FOIP and a law like ours, a health information law. They have a separate office in Calgary with five people in it managing their personal information protection, so almost 40 people managing that caseload.

Manitoba's interesting. When I first came before the board four years ago, we looked at the Manitoba ombudsman office because they actually have within their ombudsman office an access and privacy division, if you will. They had, I think, 11 or 12 people then in the ombudsman office doing access and privacy work; it's now 17. And they have a mandate similar to ours. They have a FOIP Act and they have a health information law.

Newfoundland and Labrador fascinates me. They have only one law, a FOIP law. They have no health information law and the privacy complaint law, it was only proclaimed in January. So they have seven people to do just the access piece. They've been advised they'll have two more people when their health information law comes into force later in this next year, in '08. And then Saskatchewan, with the seven people which we have now to oversee three different laws. So I think it's just up there to make the point that we have actually one of the largest mandates in terms of what we cover with one of the smallest offices.

It may be of some interest to you that when the British Columbia standing committee, which is your counterpart in BC, met just two months ago — and this means a revision to the BC number — the standing committee concluded that, and I quote: "It is important that the OIPC has adequate resources to handle its [and I emphasize] complex caseload and so endorses the request for additional staff." So they added two and a half new staff to the 21.5 that you see at the top, for a total of 24 — obviously, a bigger province.

So I'm not suggesting this is of any value other than it gives you some sense of the change and the fact that it's not unique. What I'm telling you isn't unique to our province, that all of oversight offices are also bedevilled with the complexity that comes along with health information and new privacy technology.

So finally, let me just quickly move. Page 17 of our booklet is the estimates summary. It's graphed on the next page. Personal services continues to be the biggest part of our budget. It's 70 per cent of our budget. What we're asking the board for is one full-time administrative assistant, two full-time research intake officers. This is in lieu of the portfolio officer that we discussed and the board seemed interested in a year ago. And we have an

opportunity to take some additional office space — 80 square metres — so that in fact what would be new.

The board's often interested in status quo. I just say, when you look at what the budget was last year, recognize we had one person who was on an extended leave, and we actually carved that out of our estimates last year to prune because we knew that person would not be in the office for that period of time. Where if people are interested in determining what the status quo is, then we've summarized that on page 17. So you can see it would be the middle box, if you will, on that page.

But we clearly acknowledge it's a substantial increase, and we're mindful of that. My view of this is it's always for the board to determine what's reasonable, given the much bigger context they have. My job, I think, is to come in and tell you this is the mandate I've got. This is what our office has determined is what we require to be able to meet our mandate and meet those performance measures that we've been discussing with the Assembly for the last three years.

The one other thing, this year for the first time ever our office will host the federal-provincial-territorial commissioners from across Canada. The summit is going to be in Regina in June. Our hope is that there'll be an opportunity for the board to come and meet our colleagues from across the country. They're fascinating people.

We'll be charging a registration fee to those attendees that should offset the cost. We have though booked in an \$8,000 item in terms of the hosting costs. Our intention is to recover that and then that would be directed to the Finance department, but that's an additional item.

Anyway, I'm sorry. I went on a long time, Mr. Chairman, but I recognize, given what we're asking for, members would want a fuller explanation.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Dickson. I'll recognize Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first question has to do with if we were to maintain a status quo FTE number, what percentage of the salary increase that you're asking for is, you know, salary increases for the 4 per cent increase and your tie to the management plan?

Mr. Dickson: — We are and we really have no control over those numbers. We simply go with what's determined by government.

Mr. Yates: — I'm just wondering what those numbers are.

Mr. Dickson: — Do we have that number?

Mr. Yates: — We need to have that.

Mr. Dickson: — Okay. So what I'm advised, Mr. Yates, is the status quo, if we built back in what I'd requested — the portfolio officer has been away on leave — if that was built back in we'd be looking at \$799,928.

Mr. Yates: — Seven hundred and ninety-nine thousand?

Mr. Dickson: — Yes.

Mr. Yates: — That's greater than your total request.

Ms. Scott: — That's the overall.

Mr. Yates: — No, I'm looking for the actual numbers that that represents, the increase represents — the 4 per cent that's coming and the salary increases in this budget year — not your overall.

Ms. Scott: — We've only added the 4 per cent cost-of-living increase to the existing salaries that we have in existence today. So our seven FTEs that we have currently, we have added 4 per cent.

Mr. Yates: — So it would be 462,446 plus 4 per cent. I can do the math if that's what it is. Okay.

Ms. Scott: — And we've also included two of our employees a merit increase.

Mr. Yates: — Two what?

Ms. Scott: — Two employees would receive a merit increase as well.

Mr. Yates: — So what's the total dollars of that? Is it \$10,000? Is it . . .

Ms. Scott: — The total dollars for personnel would be 593,753 at status quo.

Mr. Yates: — And that's including the portfolio officer. That 73,000 . . .

Ms. Scott: — That's correct.

Mr. Yates: — My next question goes to that portfolio officer position. Is it your understanding that that position was removed from last year's budget from the total budget that we approved, that those dollars were out of it for that portfolio officer?

Mr. Dickson: — No, no, no. I mean when I mentioned the fact that the board had discussed the additional portfolio officer, I recall asking . . . saying we would like an additional portfolio officer, but our decision was we hadn't asked for that fourth portfolio officer. What we said was we would be back in 2008-2009 looking for that fourth portfolio officer. I'm not sure I'm being responsive to your question.

Mr. Yates: — My question is regarding the position on leave.

Mr. Dickson: — Right.

Mr. Yates: — In the approval of last year's budget, is it your understanding that that salary was removed from what was approved?

Mr. Dickson: — It was. In fact the acting manager of administration who was here and had actually taken that out of the salary for the 2007-2008 fiscal.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much. And could I get from you what the anticipated salaries would be for the research intake officers and the administrative assistant, what the breakdown is.

Mr. Dickson: — I should tell you we haven't yet gone to the process we always do which is we've used the consultant that advises the Legislative Assembly Office on job classification. So we haven't done that. But I think our thinking now would be . . . Okay, the portfolio officers, I think what we're projecting . . .

Ms. Scott: — Research officers.

Mr. Dickson: — Or sorry, the research intake officers we're projecting at, with benefits, at \$52,000. Is that . . .

Ms. Scott: — That's correct.

Mr. Dickson: — And then the new administrative person, 38,596 or \$39,000.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. That's all my questions at this time.

The Chair: — I recognize Ms. Harpauer.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the committee. I have a couple of questions. One is, you had a bar chart of inquiries in a year and the increases that you're seeing there. Would you have a percentage breakdown of how many would be private individuals that have requests? And the others would be, I'm assuming, corporations, perhaps government entities, etc. So how many would actually be private individuals as opposed to other?

Mr. Dickson: — I should tell you that in the first years we didn't keep track of that statistic. I mean we were just taking the calls as they came. We've now started . . . Actually Ms. Aldridge has now. We now graph it out and so we determine whether it's, whether they're MLAs, whether they're, you know, different groups. So we graph that now. We didn't sort of over the history of the office. So we started in May. So we don't have a full year yet of those statistics. I don't know. Do we have a . . . This is just a ballpark. I mean I haven't seen the numbers and maybe they'll prove my sense is wrong, but I would think that approximately half of those inquiries that come to our office are from individuals.

Now keep in mind that inquiries, the idea is to turn them around quickly. We don't ask so many . . . I mean somebody phones and says, look I've got a question. Does HIPA apply in this circumstance? Does FOIP apply? We're not typically sort of giving them . . . asking a bunch of questions about, where do you work, what kind of organization you're part of. We just take the information and turn it around. So there may well be individuals calling on behalf of an organization and I'm not sure we're always going to know that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — When you started tracking the breakdown of who your clients were or who was contacting your office, for those files that weren't just a quick phone call for information — that you actually had to do some work on —

would you also have a breakdown of those files, percentage for individuals and percentage for organizations, corporations, etc.?

Mr. Dickson: — Yes. And I should just stress we don't typically provide advice to corporations because they're covered under the federal privacy law, other than Crown corporations of course that are treated just like government ministries. The one exception would be some corporations that are involved and do contract work for public bodies, and then any information they've got that would be covered by the contract would be deemed to be under the control of the public body. So that would be the one time we'd be dealing with those corporations.

But what we do, if it can't be done as an inquiry in less than an hour of research, then typically we describe those as detailed advice and commentary. And so we'd open a file for that. I think in the last year, up to the end of December, it would be about 70, would be the number of detailed advice and commentary files that would be handled in that way.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And again, of those 70, did you start tracking the breakdown of how many were individuals, how many were organizations?

Mr. Dickson: — Well that would almost be exclusively some of the 3,000 bodies that we oversee. I mean, our experience is individual questions are usually very simple to answer and turn around. They're just trying to find what law applies.

The really complicated questions are served up by health trustees. We're in an area where the law is still being made. I mean, there frankly aren't always a lot of answers and so a lot of those things we're dealing with we have to spend some time scratching our heads, consulting with what's going on across the country. We look at court decisions.

You know, we're trying to decide what's an appropriate disposition, so those cases are almost exclusively some of those 3,000 bodies we oversee. That's where that work comes from. It's very, very rare that we'd ever have an individual raise such a tough question that one of our portfolio officers couldn't respond to it within 72 hours.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The other question I have is in a totally different area, and it goes to your estimates summary. Can you give an explanation of the contractual services, that item in the budget?

Mr. Dickson: — You bet. The biggest part of the contractual services I think would be our rent for office space. I mean, after our salary, that's the next biggest cost. One of the things we've done, we've actually cut out some of those costs. When I started, there used to be provision to hire solicitors, and that sort of thing we've eliminated. So we're actually not hiring other contractors other than the individual that comes in to help us classify a job position. That would be under contractual services. But it's really almost exclusively rent, photocopier rental, rent of some computer equipment, that sort of thing.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And the final area is for equipment and fixed assets. You're asking for a substantial increase in that area. If I could have a further explanation for that.

Mr. Dickson: — What happens is we have a wonderful arrangement, from our standpoint, with the Legislative Assembly Office — that they actually, they consult with us in terms of our IT [information technology] needs. And part of the arrangement in working with LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] is making sure that we're using the same equipment that the LAS is buying. It's easier for them too, in terms of maintenance and service and that kind of thing. So we have some recommendations in terms of what kind of equipment.

The other item would be — and so we would require some new desktops — the other thing would be, we'd have some one-time leasehold improvements. If the board gave us what we're asking for, we'd be taking on some additional space. If the board didn't give us that, and gave us one or two positions instead of three, then there would probably be some leasehold improvements, so that is factored in there. So one-time leasehold improvements would be part of that equipment and fixed assets item.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. You mentioned in your presentation and in of course your written information that you have supplied us, that you're having quite a difficulty dealing with the backlog of files, and investigation, and formal reviews. In the investigation area, what, as far as backlog, what kind of time frame do you have as far as perhaps some of the longest times or cases that are waiting for resolution? And my questions are more so pertaining to individuals who you have been doing some investigation on behalf of individuals — as you mentioned earlier, people that are dealing with agencies such as Workers' Compensation and other agencies. You know, there is some privacy matters. How long are these people waiting for some decisions by your agency?

Mr. Dickson: — I can come at it this way: I could suggest, I think, Mr. Hart, when I look at the way we've graphed it, of that 168 files I've been speaking about, 22 of them were opened in '04-05. And of those, 20 of the 22 were access to information reviews, two of them were breach of privacy. So most of the privacy ones from 2004-05 have been resolved. Actually we've closed a lot of files. I mean the total number of files, I should just say, opened over the whole time up to the end of December in our office was 494, and we've closed 326.

But to get back, so 22 in '04-05. Thirty-five files are still open from '05-06, and that would be 24 access reviews and 11 breach of privacy complaints. In 2006-2007 we have 52 files outstanding — 32 of them relate to access to information 20 of them breach of privacy. Breach of privacy is always an individual. Corporations don't have any right of privacy. Access to information may well be. I mean sometimes it's a municipality that uses the FOIP Act to get information about a government ministry.

Am I responding to your query?

Mr. Hart: — Yes, yes you are. Yes. So what I see here is that as we move forward from 2004, the number of breach of privacy cases that were raised by individuals is increasing, that

backlog is increasing. And I take it that is some of the justification you are giving to increase your staff to deal with that backlog. Now if the board was to grant the additional funding to increase the staff, have you done projections? Could you give us a bit of an indication of how quickly you feel you could bring that backlog or reduce that wait time, I guess, in resolution of these cases, particularly the investigation cases? I realize you'd have to talk on average because I'm sure each case is quite different and times would vary to deal with them.

Mr. Dickson: — Sure. I think the biggest factor there is with the new portfolio officers we've got, we have about another four months of training. This actually tends to be quite a specialized area. There's a lot to learn. We have a prescribed program people follow to get up to speed. So it'll be four months, if we were to get approval tomorrow, still four months before those new portfolio officers are going to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I beg your pardon? Well yes, before the portfolio officers and then the research intake officers are able to make a significant dent.

I think we have a number of files we're ready to close, we're hopeful we'll close yet. Our goal had always been within a year to try and eliminate as much of that backlog as possible. Certainly all of the breach of privacy investigations our hope would be to resolve within a year. The access to information we may just put aside because we want to get those privacy matters resolved. That's very soft. I'm sorry. It's a perfectly legitimate question. I think that certainly over two years the backlog will be eliminated and we'll be able to meet that turnaround that I'm suggesting is a reasonable benchmark.

Mr. Hart: — And that turnaround is about five months? Is that turnaround from time of . . . if you were in a perfect world, I guess.

Mr. Dickson: — That's right. Yes. Yes. We've said, and we recognize there will always be and recognize there are some things we have no control, because we don't have order-making power. Sometimes we're not always highest on the priority list of the public body in terms of, you know, having them give us submissions, things like that. Sometimes that takes some time, and because we always have tried to focus on the basis of collaboration and consultation and co-operation. When you're an ombudsman, what it's all about really is trying to build good relationships with these public bodies to be able to move the access and privacy agenda along. And that means sometimes it takes longer doing that than perhaps if we had order-making power and you could just say, either we have the stuff from you or we're going to proceed to issue a report.

The Chair: — We have further questions? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dickson, one of the issues that you have raised in the past has been the provision of names in automobile accident injury commission files. What's the status of that currently?

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much for the question. Actually I've just, within the last three or four months, had a very encouraging meeting with the board of the Automobile Injury Appeal Commission. And there's a new Chair. There's some new members on the commission. And my understanding

is that they are now looking very seriously at accepting what had been our core recommendation to just mask the name, take the name off. You can put all the rest of the report on their website for educational purposes but mask the identity of the complainant. And I guess we'd have to talk to the commission in terms of what they've decided.

But they had invited me to come back and review my report with them to answer their questions, so I'm actually quite encouraged after that meeting. I'm hopeful. To this date, you will still go to their website. You will still see full text reports with all of that health information, financial information indexed by name — Dickson, Gary and then all of my information. But I'm hopeful that we'll see some changes there.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you. Because like you, I had concerns in that particular area and didn't see any need for those names to be included in that file.

Mr. Dickson: — If I could just respond further and say I think it's really about awareness raising. And to be fair, we have lots of other administrative tribunals, and our office is encouraged. We see more and more public sector organizations that are, I think, becoming more comfortable with the privacy requirements in FOIP and HIPA and I think more sensitive to the risks that exist in 2008 to people's privacy if public bodies don't do a better job protecting it.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Do you get complaints or requests from clients that are unable to access their personal information from government entities?

Mr. Dickson: — Oh certainly. Certainly. I mean, people can make an access request for their personal information, or they could make an access to what we call general information. You know, some may want to find out has there been a feasibility study done on a uranium mine near my cabin — you know, that sort of thing.

And that's a significant part, I mean, those individuals making those requests. If you look at the access to information reviews: in 2004-05, there were nine; and '05-06, there were 16; and '06-07, there were 21; '07-08, there were 25 specific access to information reviews, I think virtually all of those from individuals.

And to be fair, I have to say, I mean, sometimes we find that they're not entitled to it. Sometimes we find that the public body had very appropriate reasons to deny somebody access. There are those exemptions in the Act. So yes, it's important to offer that balance.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Do you find situations where the ministries or the Crown corporations have been providing some information but not full information and that the clients in those cases should have been entitled to the full information?

Mr. Dickson: — Sure. Increasingly we find more often now public bodies, instead of withholding everything in a record, will now disclose some and withhold other. Sever, severing is what it's called in our world. So that becomes more frequent, which is a good thing, so at the least public bodies are now, whereas before they might have withheld the whole document,

at least they're applying some judgment to what can be shared and what cannot. But nonetheless, that still results in a request for us to review those as well.

Sometimes we find that what's being withheld should not have been withheld. A good example would be we did a major report involving the University of Saskatchewan, and it had to do with resignation letters from some members of the Research Ethics Board, the biomedical REB at the U of S. And we had recommended that some of the severing had been done we did not think was appropriate, but we also found some severing that was appropriate. So it sort of gets into a more granular kind of process in deciding what the Act allows you to withhold and what the Act requires should be disclosed to the applicant.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. In your budget estimates, you said to achieve a status quo budget. I wonder if you could define your understanding of the term status quo.

Mr. Dickson: — Well I think what we were thinking of was simply with the staff we currently have, with the portfolio officers, the administrative support people, and that one salary added back in that had been removed during her leave from office. Oh, also with the 4 per cent cost of living increase.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, that's the part I wanted to hear, because to me the term status quo means exactly the same.

Mr. Dickson: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Not the 4 per cent increase. And yet I'm finding in dealing with executive government, the status quo is not the same; it's the same plus.

Mr. Dickson: — I certainly didn't mean to mislead you. I think often, because we tend not to have much control over that, that's sort of . . . We hear the announcement and sometimes it sort of is a bit frustrating because when salaries and personnel costs are such a big part of our budget and then there are adjustments made that sometimes we didn't even know were coming, then that money has to be found somewhere else to meet those.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So you have been operating your office in the past year with six staff.

Mr. Dickson: — That's correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So now you're requesting to go up to 10 staff.

Mr. Dickson: — That's correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. I just wanted to make sure I had that clear.

Mr. Dickson: — Minister D'Autremont, I'd just say that's seven with the person who has been away the last year on an extended leave.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. So you were operating your office with six even though you had an FTE complement of seven, but only salary allocated for six.

Mr. Dickson: — Right. Right.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — You're indicating that you need the additional staff to catch up with the 168 files that you have backlogged plus the current status. When you have completed your work on the backlog, what happens to the staff, the additional staff, if it was to be allocated? Would you be releasing them at that point, or what happens?

Mr. Dickson: — We would not. Our experience has been that we think that with the additional help we would certainly be able to resolve the backlog which has been the thing that's concerned me most, I think, in the last three or four years. But I think the point we're trying to make is that, given the increasing complexity in the issues that confront us and the, frankly, increased demand we've seen in our office to meet the rest of our mandate — it's not just the backlog we have, although those other parts of our mandate we're also trying to meet — we're going to require the additional complement to do that as well.

I think that what's — and perhaps I didn't say before — notwithstanding the fact we've got advice from the former Chair of the board and from individual members that they'd like us to do more education presentations, we've just cut back. We did a lot of education presentations. We advise people we're sorry, we just don't have time to do this or we'll have to defer it six months or we're going to have to defer it nine months. There's a number of other things that we're simply not able to do. The presentations we had done last year were 156. The presentations April '07 to March of '08 we project will be closer to 65. So there's other parts that we've taken away from to try and work at the backlog.

Yes, I think the point is that I want to assure you this doesn't create some kind of a Cadillac model looking at Information and Privacy Commissioner operations. I can confidently tell you we will still be certainly the smallest by a long measure in the West, one of the smallest in Canada, even if we have the additional staff.

I hope I'm being responsive to your question. I don't see the backlog as a huge problem but we have also increasing demand in other parts of our work as well those reviews and those investigation requests.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if the additional staff are needed to fulfill the additional duties that you have that you've been releasing, then you're not going to get caught up on the backlog. If the additional people are there to catch up on the backlog and fulfill your additional mandate requirements that you believe you have, I see a conflict there. You're going to have too many people at the end of the day under that scenario that you have once you've cleaned your backlog up; that you're going to have additional staff in place that you're going to . . . And it happens naturally. You'll find reasons for them to continue to be there. And I'm not sure we want to build that in at this point in time.

You look at the other jurisdictions. BC has almost four times the population that we have. Alberta has three and a half times the population we have so certainly they would have additional numbers. I think when you factor that into there, we're not too

far out of line on the staff that we have. So I have to compliment you on how efficient you are, but with what's happening in the rest of government, a 45 per cent increase in staff seems to be fairly substantial.

Mr. Dickson: — I clearly acknowledge it's a very substantial increase. I think it's important though to recognize that these other parts of our mandate . . . Let me give you this example. I find on my desk a request I received from the ministry three months ago. They have a set of regulations that that ministry wants to bring out which is going to have a significant impact on the privacy rights of Saskatchewan residents. We've not been able to get to that. So this is nothing to do with the backlog of reviews and investigations.

And so what happens when we're not able to turn that around, the deputy minister starts thinking, what's the value in coming to the OIPC [Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner] for advice and commentary; they can't turn this thing around in time for us to be able to deal with that.

So it's not just presentations we haven't been able to make. We haven't been able to turn around . . . And I regard these as important requests. I think we appreciate being invited by government and public bodies to consult with them at an earlier stage. I mean, I think that's ultimately how we can add the best value to the province but we haven't had the ability to be able to turn those things around. So it's an ongoing challenge.

And all I can do is just assure you that we are efficient. We'll continue to be efficient. I have no expectation we're going to be needing to look to invent ways to keep the staff that we're asking for busy even after that backlog of a 100-plus files is resolved. We still see increases in inquiries. We see increases in other parts of our work as well.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any further questions from committee members?

Thank you very much, Mr. Dickson. And to your staff, Ms. Scott and Ms. Aldridge, thank you so much for appearing before the committee.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much for your interest, Mr. Chairman, and members.

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

The Chair: — This time then, we'll proceed to the Provincial Ombudsman, I believe, Mr. Fenwick.

Welcome, Mr. Fenwick. And I'll ask you to introduce your staff and invite you to make your opening comments. And we'll go from there. Thank you.

Mr. Fenwick: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much. And I'm very pleased to introduce the person to my left, Lynne Fraser, who is our manager of administration from our Saskatoon office. And she can rescue me if I get into trouble with some of the questions this morning. I thank her very much for being here.

I propose just to hit some of the highlights of the written submission that we have provided to you. I don't propose to comment extensively on the background information. But I do recognize that there are some new members of the board, so if I might have your indulgence to very briefly talk about some of the areas of work that we do in our office. And I will tie those in, as I describe them, to what's contained in our budget.

We generally in the past have looked at four areas of responsibility that are set out for the Ombudsman in The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act, although, as you'll hear me say, we're shifting somewhat from four areas to three because one of them isn't so much a kind of work as it is a method of service that we provide.

The core of our business always has been, always will be, to deal with complaints that we receive from members of the public. Last year we received 3,127 complaints at our office about various ministries of government or departments of government, as they were for most of last year, as well as about matters that were technically not part of our responsibility but matters that we still had to deal with that were out-of-jurisdiction complaints — 3,127 complaints last year. That's a lot for a relatively small office. If you divide that by the number of working days there are in a year, we're dealing with somewhere around 12 complaints, 12 new complaints that come in every business day.

Our experience over the last three years though, happily, and I think for good reason, shows that the increasing — ever-increasing it seemed — number of complaints that we received in the early part of the '90s, or in the '90s and into the early part of this decade, has probably levelled off and has decreased somewhat. I acknowledge that our numbers are down from what they have been over the last couple of years, and I think that's a good thing.

We have tried to shift the emphasis somewhat in our office away from just responding to complaints that come in to try and being more proactive and anticipate what complaints might be, and work with government ministries to help them improve program delivery so that we don't receive as many complaints. Members of this board who've been on the board before will have heard me say that I think part of our role is not just to work with government to tell them what to do when the Ombudsman calls, but to tell them what to do so that the Ombudsman doesn't call. And in the end, if we're doing our job effectively, I think that we should be seeing a reduction in the number of complaints. And we are seeing somewhat of a reduction in the number of complaints that we receive.

With respect to that very important part of our mandate — and the vast majority of our resources go to dealing with the response to public complaints — with respect to that part of our mandate, we're not asking for much of a change in our budget at all. And I will anticipate some of the questions from members of the board that I heard before. And we'll say that when we talk about status quo, we are talking about status quo programming.

We use the language internally about last year's approved budget, and then we also talk about a status quo programming budget. And what we mean by that is that we have been given

certain parameters with respect to the staff that we have. We know, for example, that as of April 1, 2008 there is a 4 per cent increase for out-of-scope staff. We know that there's a four and one-quarter per cent increase for in-scope staff. So for us to simply maintain those staff at the same level, we know that there is costs that we have to absorb this year.

With respect to those increases, for example we already know that there will be increased cost to our office this year of about \$85,000 just to deal with the increases that have already been told to us will be incurred for in-scope, for out-of-scope, and for some of the merit-based increases as well. With respect to the merit-based increase I can comment on that as well, and again I'm anticipating a question. The 4 per cent increase for our staff this year is going to cost us about \$55,000. The merit increases are over and above that and will cost our office about \$17,000.

The way the merit system works is our supervisory staff are required to, as part of work performance evaluation, sit down with the staff they supervise on an annual basis — and more often if we're doing a good job and we should be — and at the end of year to rate our staff. And there's a rating system set out by the Public Service Commission whereby those staff members are either rated as does not meet requirements, or meets requirements, or exceeds requirements, or outstanding.

And the consequences of that rating system attract certain benefits, merit increases if you will. If someone does not meet requirements, they're not entitled to an increase understandably. If they meet requirements there's a range of either 3 to 4 per cent and the manager has an opportunity to decide whether it should be 3 or 4 per cent. If they exceed requirements it's 4 to 6 per cent, and if they're outstanding it's in the range of 6 to 8 per cent. So that's how the system works. They get a rating based on their performance for the last year, and as long as they're meeting requirements or exceeding, there's dollars attached to that.

Now in our particular case that adds up, we anticipate, to about \$17,000 this year. And our \$17,000 assumes the minimum, that is meets requirements of 4 per cent. We're fortunate in our office to have a very long-serving and a very experienced staff. What that means is that a number of our staff are already at the top end of the range and once you get to the top end of the range, you're not entitled to further merit increases.

So when we say we anticipate extra expenses of \$17,000 this year for merit-based increases, that's only for the staff who are not already at the top of the range, and we're assuming the 4 per cent which means meets requirements. If they exceed that we'll find the dollars somewhere I guess. If that helps explain somewhat how the system works?

And so what we're talking about is, is \$55,000 for an economic adjustment we've already been told is coming and a further \$17,000 for what we will anticipate are merit-based increases. And I've rounded those numbers so I think they don't quite add up to what's in our written submission based on actual dollars.

With respect to the public complaints we have one small item where we are asking for an addition over and above status quo to our budget. The cost of that increase is not large. It's \$12,600, and what we're asking for, for that small increase, is to

increase one of our complaints analysts positions from what is essentially a point eight position to full time.

We have one of our staff in our Saskatoon office who does what we often refer to as our intake work. The complaints analysts, and we have three bodies, if you like — although not three full-time equivalents yet — in our office. They are the voice and the face of the office for most of the people who come in contact with us. If someone phones the office they're referred almost immediately from our reception staff to those complaints analysts. They're the ones that end up resolving or referring or dealing with somewhere between 75 and 80 per cent of the people who come to our office.

We have one full-time position in Regina for a complaints analyst and one in Saskatoon. And in addition to that we have one person who used to be at point six per cent . . . I'll try that again, at point six of a position not point six per cent — that would probably be about a day a year — but she's a point six position. And then we had a few extra dollars left so that we could hire casual staff to cover off mostly in our Regina office for holidays, etc.

About a year ago we moved to a provincial intake model which we think provides much better service so that our Saskatoon staff can handle the Regina phones and the Regina staff can handle the Saskatoon phones, etc. So what we did is we pooled that casual money, gave it to our point six person in Saskatoon to bump her up to essentially a point eight.

What we think is the most efficient thing and quite frankly the fairest thing to do for that staff person, is to increase that point eight to full time. That would allow us then to deliver a much more efficient service because we know we've got that coverage all the time. We would work very hard then to always have two people available to take calls. When you're designed for a complement of three and you happen to have two people away at once, and we're down to one, that adds great pressure. So we're asking for \$12,600 to increase our Saskatoon complaints analyst position to full time.

Part of our mandate is what has in the past been called alternate complaint resolution, and I'm changing the name of that as we have done in our office, and we talk really about appropriate complaint resolution. In the old days or as my sons would say, back in the day, dad; back in the day when people talked about ACR they talked about alternate case resolution. And alternate meant that we would do something other than an investigation. But it created the impression that this alternate was somehow not as good, was secondary, was something that we would carve out if the case or the complaint did not warrant a full investigation.

In reality we believe that everyone who comes to our office deserves to have their complaint dealt with appropriately. And sometimes that means a full-scale investigation, but sometimes it means coaching. Sometimes it means assistance for the complainant, for the citizen who needs to carry forward an appeal with the Workers' Compensation Board, or the provincial appeal board at Social Services, etc. Sometimes it means that we do some mediation between the ministry and the citizen. Sometimes it means that we do some shuttle diplomacy and carry on some negotiation.

All of those types of dealing with complaints are equally valid, and what we have tried to do is to encourage all of the staff in our office to assess what's the best way of dealing with those complaints and provide them all with the tools so that we can provide the appropriate range of services and the appropriate method of service for all of the citizens who come to our office with complaints.

We're not asking for any change in that particular part of our mandate except with respect to the language we use. You will hear us now talk about appropriate complaint resolution rather than alternate. And we will not talk about it in the future as a separate way, a separate kind of work we do but rather as a way that we do all of the other kinds of work that we do. No change there. Status quo, using our definition of status quo.

The third part of our mandate is with regard to what we call own-motion investigations. And those are matters that are not necessarily generated by a specific complaint that comes to us from a member of the public. There's a couple of ways that we will start these own-motion investigations.

Most often it's because we see a pattern in the complaints that we receive. And I believe that if over the course of a year we see 10 or 12 complaints to our office about essentially the same thing, then what we should be doing is not waiting for another 10 or 12 of the same kind of complaints to come in next year but to go and look and do a broader-scale, systemic investigation to get beneath the tip of the proverbial iceberg and see what are the underlying issues that are generating all of these complaints.

That's one reason that we start our own-motion investigations. They're related to complaints that we have received from the public but we're going an extra step, if you were. I'll give you a quick example of one of those that we commenced last year that happily resulted in a resolution very quickly. And it had to deal with complaints that we were receiving about people who were temporarily outside of Saskatchewan or not ordinarily residents in Saskatchewan, usually because they were attending university.

We had a young couple come to us with a complaint. This young couple were attending university — both of them outside of Saskatchewan — had two children who were living with them while they were attending school outside of Saskatchewan. They were Saskatchewan residents in the sense that this is still their home. They were Saskatchewan residents in the sense that the Department of Health as it then was, the Ministry of Health now, gave them a Saskatchewan health card and recognized that they were entitled to that Saskatchewan health card, but denied them coverage while they were in Saskatchewan, under Saskatchewan's health plan, because they said you are not ordinarily resident in this province.

We commenced a systemic investigation about that because that didn't seem to us that it was fair. And I'm very happy at the result that once we started that investigation, the then Department of Health changed its mind and implemented a new policy under the tutelage of one of the members of this board and changed the policy so that as of now there's about 2,800 people every year who have coverage while they're not ordinarily resident in Saskatchewan, but while they're back in

Saskatchewan.

These people weren't asking for coverage while they were going to school, but for the three months of the year between semesters when they were back here they wanted coverage. Our investigation led to a change in policy that was readily accepted by the ministry. That's the kind of thing we'll look at when we want to get beneath the tip of that iceberg to the underlying issues.

The other kinds of investigations that we do on our own motion are sometimes issues that we will pick from the news, if you like, without necessarily having received a complaint in our office. But they're issues about which we would anticipate we will receive complaints, and I will mention one of them quickly.

We are in the process right now of conducting a review of the introduction of tasers in our provincial correctional centres. And I will point out that we had commenced this review before the unfortunate incident in the Vancouver airport that led to all of the publicity a little while ago. So we're looking at that right now partly to perhaps comment on whether tasers should or should not be introduced, but more likely to say if they're going to be introduced, these are the protocols that are in place. This is the training that has to be there. This is what needs to be done so we make sure that they're introduced properly and effectively and safely, etc. That's something that we started without actually receiving a complaint.

Those systemic investigations or own-motion investigations have a wide variety in terms of what we do.

Sometimes such as the example that I mentioned before with the out-of-province health coverage, they get resolved very quickly. Other times they result in a very comprehensive review and a significant report. The example I would give you is the report that we called *Hearing Back* that we tabled in the legislature in December. It was a review of administrative tribunals in this province and how long it takes them to hand down their decisions. That was a very, very complex review that took place over a number of months and resulted in a written document that was tabled in the legislature. And which I would . . . I'm happy to report has been widely acknowledged and accepted actually not just in this province but across Canada, and has been accessed on a regular basis by various administrative tribunal organizations, And I've been asked to speak at three different conferences now to talk about that report.

With respect to our own motion investigations, there is a lack of research capability in our office. And I mention this now although we're not formally asking for funding for it this year, but to tell you that we need it and to warn you I might be back next year asking for this amount. With respect to the administrative tribunal report, for example, what we did is we needed to bring someone from outside our office with specific expertise in the administrative tribunal field. I would dearly love to have the ability to do that once or twice a year to contract, to bring in specific expertise to help us with those systemic investigations.

Now we recognize that the direction from the . . . or the suggestion with respect to executive government and the

suggestion from the board may very well be that we need to be careful with what we're asking for this year, taking then into account we're not asking for those dollars. But it would be very advantageous to us to be able to access research money down the road in order that we could bring in that specific expertise.

Fourth part of our mandate is with respect to public education and communications. We're asking for a small increase in our funding in this area to increase the point seven five position we have right now to full time. We have one very dedicated individual in our office who wears three hats every day. She administers our fair practices training program that we deliver to government. She looks after our public education which is part of our mandate according to our statute, and she also serves as our communications person putting together things like brochures and our annual report, etc. We're paying her at point seven five and she's working at pretty much full time because of her dedication and her loyalty to the office. There are still a number of things that we're not able to accomplish, and I believe that it is proper that we would see that position increased to full time and we're asking for dollars to do that. The cost of that would be \$20,400 and that's delineated in our practice . . . or in our proposal rather.

Just one quick comment with respect to our fair practices training module. This is something that we developed a couple of years ago, again to go back out to government agencies and say, this is how you should do your job or how you can do your job better. We are not able to meet the demand for that training. We're meeting as much of it as we can but we have a waiting list of government agencies who would love to have us deliver that training.

What I will tell you is that every time we deliver one of those training sessions we do an evaluation, and we ask the participants to provide an evaluation to us. One of the questions that we have on there is, will this training allow you to do your job better? One hundred per cent of the government employees so far who have taken that training have answered yes to that question. So I think it's very, very effective and I think it's very, very worthwhile.

A couple of other things I will just comment on in response to some of the questions that I have heard. We have an item in our budget for contractual services that we've shared with you as well. Anticipating there might be a question on that, I can tell you that of the \$294,000 that appears in our spreadsheet document for contractual services, rent composes 157,000 of that. I'm rounding these numbers off. Our IT services are about \$44,000 of that, some of which we pay for our complaint tracking system to the BC ombudsman's office who we contract with. Some of it we pay to the company that provides our in-house service in Saskatchewan. Our phone bills are about \$22,000 a year. Our Internet services are about \$7,000 a year.

We just put our heads together briefly this morning and added up the biggest of those items. That's about \$230,000 right there of the total of 294. We could certainly provide you with the smaller items as well. But certainly rent is the biggest item that we categorize as part of our contractual services. The other things like photocopying and shredding costs and our work in the North comprise the balance.

I am a believer in fiscal responsibility in our office and I believe we must continue to be fiscally responsible. We are in a bit of a recovery mode this year because of some unfunded salary adjustments from last year. Last year there was the \$1,000 bonus for out-of-scope employees and there was the introduction of the flexible benefit or the health benefit program, neither of which was funded. The cost to our office last year for those two items alone was about \$36,000. And we're not complaining about the program, by the way, but the cost was unfunded. And so as a result of that we had to find \$36,000 last year that meant that there were things that we would have liked to have done that we couldn't do.

Now the flexible benefit is still there and that's something that we've included in our definition of status quo because we know we're going to have to pay it this year. The \$1,000 was a one-time expense. But we feel like we're starting about \$36,000 behind when we start this year.

I can tell you that, of our total budget, salaries comprise about 82 per cent of our total budget. We have very little control over that — short of laying some people off, of course, which is not something we want to do. About 87 per cent of our budget is salaries and other fixed costs such as rent. So we have very, very little room to manoeuvre with respect to what we can change around in our office.

What we're asking for, we believe, is what's currently required to allow us to address the mandate that the legislature has given to us. To continue to keep the same staff complement as we had last year, the total cost with the 4 per cent increase and the merit increase is \$2.035 million. I think that number is set out in our document.

What we're asking for for those two small items — one, to increase our public education, communications, fair practices coordinator, and the other to increase that one complaints analyst — adds up to an extra \$33,000, so we we're asking for \$2.068 million in total with those two additions.

I anticipate board members will have some questions but I want to add one other thing if I can, and that is with regard to the possibility that our office may be asked to provide services with respect to the health ombudsman issue. There has been some talk with respect to a health ombudsman. I don't want to be so presumptuous as to assume that responsibility will come to our office. But as we heard the discussion around a health ombudsman, we thought that it would be advisable for us to prepare at least some background work around that issue. We have done so.

We are in the process of scheduling some meetings with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health to talk about that. I have brought with me an executive summary of the background research we've done so far and a draft potential budget proposal. And I can certainly share it with board members if you want, but quite frankly I don't know where that discussion around health ombudsman issues are at. So I've come prepared to answer questions and to share documentation if it's the board's wish, but again, don't want to presume that necessarily those decisions have been made yet and as a result did not include them in our formal presentation.

Thank you very much, and I'd answer any questions on the health ombudsman issue or any other.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Fenwick. Seeing as it's noon, I wonder if we could take at least a 30-minute break and enjoy some lunch, and then we'll get into questions versus . . . Who knows how long the questions may take us?

Mr. Fenwick: — I'll never argue with a group who's got a free lunch on hand.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Let's call this meeting back to order. Enjoyed lunch? Now we have . . . And Mr. Fenwick's pleased we had lunch because everybody forgot all their questions.

Mr. Fenwick: — Mr. Speaker, just one quick comment. In my former life I used to do a lot of training and presentations, and we always said that the two worst spots were right before lunch and right after, so I hope my fellow independent officers appreciate that I've taken up both of their slots.

The Chair: — Do we have questions for Mr. Fenwick at this time? Yes, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: — I guess we have to make him earn his lunch. Just a quick question about the 36,000 that you talk about under pressures from last year and the lump sum payment and the flexible benefit plan. How is it that you found yourselves required to make that up out of your other allocation as opposed to sort of a submission for additional dollars to . . .

Mr. Fenwick: — The announcement of the \$1,000 lump sum benefit for out-of-scope employees and the flexible benefit program — the wellness money, as we call it — was not announced until after our budget last year had been approved. And we did engage in some discussions with the then Speaker about whether there was going to be some accommodation made, and I think the Legislative Assembly found itself in the same position with respect to its own staff. And so because we had not anticipated or asked for that money when we made our budget submission and because budget had already been approved before that was announced, we needed to find the \$36,000 somewhere.

What we did was we . . . Although our office staff is very stable normally — we do not have a lot of vacancies — we had one person leave last year on a deferred salary leave and someone else who took a position, moved up to a position in a line department. What we did is we left those positions vacant for a while so that we could make up the money. So that's part of the reason that we feel like we're starting behind.

One of our goals last year was to reduce the time it took for us to handle complaints and to get rid of some backlog that we had within our office. We made some progress last year, but we didn't make as much as I would have liked because we had to leave those positions vacant.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Fenwick, in your presentation you reached the topic of health care ombudsman and, as you said, just putting this out for information and that sort of thing. And I guess my question is, what is the status in other provinces? Do other provinces, first of all, have that position and do their provincial ombudsmen operate as a combined role? I wonder if you could just brief us as to . . .

Mr. Fenwick: — Certainly.

Mr. Hart: — The status in the other provinces.

Mr. Fenwick: — We'd be happy to. And I can actually expand a little bit beyond even what other provinces are doing because of the background work that we have done.

Every ombudsman in Canada has more or less the same kind of jurisdiction in health that we do. There is a health Ombudsman in Saskatchewan right now and it is us, in the sense that we have jurisdiction over the Ministry of Health and we have jurisdiction over the regional health authorities. And we average right now about 100 complaints a year that are health related.

So is there a separate or specific health ombudsman in Saskatchewan? No. But is there an ombudsman that has jurisdiction over health? Yes, and that is us. That's the same in other provinces.

There is no province in Canada that has a separate health ombudsman office. But they all have jurisdiction in one way or another over health. The differences are in terms of the scope of that jurisdiction.

British Columbia, for example, has jurisdiction in their ombudsman's office, also over the self-regulating professions — physicians, chiropractors, psychiatrists, etc., etc. We don't have that jurisdiction in Saskatchewan. Alberta is moving that direction. They have passed legislation that gives the ombudsman jurisdiction over the self-regulating professions, but there's a process under which those self-regulating professions are coming under the ombudsman's jurisdiction over time.

Because we have large health regions in this province, that gives us a fairly broad jurisdiction for Ombudsman Saskatchewan. In some other areas where there's less public involvement and there's more of health care service that's provided by private care facilities, then the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman would be smaller.

Senior citizens' homes is an example. Most of the seniors' homes in Saskatchewan now fall under the regional health authorities. In provinces where they're not under regional health authorities, the ombudsman probably does not have jurisdiction over the Lutheran home or the Catholic home or whatever it might be.

Mr. Hart: — Good, good. Thank you for that.

The Chair: — Do we have further questions for Mr. Fenwick while he's here? Okay, Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Fenwick, you talked in your presentation that your communications director position you want to increase by point two five FTE. What would be the implication if that was not to happen?

Mr. Fenwick: — Well first of all I point out it's not just a communications director position. As a matter of fact, it's a combined threefold role. It's the fair practices coordinator, public education coordinator, and communications. And a relatively small portion of what she does is what I would normally call the communications side.

What would happen if it stayed the way that it was? One, we would continue to be unable to respond to as many requests as we have for the fair practices training. Fair practices training is when we go out to government and we talk to them about what fairness is and why they should care as government workers. We talk to them about how to better identify what it is that the citizen's complaining about, and we ask them to consider not just the substantive decisions — the dollars and cents issues — but also using good, clean, open processes in government for decision making so that people understand the decisions better, and just as importantly, that people be treated with respect during their interactions with government.

We talk to them about those things and also work with them to give them some tools to better identify what those kinds of needs are. So that would not be, we would not be able to meet the demand that's there.

Secondly, we have a number of public education materials in our office that are old and they need to be updated. We can struggle along and reprint some more brochures, but we would really like to update them. There are some specific areas where we would need to, we think. We would like to see some work and we think we need to. We have not yet been able to revamp our public educational materials for the North. We put that on hold last year. We would like to do some translation of some of our materials into Cree and Dene particularly for use in the North, so that's something else that we wouldn't be able to do.

We have not yet been able to complete the updating of our website although we're close. So, you know, how much of that gets put off down the road depends on the time that she has available. The other thing is, from a practical note, she would continue to work many hours and not get paid for them because that's the kind of individual she is.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The work that you do with the training program, who does this benefit? Does this benefit the department or the ministry that you're working with? Does it benefit your area?

Mr. Fenwick: — I hope both of those and most importantly I hope it benefits the citizens of the province. It helps us because if we're doing a good job in that training, then government workers should be delivering a better service and therefore generating fewer complaints that come to our office. That helps us because it lets us then deal with more of those systemic issues and look at things in more depth and get to a broader and more in-depth view. It helps us that way. It helps the government workers because the level of satisfaction is higher, but most importantly I think it helps the citizens because the

training is to make sure that government workers are treating their citizenry fairly and that's ultimately who the beneficiary is.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if it's a benefit to the ministries and to the people employed there, have you considered charging a training fee for this?

Mr. Fenwick: — We've talked about it, yes. It's a good question and we have talked about it. And for two reasons we decided not to make the changes to go that direction. The one reason is the money's really coming out of the same pair of pants and if we're charging a government ministry, and our salaries and our office are ultimately paid by the Legislative Assembly as well, it's all coming out of the taxpayers' pockets. So it's taking the money, I would argue, from one pocket and putting it back into the other.

The second is that at the current time we have no mechanism to take money into our office. We would either have to set up a revolving fund or something like that, and the cost of setting up that system and the administrative side of that system we don't think would result in any efficiencies. But we have given it consideration.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Well thank you. When you say it all comes out of the same pair of pants, I agree with you. It seems most of the ministries don't understand that part of the equation, that they operate very much this is our money and if you're going to utilize our services, you're going to pay for it. And Government Services is probably one of those that is most representative of that area . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, well I'm practising it.

Your complaints analysis position you're asking for, another point two, is that located here in Regina or is that in Saskatoon?

Mr. Fenwick: — It's in Saskatoon. We have one full-time position in Regina. And currently we have one and a point six in Saskatoon, although since we've gone to the provincial intake model, we had some money for casual help to backfill Regina. We've now added that to the point six in Saskatoon. So the Saskatoon position now is actually point eight. What we did is when we went to this provincial intake model, it means that we now have a sort of a pool of three people who can handle intake from across the province. The physical body, though, is in Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. That's all the questions I have.

The Chair: — Seeing no further questions, I do have one. Mr. Fenwick, where do you get most of your complaints, WCB or what, from where do you get the complaints?

Mr. Fenwick: — We have three tiers, if you like. The top tier, the largest sources of complaints come from two ministries. The highest is Social Services and the second highest is Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, and they run at about 800 and 600 a year, more or less. Then there's quite a drop-off to the second tier, and the second tier is Workers' Compensation Board and the utility Crowns — so SaskPower, SaskEnergy, SaskTel to a somewhat lesser extent, SGI as well, and Workers' Comp are

all in a range of . . . They average anywhere from 75 to 200 complaints in that group.

And then there's a drop-off to a very wide range of ministries who have anywhere from one or two a year up to 50 or 60 a year.

The Chair: — And of these complaints, how quickly do you get around to resolve? And are a lot of them resolved, say, over a phone conversation, or does it take a lengthy time to deal with the issue?

Mr. Fenwick: — Not many are resolved with a telephone conversation, but certainly the majority of them are dealt with, with a few telephone conversations, an interview or two. So about 70 per cent more or less of those complaints are resolved within two weeks of the contact with our office. The ones that go to investigation take considerably longer.

Our goal is to have 90 per cent of the complaints resolved within three months of the initial contact with our office. We're not there yet. That was part of our goal for last year was to get down to that number, and 95 per cent to be resolved within six months of contact with our office. We're not there yet either.

Part of the difficulty is that some of that time frame is outside of our control. So when we make a recommendation to a ministry, for example, we can't control the timelines for when it comes back. But the short summary is 70 to 75 per cent are resolved within a week to three weeks would be the range. And right now, we would be at about 85 per cent in total that are resolved within not more than six months — most of those even within the three.

The Chair: — Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thank you so much, Mr. Fenwick and Ms. Fraser.

Mr. Fenwick: — Thank you. I just, Mr. Speaker, I hadn't heard questions specifically about the health ombudsman. I'm quite content to leave that issue. But there are materials here if . . . I'm at the board's direction of whether you'd like those materials left with you or not.

The Chair: — Thank you. It will be so noted.

Office of the Children's Advocate

The Chair: — We'll move next then to the office of the child advocate and invite Mr. Marvin Bernstein to the table and his staff.

Mr. Bernstein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On my right is Bernie Rodier, who is our director of administration. And on my left is John Brand, who is our director of advocacy and investigations.

This is my third opportunity to appear in front of this board as Saskatchewan's Children's Advocate. And I'm proud to be holding such an important public trust and to be given both the privilege and the responsibility of promoting the interests and well-being of the children and youth of this province.

I'd like to go on record as first acknowledging the support and

dedication of all of our staff members who are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of children and youth who live in this province so that these young people can achieve their full potential.

As well, I wish to acknowledge and express appreciation to the staff at the Legislative Assembly for the support and assistance they've extended to our office. They are a group of devoted individuals and they deserve much praise for all the work that they do in supporting all of the independent offices.

I know that you've reviewed the written submission we provided to the board, and therefore I intend to merely highlight some of the key points by way of introductory remarks before responding to any questions that board members may have for me.

As you can see from our written materials, I'm submitting our office's 2008-09 budget proposal in support of a status quo programming budget allocation. And I would draw the same delineation that Mr. Fenwick did, that this is a status quo programming. And although the overall percentage increase of both budgetary and statutory increases is 5.6 per cent, the factors contributing to this increase are, in my estimation, largely a result of variables that are outside of our control. So you've heard this morning, for example, that there are economic adjustments of 4 per cent that are triggered on April 1. There are performance pay increases to those staff who are eligible for performance pay. Those are triggered on July 1. You've heard about the flexible benefits that in the upcoming year will be in the amount of \$712. There is the statutory allocation that's provided to me. And all of those are really outside of our control. We're not asking for any new initiative money. It's just to maintain the status quo programming at the same level for the next fiscal year.

The budget proposal then reflects our best projection as to what our office requires in order to serve the citizens of Saskatchewan in a fiscally responsible and prudent manner. In this regard, it's important to note that we are conscientiously and deliberately submitting a status quo programming budget, notwithstanding a 10.8 per cent increase in our office's 2007 caller activity over the previous calendar year. So if anything, our intake numbers have gone up the past two years.

It's also important to note that the status quo programming budget proposal is being presented independent of any consideration or analysis on our part of any new or expanded initiatives or directions that may be identified for our office by the provincial government or any committee of the Legislative Assembly of this province or by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Such expanded directions and responsibilities would, in my respectful submission, have to be negotiated and would most certainly necessitate further funding being provided to our office.

This is, I think, similarly along the lines that Mr. Fenwick has referred to. There have been some references made of mandated letters from the Premier to different government ministers and our office has been referenced. Those pieces of activity, if they're enlarged or if our mandate were to be expanded, haven't yet been resolved. So we're always happy to engage in discussions and dialogue as to how we can be more helpful

within the mandate that has been struck for our office.

Our office was created in November 1994 and I have the — as I said — the honour of being the second Children's Advocate appointed.

We have a very specific legislative mandate as defined in The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act, and this statute has served as our governing legislation for the past 13-plus years. Under this legislation we work diligently to ensure that the interests and well-being of children are respected and valued, both in the community and in government practice, policy, and legislation. Our budget proposal reflects both our legislated responsibilities and our office's five priority areas which are as follows.

One, individual group and systemic advocacy. This involves advocating for the interests, rights, and well-being of children and young persons in both a case-specific and systemic manner by using negotiation and other appropriate dispute resolution processes in order to ensure that the voices of young people are being heard before decisions are being made about them. It also enables us to make informed and progressive recommendations to government.

Secondly, individual, group, and systemic investigations. The three objectives of our investigations are: one, to prevent imminent and future harm to children through advancing recommendations that impact upon provincial government policy, programming, practice, and legislation; two, to improve the quality of services provided by child-serving systems of provincial government ministries or agencies; and thirdly, to increase public accountability.

Within our office we've defined five different areas of investigation. One is child death investigations. The second is critical injury investigations. The third is fairness or administrative fairness investigations. Four is systemic or program and service investigations. And five, investigations in response to a referral by a committee of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly or the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is recognized in our legislation.

Three, third priority, public education and communications. This involves educating and informing the public, media, and key community groups and stakeholders on the rights and entitlements of children and youth. We carry out well in excess of 100 presentations by way of public education each and every year. It also includes facilitating public and professional presentations, the development and publication of annual reports, special reports and position papers, as well as a variety of public education materials and website communications.

The fourth area of priority is youth voice. The perspective of young people is particularly critical in the area of promoting systemic change. So within our office we talk about all of the different priorities working together to achieve positive systemic change. With the assistance of young people, we can identify patterns or themes where government services have not been meeting the needs of children and youth, and then using this information to advocate for and recommend important systemic change to address these service gaps and promote the interest, rights, and well-being of a broader group of young

persons.

And then the last area is administration, with the focus being on providing high-quality service in the administration of all facets of our office's activities.

You can see from our written submission not only a description of the stated goals and objectives of our office but also a listing of, first, our operational principles, and then secondly, our office's children and youth first guiding principles which were publicly released upon the tabling of last year's annual report on May 15, 2007. These newly developed principles are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and are meant to reflect the core of the Children's Advocate office beliefs and values which our office will advance in all aspects of its work with provincial government ministries and agencies, as well as with child and youth service sectors and care providers.

You also received a comprehensive annual report from our office and periodically we also produce other reports with findings and recommendations which we release either through tabling in the House or in some other manner in accordance with our legislation.

In summary I'm pleased to be bringing forward a status quo programming request for budgetary expenditures in the amount of \$1.531 million, which equates to a 5.6 per cent increase over our 2007-08 approved expenditure level. Consequently I would respectfully ask that the Board of Internal Economy recommend to the Legislative Assembly a total appropriation for our office in the amount of 1.531 million, which represents an overall increase for both budgetary and statutory expenditures of \$81,000 over last year's approved allocation.

Just in terms of the areas of involvement of the office, a question that's been asked of some of the other independent officers, the greatest area of activity in terms of intersection of our office with a government ministry — this shouldn't come as any surprise — is with the Ministry of Social Services. Last year's annual report indicated that when you look at the ministry and you look at the First Nations Child and Family Services agencies, it accounts for about 55 per cent of our involvement. In terms of taking a scan over the past month, it's up to about 60 per cent of our involvement.

Justice is the next area of significant involvement but most of those calls are considered to be out of jurisdiction, dealing with custody and access, and that comes in at about 12 per cent. Eight per cent is Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. And health related issues come in at about 2 per cent. And Learning, Education now, as of last year's annual report was roughly about 2 per cent. So there is a significant drop-off after we look at matters that relate to the Ministry of Social Services.

In terms of referrals to the office, the greatest number of referents are parents at about 46 per cent. Children refer themselves at about 20 per cent, 21 per cent; extended family 15; foster parents 4 per cent; professionals 7 per cent.

So hopefully that gives you some sense of where the calls are coming from and the ministries with which the office is most frequently engaged. And I will stop there and entertain any

questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Bernstein. Before I open for questions, I do have a question of my own. A bit of clarification and maybe it's fairly simple. On page 7, you mentioned, I think, was it \$712 as far as flexible benefits, and that's per member or per employee?

Mr. Bernstein: — That's out-of-scope staff and per FTE.

The Chair: — Okay. And so that then on page 7, that eighty-one eighty-eight, is then . . . would be the total amount. Am I correct in . . .

Mr. Bernstein: — That is correct.

The Chair: — Okay, very good. Thank you. And the other question I do have, you mentioned your largest referral comes from parents. I don't know if you're free to just acknowledge in general what referrals or concerns. About a lack of holding children accountable or just aren't able to control or children have left home? Or what are the circumstances that would cause parents to call your office?

Mr. Bernstein: — The areas, Mr. Speaker, are oftentimes disagreement with a case plan. So if a child is involved in child welfare proceedings, the parent may be expressing some concerns about the position being taken by the ministry. Sometimes with respect to children in care, parents are raising concerns about the lack of visits that are taking place; sometimes concerns around disagreement as to children being taken into care. There may be concerns that are being expressed with respect to changes in placement, whether or not children's needs are being met while in foster care. There may be some disagreement with some of the factual determinations that are being made by government officials. Those kinds of issues.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I'll open the floor to questions. Ms. Harpauer.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. I just have one question in the area of when you listed your priorities and you have youth voice. What exactly would that involve? What activities would that involve?

Mr. Bernstein: — That involves attempting to meet with young people. It can be through the Youth In Care And Custody Network. So a good example is that we're presently involved in an investigation into foster home overcrowding in the Saskatoon region. And when we reach a point where we have developed some tentative findings and recommendations, we're going to take that out to the Youth In Care And Custody Network, try and get their perspective.

Do we have it right when we're advancing policy positions to government? We tend to meet with young people to understand through their experiences, would they agree with some of the recommendations we're making to government? So we don't want to impose our values and our judgment on young people. We always try and connect with them to inform ourselves.

When we developed the children and youth first principles last year that we rolled out, we went out to the schools and spoke to

the young people and said, do we have it right? Would you agree that these are the most important principles to be taken forward on your behalf? Have we captured the language correctly? Do we have the sequence right? So for example, they said that we should move up the principle that speaks about it being important for their right to be heard. They're saying a lot of times decisions are being made about us — nobody's listening to what we have to say. That was down around principle no. 7. They said that needs to be moved up on the list. So that's the kind of thing we're talking about.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's the only question I had.

The Chair: — Any further questions from committee members? I guess that's an indication, Mr. Bernstein, that you did an excellent job of presenting your budget and working up your office. And thank you so much to you and all your officials, Ms. Rodier and Mr. Brand. Thank you.

Mr. Bernstein: — I'd also like to thank the members of this board who have always treated the office very fairly and thank you once again. Thank you.

Legislative Assembly

The Chair: — Order. We'll move to item 6. If I could have the committee come to order, we'll move to item 6. Yes, that's fine. We've got a couple motions to deal with here. Item no. 6 is quarter financial report and fiscal forecasts, fourth quarter '06-07, and first, second, and third quarters '07-08. I need a motion of acceptance of those reports. Moved by Mr. Yates. Seconded by Mr. D'Autremont. Thank you. Everyone's agreed? The committee's agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you. And just a couple of other things I will mention before we move further. We had attempted to get members together to look at some lighting options with some expenditures that were moved forward last year. And the Assembly needs to . . . the staff needs to know where they're going with that. So I thought maybe when we do our break at 3, we could take a few minutes to just look at what lighting we might look at. I think the staff have some options open to us to look at.

Also we've invited the staff in from the Cumberland Gallery just to make a short presentation about the store down in the basement here and some of the concerns they may have as well. So we'll do that. When they get here we'll move that through before we get into the full debate on the Legislative Assembly budget.

There's a couple other items, items 7 and 8 — before we go in camera for item no. 9 — legislative priorities '07-08 mid-year report on progress. Are there any questions in regards to . . . We also have another item, item no. 8, Provincial Auditor's memorandum of audit observations for the year end of March 31, '07. Any questions? Seeing none . . . Members, it's been brought to my attention that — back to item no. 7 — we need a motion to accept the priorities mid-year report on progress. Ms. Harpauer. A seconder to that? Mr. Taylor. Is everyone agreed? Carried. Thank you.

And we will move into the budget for the Legislative Assembly. We will begin that process, and at 3 we will take . . . or in around 3 o'clock we'll take the time to look at lighting and also discuss the Cumberland Gallery. We'll do it in where we've got a break, so we don't break up somebody's presentation. Okay. And this will continue as the normal process.

Welcome, Mr. Clerk, Mr. Putz, and Marilyn. And members, as we're discussing this budget, just to be mindful of the fact that it impacts each and every one of us so make sure you give it due diligence and proper scrutiny. And we're pleased to have our Clerk of the Assembly — I believe this may be the first full budget that he's carried through . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . or the second one — to lead us through our budget presentation. So I'll turn it over to you, Greg.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a number of staff with us today. Not all of them have joined us. We've moved along a little more expeditiously than we had anticipated. So maybe we'll save the introductions — all of you know these staff in any event — but just for the record so we know who's present, maybe after they've all joined us. And I'm hoping Linda Kaminski joins us, in anticipation of some of Kevin and Dan's questions that came out of some of the deliberations this morning as well on our personnel costs.

I think I'd like to begin with a little bit of a summary and say that LAS is asking the board to approve a budget of \$22.841 million which, as you can see from our budget book, is an 8.65 per cent increase over last year's approved budget of \$21.023 million. As you are aware, the Assembly's budget is split into two segments: statutory, which is 64 per cent of our budget; and the budgetary segment, which is 36 per cent of the overall budget.

And I think members are aware of what constitutes each of these sectors, and it's also charted out for you on page 5 of our budget document. On the statutory side, an increase of 9.18 per cent is necessary to cover off the very statutory and inflationary factors that are prescribed by law and directive. You'll find a summary of these economic adjustments on pages 30 and 31 of the budget document. On the budgetary side — which for the most part is the LAS budget — an overall increase of 7.7 per cent over last year's approved budget is requested.

So having got the summary out of the way, I'd like to spend a couple minutes outlining how the budgetary estimate numbers were developed. Preparation for our 2008-09 estimates began by tasking each of the branches of LAS to develop a baseline budget for their operation so that it might deliver the same services that were provided in fiscal year '07-08. The baseline estimates reflect the known salary adjustments for the upcoming fiscal year and the estimated cost for the goods and services required to provide the regular and ongoing services that we provide to the members and public and other clients.

By far the factor that has the biggest impact on the LAS budget is our staffing. Sixty-two per cent of our overall costs are for personnel services. Under section 71 of the Assembly Act, the employee benefits applicable to the public service apply to the employees of the LAS. So consequently any changes to salary rates and benefits applied to the public service has a significant impact on the overall budget numbers for the LAS.

Application of the public services approved economic adjustments, as well as the regular annual performance adjustments, requires 7.75 per cent increase in funding for our personnel services. In dollars, that translates to an additional \$357,000 required to meet our obligations to LAS employees. Now this number does not include any of the new FTEs that are requested and I'll get to those later.

Detail of the LAS personnel policy can be found on page 18 and Linda has now joined us and can answer any of the detailed questions of how we arrived at our . . . about our personnel policy and how we arrived at our baseline assumptions.

On the goods and services side, some of the significant baseline increases that factor into our request: our rented Walter Scott Building, directive 24 costs which this year is an increase of \$52,000 given that we've . . . just coming out of an election and need to start 17 new constituency offices and there's a refresh element for existing members as well. And cost-of-living increases is built into our security contract with the Core Commissionaires. The contract that we're in provides an annual cost-of-living adjustment and that's \$10,000 for the next fiscal year.

So overall, an increase of 5.9 per cent over last year's approved budget is needed by our estimation to keep up with inflationary increases, various economic adjustments, and election-related costs associated with a new legislature.

As I note at the beginning in my summary, the Assembly budget comprises an overall increase of 8.65 per cent — 9.1 per cent for the statutory side and 7.7 per cent on the budgetary side. So on the budgetary side, after taking into account the 5.9 per cent increases that I've just noted as forming our baseline budget, that leaves us with a modest 1.8 per cent increase for brand new spending to bring us to an overall total of the 7.7 per cent that I've mentioned.

So what I'd like to do now is take just a few minutes to outline in general terms what comprises the 1.8 per cent increase over our baseline or status quo budget. So after preparation of the LAS baseline or status quo budget, LAS managers were asked to prepare an action plan on how they proposed to provide the regular and ongoing services to the members and public; what improvements and enhancements they wished to propose to their baseline services; and how they proposed to respond to new demands and changing circumstances.

In carrying out this exercise, the managers were asked to consider how their operations could be realigned or restructured to meet new challenges and priorities in order to negate or at least minimize additional costs. All of these action plans have been consolidated and presented to you as the LAS action plan for '08-09 which can be found in section 3 of your budget book. There are some 40 points to this action plan, 20 main points and 21 sub-points. And I'm happy to say that the majority of these actions require no additional funding beyond what is requested in our baseline or status quo budget. Yet as you can see, the plan will go far to improve the management and administration of the LAS and, just as importantly, move us forward to enhance the services we provide to members and other clients.

This action plan however has another significance. As a

component of the budget, the action plan provides the board with a broader picture and context of what we propose to do with the funding provided. As such, the action plan is a means by which the board can measure the LAS's progress in meeting our goals and objectives. In this context I want to remind you, the board members here, of what the auditor's concerns have been over the last number of years: that the board — the LAS by extension — set and approve its operational goals and objectives; set performance targets and measures; monitor progress in achieving targets; and define and document operational reports it needs to monitor progress.

Last year the board approved the LAS's strategic plan. The action plan in this budget is built on the goals and objectives of that strategic plan. The approved '08-09 budget and the associated action plan will be the basis on which LAS will report to the board mid- and end of the year on its progress in meeting our objectives. Last year the Speaker and the Clerk committed to providing these reports to the board and you've just received our mid-year report just moments ago. These reports along with the quarterly financial statements will help you to monitor how LAS is doing with the financial resources provided by the board.

Now a couple of final points about this action plan. The action plan includes two major new costs that comprise most of the 1.8 per cent increase. The Legislative Library is experiencing significant pressure in its front-line services in the management of electronic resources. A position is required to ease this pressure. For those of you who were on the board at this time last year, you will be familiar with the electronic resource issue. Since last year the library has re-examined how best to tackle this problem. Through the action plan, the library proposes to restructure its operations to meet the pressures. This restructuring means that about half of the funding for a position could be reallocated from existing funds. The LAS is asking the board to meet it halfway in providing half an FTE of \$25,000 for the Legislative Library.

The increased workload at committees and logistics required for simultaneous committees has reached a critical point where servicing the committees with ad hoc support from various offices is no longer practical. To fulfill a long-standing recommendation for dedicated committee support which we first made in 2002 based on a report, a rules committee report that was adopted by the House, LAS is asking the board to provide funding for a committee support position of \$45,000.

Finally I want to point out that our action plan also incorporates funding proposals under the Refurbishment Asset Replacement Fund — RARF for short and I don't know what you think of that acronym but we're stuck with it. Last year the board established the fund to provide improvements to LAS and the Assembly facilities, replacements of furnishings, and non-capital equipment and major asset acquisitions. LAS offers the board a number of proposals under the umbrella of this fund. Any of the proposals adopted of course will become part of our operational priorities for the LAS in the next fiscal year.

Section 6 of your budget document provides a summary of the project proposals and section 10 provides details expressed in terms of board decision items. The list includes costing for proposals brought forward by one member of the board, Mr.

D'Autremont, and six other proposals that were developed by LAS managers. These managers would be pleased to discuss the details of any of these project proposals.

As well, I and other LAS staff would be pleased to answer any questions you might have with respect to our '08-09 budget proposal. And that concludes my formal remarks.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Putz. Any questions from committee members? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I have never failed to ask a question yet, so it would be surprising this time if I did.

The Cumberland Gallery Gift Shop, I believe you say is coming in to do a presentation for their requests. Do you have the information on what that will be for?

Mr. Putz: — The amount?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, it's 18,000.

Mr. Putz: — It's 18,000. No, we don't because . . . We have a vague idea what it is. But I think it's best that they explain that themselves. That's a direct transfer. We have no involvement in the management and operation of the gift shop. That's done through a transfer grant to the Friends of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you. On your FTEs that are being requested, the library is requesting a point five increase in FTEs. Exactly what will that additional point five do for the library?

Mr. Putz: — I'll ask Melissa and Pat Kolesar to come forward, and they can address that question.

Ms. Bennett: — Thank you for the question. The position would essentially staff our reference desk. And it would also assist the member services librarian with research — professional librarian research support to provide the services that member services provides to you folks.

There's a couple of key points that I wanted to make about this position, and that is that this is not a service expansion. And I don't view it as an FTE expansion either because the library used to have this position on an ongoing basis. And six years ago it gave up the funding for this particular position to meet a budget target in 2002.

Since that time the library has been functioning without this position and without this support to the reference desk and the member services area. We've coped. I would say the library's limped along, coping with this situation. We were basically left with one professional reference librarian. These individuals do require master's degrees. But we had one position left that was solely focused on working on the reference desk and assisting our member services librarian.

We had another professional librarian who was predominantly supposed to be focusing on providing you with electronically-based services, feeding you things through the members' portal, expanding services that you get via electronic

means, whether that's through digital materials or through your PDAs [personal digital assistant], that sort of thing. That individual has predominantly worked our reference desk and not been able to focus on the electronic service delivery. I think it shows in the fact that we have not revamped our website in, oh, many years, aren't even really caught up with the last LAS website revamping, unfortunately.

So I do not view this as an expansion, a service expansion, and I am raising it now because I see a number of pressures that are emerging in the current environment which I believe make it difficult for us to continue coping and would make it strategically not in our best interest to continue in the situation that we're in.

Number one, I am seeing an increase in the complexity of questions that both members and your staff are bringing to the reference desk. And you expect us to respond to you when you come in the library, and increasingly we don't have anyone on the desk. We had to cut service hours in 2002. So we've had your staff say to us, why aren't you open till 10 a.m.? I need to come in here in the morning and have a reference librarian here to help me. And unfortunately we don't have someone come on until 10 a.m. out of session. In session we do make a point of being there right at the opening hours.

Fifty-seven per cent of our service for reference questions is from members and staff. And so you make up our huge service component and if we're looking at curtailing services, it's going to impact you. Only 30 per cent of our questions are coming from the public and only 14 per cent are coming from civil servants. So if I'm looking at trying to scale back services, I'm looking at impact on our immediate environment.

The other concern that I have is maintaining the quality of service that you receive when you come into our library and ask questions at our reference desk. We have quite a unique collection. You have very complex questions, and we need individuals on our reference desk and assisting members services who are trained and familiar with our collection and know how to respond to you quickly. And I'm deeply concerned that, without a sufficient staff complement, that we won't have the folks in place to give you that level of service that you're used to.

We're also seeing an increased demand for research because of the work of committees. So for example we have a new committee researcher, and those folks turn to us to provide a lot of the documentary evidence that then they analyze and synthesize. So you know, we're calling across Canada to find out what the legislation is in different jurisdictions, that then the researchers can analyze and synthesize and bring forward to you.

The other major trend that I have noticed is an aging workforce and a need to do some succession planning here. And our term librarian staffing that was cut in 2002 was a key way that we would bring in a backup librarian and start training them in our collections and our services. And that person was always sort of waiting in the wings when we had an emergent situation. I am seeing an increasing pattern in the library with an aging workforce where we have people who are getting ill — they're away — and I don't have the proper backup to ensure there is a

person with expertise on our reference desk.

This issue was so critical for us this year that we looked for the money in our budget and created the point five FTE. And we filled that position and we have someone in that position who has been learning the job. They have actually, because of some emergent situations that have arisen, they are bearing a lot of the full weight of the reference desk right now. So it's illustrative of what I see to be a continuing trend. And I hope it's not a continuing trend. But it's a strategic concern and I feel that we do need to give it our attention at this point in time.

So as I indicated, we found the funds within our budget for point five. And we are looking for point five, primarily so that we can keep someone on and not have that position be a revolving door. As I mentioned, we require a master's degree in library science. There are eight schools in Canada, and it's a competitive marketplace right now. So people looking for these positions, while they are attracted to a library like the Legislative Library because it's an interesting place to work, people want full-time. And it's hard to retain someone at a point five hours. Plus we need the full-time capacity in the library. If there's other aspects to the request, or a detail that you'd like, I'd be happy to follow up.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. You say that 30 per cent of the library's operation is public. What role does the library play in that way? Is it mandated to provide services to the public? What are the public accessing? Is it the publications that you have available, or is it the publications that are available on a weekly basis, such as the local newspapers from across the province that are available? Are they in-depth questions and information, or is it more of a cursory involvement?

Ms. Bennett: — We have a mandate to make our unique collections accessible to the public of Saskatchewan, so I think it is correct that primarily our mandate is to give them access to our Saskatchewan government publications. We are the official deposit and repository for Saskatchewan government publications and we are mandated to make those accessible to the people of the province. A lot of the questions we get do relate to accessing those materials. We are also a federal depository library, a full depository library — the only one in southern Saskatchewan — and have been so since 1927. So we also have, as part of that criteria, a mandate to provide access to the public. I would say we get fewer questions that are focused on looking for federal government information.

Generally over time I think our questions have, all of our questions have become a little more complicated versus cursory because there is more information on the Internet, and people can find more government information from Saskatchewan departments on the Internet. So we are finding that questions can be a little more complex around legislation, regulations, that sort of thing. We get the odd genealogy question. They come in too. We have unique things like naturalization records and that sort of thing.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. On the full-time FTE being requested for permanent committee support staff positions, how much additional work is being done by the committees to require full-time staffing of a committee person?

Mr. Putz: — I'm glad you asked that question because Iris Lang anticipated it, and I'll call her forward.

Ms. Lang: — As you can see from the chart that I passed out, there has been a significant amount of increased hours by standing committees. Now this just reflects the actual work hours in the committee. It doesn't include any of the prep time or any of the work that the committee Clerks do in advance of actual committee hours.

What we've seen is certainly, if you look at the second page there with regards to the standing committee meeting hours, the first session with the new committee rules was 19 months. The second session was a year, and the third session was a year. So when you look at that particular graph you'll see, you know, there is a little bit of up and down. But the reason for that, as I said, is the difference in the sessions.

But if you extrapolate, you know, based on a full year's session, we've seen a 44 per cent increase from session 2 to session 3. What the major significance is now, in the past the estimates were in the House. Now all the estimates are pushed to the committees, so it's increased the workload of committees significantly as a result of all the estimates and the Bills coming before the committees.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — While the estimates have all been now moved over to the committee structure, those estimates were heard though at the same time, were heard equally in the House previously. So while you'd had one Clerk dealing with that, you now have two dealing with it because the committees sit simultaneously. But has the actual sitting times increased though, from what was done previously before the Committee of Finance in the House versus what's being done now before the committees?

Ms. Lang: — Certainly with the way the rules are now with . . . You know, you're looking at the 75 hours, if you want to get the 75 hours in for all the budgets and specifically two hours on certain estimates, that has an impact as far as the number of hours required of the committees. So because of that rule change, there seems to be an added push to get a certain amount of hours on various ministries.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — But has there been actually a change in the total number of hours that the committees would be sitting? Because previously you were sitting in the Committee of Finance doing estimates. You were sitting in Committee of the Whole doing legislation. When you total those all up, are we spending more time on committee or an equal amount of time? There should be less days because we're running committees concurrently now, but you still need to be staffed. But are we running more hours or less hours in total than we were previously?

Ms. Lang: — I don't have the exact number as far as . . . I just looked at actual standing committee hours, I didn't look at hours in the House. Certainly in the past we had four Clerks at the table in the House and we were able to rotate out. Now basically we have simultaneous committees so you have two committee Clerks working at a time, so the workload is condensed more and there's greater pressure on one committee Clerk to look at a substantial amount of work versus being

displaced over four.

Mr. Putz: — If I could just add to that, the number of hours probably hasn't changed dramatically because the whole scenario was based on swapping out hours in the House with hours in committees. The fact that they're compressed in a smaller time frame in a few weeks has a bearing on this. But another factor here is that with the standing committees, we keep more records than we did before, than we did in the House. We basically didn't keep any sort of records. There's more formal minutes for all of these things. There's all of the different tabled documents and all that stuff is tracked quite differently than we ever did in the House, plus we organize more of these meetings than we did before as well. That was basically something that we had no control or influence over at all. It was a function of the House business office where some of that work — not all of it — but some of it has been transferred to the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — With the changes to the rules and the utilizations of the committee structure, are we seeing more hours utilized there that wouldn't have been there under the previous rules where you needed a special committee to perhaps have public hearings? How much extra time are we seeing in that area?

Ms. Lang: — I don't have it broken out as far as the number of hours for public hearings but certainly we've had public hearings on at least three Bills and we've had an inquiry on internal trade. So that's added significantly to standing committee hours.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — In the past whenever there was a special committee, quite often another employee was hired on a contractual basis to fill that in and that has been done. Now has it been by the existing staff?

Ms. Lang: — Yes, that's correct. What happened in the past if, you know, we needed a committee researcher, we would hire a researcher. If we needed added support, there was the ability because usually it was interessionally to perhaps second other Legislative Assembly employees to assist or get outside help. Given the current situation, because everyone is busy during session that's our peak time, that's when we need this committee support position. That's just not available any longer.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — When we're not in session, what will the utilization of another full-time FTE be? What will their duties be outside of session?

Ms. Lang: — Certainly this position is somewhat of a higher level support position in that they should be able to work somewhat independently. But in addition to that currently we have, our committee Clerk as well as myself in the past, we actually looked after the Internet and intranet committee information. That's not necessarily good utilization of a committee Clerk position, to be doing updating websites and maintaining the site, so that would be one of the duties, and that's one of our key strategic initiatives within the Assembly is the Internet, the intranet, and the members' portal. So that would be something that this position would be responsible for.

And actually because committees are becoming so busy, we're actually somewhat building a base within committees that this person would have the opportunity, if the right person could grow and develop, there might be some succession planning opportunities. So if you have the right position, that gives you some latitude to build some depth within committees so that if there are perhaps two hearings at one time that this person could actually assist in a general use. They may even be able to clerk if it's just straight public hearings.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — When you talk about succession planning, I didn't think any of the Clerks were old enough to be considering that at the present time. Okay, thank you very much. I didn't notice anybody wanting to comment on that.

The FTE, the point four four FTE for parliamentary publications, are we falling behind in this particular area or what's happening in this area that we need to put in basically another half-time person?

Mr. Putz: — I'll ask Lenni to come forward. If I could just, while Lenni is coming forward just add also to what Iris said, that I think you're well aware that our committee support is not dedicated, and that's what we're looking for here. It's ad hoc support that's out of the Office of the Clerk. And I guess part of the reason for asking for this request is kind of selfish on my part because I've felt that in our office they just, with the increasing demands of everything that's going on, there just isn't time to give the committees the dedicated support they need at the times they need it.

So people call and ask questions. And our staff know what the answers are; it's just that they're juggling too many balls. And this would be a way of getting rid of one of those balls and putting it in the committee sector where it belongs so that the public and members would have a go-to person that have reliable, up-to-date information on what's going on and exactly when. Now Lenni's here. That was a good . . .

Ms. Lang: — If I could just make one more comment. With regards to this position as well, you may know that Alberta came and looked at our committee system, and they actually pretty well copied what we have. And the first thing they did was hire . . . They had three positions. They had a support position, a committee researcher position, and a committee Clerk. And that was just even looking at not even doing half the work that we're doing, they hired three people. So I think that this is pretty meagre. And also when you look at New South Wales, which we looked at to copy their system, they have a staff of 30 for 11 committees. And we have eight committees. So they're looking at having a minimum of three support positions per committee.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — They have a different work ethic in Australia, and I don't think we want to elaborate that here. But they certainly do have a different take on their work ethic there. And since Alberta is copying us, I'm wondering if we can get royalties.

Mr. Putz: — Well I did ask, and I was told no.

The thing is though with the committees as well, we all know that built into their mandate — and, Dan, you'll know this as

well as anybody in this room because you're one of the architects of the system — is that there is a big element to the mandate that allows public to participate in the process, and now that could happen at any time. It could happen during the session. There could be hearings on Bills, and that's when the majority of committee members decide that. Intersessionally, could be inquiries.

Right now if we were to have hearings in the midst of a session on a Bill, there is a lot of logistics and support necessary to make that happen. Even if it's a small thing, you've got to make sure that everybody is treated fairly, the same — that they're given their times, when to show up. Somebody needs to do that.

And right now during session and intersessionally with all the other work that's going on, it's not easy for us to just stop everything else to cater to one committee. And you can see that this would be compounded if we had four of these committees doing it. And the idea here — and that was the basis of the proposal in 2002, depending on when the committees got up to full steam — that there would be this need for dedicated support. And we feel we're almost at that point, or we're at that point, and anything else is going to tip the scale here. And we're going to be really scrambling and hard pressed to support these committees when they really get going under full steam.

Ms. Frohman: — Thanks for your question, Mr. D'Autremont. I hope that my answer . . . In some ways it's a very concrete kind of answer, because for the point four four FTE for parliamentary publications, it's entirely linked to our best and most educated guess and anticipation of what the committees' hours will be in the upcoming fiscal year. And for folks who have been on the board in previous years, if you were to note again the detail of parliamentary publications, or in this case specifically Hansard, there's often some fluctuation of point four FTE, or point one two FTE, or perhaps less.

And that fluctuation is not so much about a position or a role, but it's about 39 editors who come in to transcribe literally the hours of debate that occur in the committees. And so in putting together our budgetary numbers, I talk with the committee Clerk. Because again, without wanting to presume what the committees would do with their time or presume . . . But again the Clerks do have an idea, perhaps, of the business in that year. And we do our best then to anticipate what might be the number of hours that those committees might work.

And so for the parliamentary publication portion, that point four four FTE is simply number of committee hours then times a multiplier — and I'll spare you the details — but times a small multiplier. So it takes us, for every hour of committee debate, it takes us roughly an hour and a half for the transcribers to transcribe, edit, research, and move it on the production path — that's with two committees going at the same time — times the number of editors you need, times their salaries. And so this year that calculation simply added to point four four FTE.

Just from my own perspective, perhaps you might find this useful. When Iris had let me know too what was maybe expected or anticipated for the committee business this year, that was an increase for us. Again, I wouldn't have blinked even say at a point one two increase or a fluctuation of some kind, because again we try very much to peg that to the work of the

committees and the work of the House itself.

Does that help? Okay.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I know how many people there are over there because I know how many muffins I have to order.

Ms. Frohman: — Thank you, yes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. The other, the rest of the FTEs that are being requested, point zero two at human resources/payroll, financial administrative services that . . . why even ask?

Ms. Kaminski: — We're letting you know that there has been an increase, very minor increase in the hours. And I don't even know offhand without going to check but there's a very small increase in the number of hours for the non-permanent person to assist on the financial side. So at the end of the day we have to equate it to the number of hours that we're asking for, what does it mean for FTEs, so we're advising you that there's been a slight increase.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — If there was changes made in how some of the accounts are calculated and recorded, would that make a difference in the necessity for this small increment?

Ms. Borowski: — Depending on the changes, yes, I think it would. I'm not quite sure exactly how much, but changes to the way we process or account for — and I'm guessing you're talking about members' expenses in this particular area — would affect, you know, the number of people that are required.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Would that affect be downwards?

Ms. Borowski: — Depending on what you do. It could be. I know we've talked about a few things possibly a combination — downwards, yes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. And I guess this would be the same for the communications and technology of point zero three and the Sergeant-At-Arms, he's getting the big increase at point one two.

Ms. Kaminski: — The Sergeant-At-Arms I know was for a relief person to come in for vacation relief.

Mr. Hislop: — CTS [communication and technology services] is sessional staff.

Ms. Kaminski: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So these are basically just to fit within the estimated time that it's calculated for when the House will be sitting and committee services.

Ms. Kaminski: — Yes. CT is related to their non-perm co-op student individual that they have throughout the entire year.

Mr. Putz: — And sessional hours for Ed, the sessional broadcast tech.

Ms. Kaminski: — Right. And Sergeant-At-Arms is for a new vacation relief person for their professional plain clothes constables when they take vacation or leave to allow a person to come to relieve for a couple of weeks. So I'm going off the top of my head here — I can double check the numbers — but I believe the Sergeant-At-Arms is for a two-week replacement which represents point one two of an FTE. Am I correct with those numbers off the top of my head?

Mr. Shaw: — Yes.

Ms. Kaminski: — Okay.

Mr. Putz: — And Darcy's here. He can maybe explain the sessional.

Mr. Hislop: — The sessional is directly related to a broadcast technician that we bring in on a sessional basis, particularly in light of simultaneous committees. We need a fair bit of expertise to run the control room. So we split our two existing staff and fill in one with a sessional person. And we generally grab one of our IT folks and have them act as a camera operator for the other one. So again just an estimate based on sessional activity.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

The Chair: — I'm going to just ask the members, committee, and legislative staff if we could just pause for a few minutes in regards to the legislative budget.

I notice we have Jackie Schmidt and Joel Peterson from Cumberland Gallery, and rather than them having to listen to the long debate about legislative budgets, I'd invite them to come forward and just to make a presentation regarding the Cumberland Gallery and some of their concerns.

Oh, and the other thing is we'll go in camera on this. Oh yes, we need a motion.

Mr. Yates: — I move that we go in camera.

The Chair: — Thank you. And we got a seconder? Ms. Eagles. And the committee's agreed then we move in to camera?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Sorry. Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

[The board continued in camera.]

The Chair: — I'll call the meeting back to order and do we need a motion to move out of camera? We were in camera. I think we may have more questions of . . . Well I do have a couple of questions I was going to do some follow-up on, so.

So if I could have a motion to move out of camera? Glen? And a seconder? Mr. Yates. Further questions?

A couple of questions in regards to the — now where's my paper here — renovations. We've talked a lot about renovations and maybe Darcy could just bring us up to speed as well, where we're at with . . . As you all know, there's been some money set

aside in the last budget year to deal with demolition of the fourth floor, opening it up for a possible committee room. And I'll ask Darcy to bring us up to speed as to where we're at with regards to the demolition. Also there's, I believe, a project looking at some work that's needed on the outside and maybe other proposed renovations that might be taking place in the building.

Mr. Putz: — If I could just start, the outside renovations is strictly a Government Services project, so you might want . . . Dan could answer those better than we could.

The Chair: — If it's not in our budget, we won't worry about it.

Mr. Putz: — So Darcy is assigned by LAS to be our project manager liaison with Government Services for the fourth floor, so he is up to date with what's been going on with the funds that were appropriated last year through the RAR [Refurbishment Asset Replacement] Fund through the board's funding of the demolition of the room. And if you want, at the same time he could talk about what the proposal is for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Chair: — That would be a good idea.

Mr. Hislop: — A quick recap for the 2007-2008 RAR funding was for \$50,000 to begin demolition of the fourth floor space. It was previously a storage space used by both Government Services and LAS for storage of various surplus equipment and furniture. The removal involved taking out the suspended ceiling and a plaster ceiling above that as well as removing drywall around the perimeter edges.

Government Services had recommended an incremental approach to the project, feeling that cost estimates would become more accurate as demolition, removal some of the existing structures became . . . As that went along, potential issues involving the structures or heritage concerns would become better known.

So out of the \$50,000, as they went along, sure enough we did discover a few surprises. There was a couple of skylights located in the space that they sort of slowed the project down. They got heritage involved. They came. They looked at it. You could tell the skylights had been removed and then the original location filled in. They had stored the original skylights above the fixed plaster ceiling. So after much consultation with the various folks, they documented it all, came along with a approach about how to deal with the skylights and documented it, archived it, and packed it all up and came up with a plan to keep the original fixtures here on site to avoid the problem of removing them, documented everything they found out about them. And they would actually be encased in an outside perimeter wall.

We did get an opportunity to tour — Mr. Speaker and Kevin and a couple others — through the space just before Christmastime, I believe. The space is largely cleaned up. They have discovered a few other interesting pieces in regards to some of the interior walls that they thought were added on at a later date that are probably older than they anticipated. The intent is to revise the final design based on the information that

they've learned from that.

And proposed activities for this year involve removing a wood subfloor that brings interior office space up to the level of the light box. As you walk up the grand staircase leading up to the Chamber, if you look up above, there's a skylight. Well that skylight is actually on the floor of this fourth floor and actually has a lighting fixture. So there is actually an office that would have a light box below it that you need access to be able to open up and get in and change bulbs.

If you make any renovations to this space that are to be occupied by people, we have to get it up to current codes and that redoing that slab floor for that light box is one of those things. Putting in a second staircase is another one of those things. Providing access for wheelchair accessible, which means extending the elevator up another floor, is another one of those activities. There are some significant structural issues to be addressed with that.

That being said, it's a fair bit of space in a building that has a significant lack of space and at some point in time it makes sense to develop that. In the couple years that I've been involved with the project, construction costs are going up, SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management] and Government Services had indicated, 1 to 2 per cent per month. This will never get cheaper than it is now. Every month, every six months, every year that we wait, costs will escalate.

I just recently last week got some updated costs and I think there was an outstanding 1.8 million, I think is about 2 million now, just roughly. So costs are going up. And that estimate was with a cautionary note of construction costs are volatile. And so rough estimates, depending on when things go ahead.

So like I said this year they're looking at redoing the wood floor over the light box, installation of a new fire-rated concrete floor slab over that, removal of the existing stair, and a new slab over that stair opening. That's an incremental base.

The Chair: — Are there any other projects that'll be moving forward in the building as far as changes, adding to . . . Someone's brought to my attention that we might be looking at a women's washroom on the main floor. Now is that part of this budget or is that another Government Services? I'll pass it on to them. Has there been any discussion of that nature?

Mr. Putz: — I can bring board members up to date what we know about this. Approximately eight months ago when Speaker Kowalsky was in your position, Mr. Speaker, he was approached with a proposal that we need to find a female MLAs washroom that would be suitable. Right now the female MLAs share a washroom actually with our pages and staff on the east side of the Chamber. And a number of options were pursued, and there is a preferred option that has been selected that has been brought to our attention. We're just now waiting for Government Services to determine whether they're going to proceed with that project either commencing this fiscal year yet or sometime in the next fiscal year.

So we've been advised of a location for this washroom, and we've been making the necessary accommodation for staff, our own staff, that'll be displaced by this proposed new female

MLAs' washroom. But to date we haven't officially received notification that construction will commence.

The Chair: — So that isn't an item up for this budget. It wouldn't be a budgetary item in this . . .

Mr. Putz: — Not for LAS. No.

The Chair: — Okay. I noticed one other item on page 13 about the fixed assets of MLA constituency offices continuing with the bar-coding system. Now when you mention continuing, is it . . . I'm taking it, it's not complete. Or are there some changes in regards to what the office lists are and how it's going to be put together?

Ms. Borowski: — Yes there are some changes. Right now with members' fixed assets and with the Legislative Assembly fixed assets there was a tag that was put on, and then this tag was noted and reports were compiled to list, you know, the tag and what went with the tag. Shannon and her group right now . . . and they've just finished some training. We've invested in what we call a bar-coding system which is going to make it a lot easier. And basically it will be the same sort of bar code that you see on, you know, that stuff you purchase at the store, and then they'll be able to scan it. So then it'll make it a lot easier to put together these reports and, you know, it should simplify the whole tracking system of the fixed assets.

So where we are right now is Shannon and her group have done the training that they need to do. Now what they need to do is go through the database of fixed assets, the way it exists. They have to clean it, clean it up to make sure it's consistent so that they can convert it over to the new fixed asset system. And then, of course a lot of that isn't going to get done this year. This year it'll just be a case of moving to cleaning up the old database and starting a new one. And probably next year is when they'll actually start going out and using the bar-coding system to start collecting assets again, new assets, because we still do have the old ones.

And then what they also are going to do is look at preparing reports that will be more useful for members and for staff. It'll accumulate the information much better and make it easier for members and staff to see what's on their fixed asset listing.

The Chair: — Another question I have in that regard, Marilyn, for members, rural members especially, where you're purchasing locally. Once the bar code's on, and say you trade your . . . well the computer has no value. You don't want it sitting in the office. So many times we've just been taking it and getting a bit of credit for whatever value. How does that impact trading that computer off with a bar code? Is there a way of . . .

Ms. Borowski: — Well it would be . . .

The Chair: — Taking that off?

Ms. Borowski: — It would be the same sort of thing that you would . . . There would probably be, you know, some sort of a tracking form that we'd ask you to complete, that would say that you have . . . you know, this particular item has been disposed of or whatever and then that would make its way in.

I'm not quite sure.

Darcy, do you know, with the actual bar code, does it have any particular . . . like it goes then with the asset, I'm guessing, that particular . . . do you know?

Mr. Hislop: — The tags were intended to identify a specific asset. The database record for that asset allows you to reference that to a particular constituency, and it allows you to track different notes, and it allows you to group that. So if a particular asset that had a tag on it was part and parcel of a larger configuration, you can group them all.

A good example is office furniture. You have a corner unit, you have a left return, you have a right return. If that moves out of that constituency office, it gets placed in a warehouse. It's awfully nice to know that it, along with the five other desks, pieces . . . be able to tell which is which. And so this system allows you to track each particular item and group them as they go. And you can move them, tag them, add notes to them. It's either assigned, not assigned, surplus, disposed of, whatever the valid state of any particular asset could be.

The Chair: — Okay. Kevin.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Along the lines with the fixed assets, over the last seven or eight years we've changed the level of what our fixed assets are. At one point we, I think, tagged everything or virtually everything.

Ms. Borowski: — Yes. Initially, yes.

Mr. Yates: — There will be things in our offices, coat trees as an example, that are all tagged. Are you going to retag everything? Are you going to be able to use the same tags, type of thing? Or . . .

Ms. Borowski: — We're just looking at how this conversion process is going to work right now. Right now, the reports of course would list all of those things.

Mr. Yates: — Yes.

Ms. Borowski: — When we convert to the new system, we'll still have those things on there probably. But we're not going to, if it's less than the 250 value that we're looking at, we're not going to, you know . . .

Mr. Yates: — Retag them or whatever.

Ms. Borowski: — Spend a lot of time tracking them. They still will belong to the Legislative Assembly, but they're not likely going to be . . . we're not going to spend a lot of time tracking them. Yes.

Mr. Yates: — And my next question is, is the \$250 amount the right amount?

Ms. Borowski: — To be using?

Mr. Yates: — To be using, from your experiences? We've had it in place for — I don't know, what — two years, two and a half years, three years? Or is there a more appropriate number

that we should review as a board?

Ms. Borowski: — We probably should be reviewing it. I know we initially set that number in sort of consultation with the Provincial Auditor in trying to determine at what point would we be missing, you know, 250. In the end, you don't want to be tracking all these things that, you know, it takes more time and effort to track than they're really worth. But on the other hand, you want to acknowledge that this is property of the Legislative Assembly and it should be looked at.

And I think at the time we picked 250. That captured what was cellphones at the time, but it didn't . . . you know, got away from the coat trees and the garbage, you know, the wastebaskets and the coffee makers.

Now I don't know that 250 captures cellphones, but you know . . . so yes, it's probably worth looking at again.

Mr. Putz: — If I could just add to that. If you notice from the auditor's management letter, he'd like the board to review this and decide whether this remains an acceptable risk as far as assets go.

Mr. Yates: — And I agree with that. That's partly why I asked the question. If we have our own system it might well become easier again to move that number back down to, I don't know, 50 or \$100. Because many things that were once several hundred dollars . . . Today you can buy DVD [digital versatile disc] players for, you know, well under \$100, right — I mean assets that have some value — printers, lots of things that at one point would have been several hundred dollars.

Ms. Borowski: — I think too, if this new system turns out to be quite simple in terms of being able to scan and get a report that didn't require a lot of, you know, a lot of paperwork going all the way around and back and forth, that it certainly doesn't hurt to look at maybe doing a bit more closer tracking than we are.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. On the same issue, tracking of assets. Is there a way of reading these bar codes when you don't have a bar code reader? Because each constituency office isn't going to have a bar code reader to know what the number is on that particular item.

Mr. Hislop: — There is a human-readable number as well. The bar code really comes into effect as efficiency, creating that asset tag and then tracking it. If we go out and do an inventory of an office or if we're identifying material that's coming back to a central location, you just scan it. It will pull up the record and away you go. So there is human-readable numbers on each tag as well.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. Which leads me to another question, something you said. When items are returned from an MLA office, either because the office has shut down or because it's no longer usable, who pays for that return?

Ms. Borowski: — You kind of got me on that one. If members bring it in then of course, you know . . . But otherwise, no. It would be the Legislative Assembly. We would . . . If we need to

send somebody out to go collect it, yes, then we pay for it. It comes out of the Legislative Assembly general. It doesn't get charged to a member.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. That's why I was asking, because I had never seen it show up on any of my accounts. But I was assuming Government Services didn't do it for free either.

Ms. Borowski: — No, no.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Maybe they should but they're not.

On another issue, under your estimate summary by branch, you list an increase of \$51,600 under constituency office administration. What's that increase for?

Ms. Borowski: — That's actually the directive 24 program, so we've increased again. That program right now is based on member spending over the course of a term. And our experience is, is right after an election costs are usually . . . members do a lot of purchasing after an election. So we've increased our provision for directive 24 by about 50,000.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Just a couple of questions about the proposal, metal detection systems. It's noted that six legislative assemblies and the House of Commons have metal detection systems. Saskatchewan being that we don't currently have that in place. What other assemblies are in the same position as Saskatchewan?

Mr. Shaw: — The same as Saskatchewan?

Mr. Hart: — Yes, where we don't have . . .

Mr. Shaw: — Manitoba.

Mr. Hart: — Manitoba.

Mr. Shaw: — I believe Nova Scotia and PEI [Prince Edward Island].

Mr. Hart: — Okay. And the proposal would be to . . . I know in some assemblies, well at least the last time I was in British Columbia, in Victoria — then that was quite some time ago — they actually had the main entrance to the building locked, and the entrance to the public at least was off through a side door.

Under this proposal, I would hope we're not looking at something like that. That just seemed to really distract from the overall experience of the building and that sort of thing. And it just seemed to herd everybody off through this little side door.

So I guess basically what I'm looking for is an explanation as to how you would see this, where you would see this set up, and how it would operate, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Shaw: — Well initially, we'd like to get two portable metal detectors that we would use to scan people going into the

public galleries. And then phased in over a four-year period, we would want to put in permanent ones at the front entrance, at the Prince of Wales entrance, and at the rear service entrance.

Mr. Hart: — But the initial plan is for portable scanners.

Mr. Shaw: — Yes.

Mr. Hart: — And you would . . .

Mr. Shaw: — Yes. And intersessionally then, if we needed to . . . Say we had a demonstration or something, and people were going to be allowed in to sit in the galleries, we could . . . or, pardon me, meeting in the building, we could scan people as they came into the building. So they would be something that we could move around and utilize in the various areas of the building.

Mr. Hart: — So these portable scanners, is there something you can just set up and people walk through?

Mr. Shaw: — Yes.

Mr. Hart: — It's not the hand-held wands or anything like that?

Mr. Shaw: — Well, there's both. Because as you've had the experience of going through an airport, and if you beep, they wand you down then. It would be the same thing. And basically the ideal situation is to have it just like the airport — have a walk-through and a baggage. If somebody's bringing a briefcase in then that would go through and you would X-ray that, similar to the machine that we have down in the mailroom. And then the walk-through metal detector to scan the individual for weapons or improvised explosive devices.

Mr. Hart: — Okay. And on page 43 is the breakdown of the costs and the fees over a three-year period.

Mr. Shaw: — Right. And if we were going to permanently install something, of course we'd have to work with heritage branch to make sure that it was aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the design of the building and so on. And that's where the big cost comes in. And if I can impart to them what I have in my head, I think we can make it relatively unobtrusive and without too much cost involved. Well not as much as I'm thinking they may want.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you for that.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Same vein of questions. What use would the portable detectors be if there was a permanent system put in place?

Mr. Shaw: — Well we would use those upstairs as a supplement to . . . for the galleries.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — So if the permanent ones were in place, you would be scanned entering the building; further you would be scanned again going into the galleries.

Mr. Shaw: — Correct.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Is there a need for that much scanning?

Mr. Shaw: — Well I mean if you have them, I don't see it's a problem. It's not to say that somebody while they're in the building can't pick up something. It's for the MLAs' protection in the House, the Speaker's protection, and everybody that works in there. Certainly it's a secondary. It wouldn't . . . the ideal is to check everybody coming in at the public entrances.

And, Mr. Hart, I agree with you. I don't like that idea of having the public relegated to coming in a side entrance as opposed to coming through the main entrance. I know New Brunswick is just going through that as we speak, reconfiguring how the public comes in. And I don't care for it. It really detracts from the building and the whole idea of being a public building and the building of the people, for the people. I agree with you there.

The Chair: — Thank you, members. Seeing no further questions, we will now . . . First of all, thank you to the Clerk and the staff of the Assembly for being with us and answering the questions. And I'll now have a motion to move in camera and we'll get into the discussion.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — I'll so move.

The Chair: — Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, second by Mr. Yates. Committee agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed.

[The board continued in camera.]

The Chair: — We will call the meeting back to order and ask for a motion to move back out of camera.

Mr. Yates: — So moved.

The Chair: — So moved by Mr. Yates and Mr. Hart. The committee is agreed and it's carried.

Okay. We've had some discussion around the table regarding the budgets presented by each one of the independent officers. And we'll begin with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the discussion around the table agreed that the budget presented by Mr. Gerrand would be approved, so I need a mover and seconder:

That the 2007-08 estimates of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of 151,000 and further that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

So if I could get a mover on this. Mr. Hart.

The Chair: — Have we got a seconder for that motion?

Okay. Is there any discussion on that motion? Seeing none, is

the committee agreed with the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

The second item of business is the budget for the Chief Electoral Officer, and I will ask for a motion to accept the estimates of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of \$1,070,825 — no that's right, 825,000 — be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair. A mover? 70,825, right, sorry about that — \$1,070,825.

Moved by Dan, second by Kevin. Any discussion on the budget question? The question's been called. Are we agreed? Oh, sorry about that. Sorry about that. Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fund that we've allocated here, the \$1,070,825, is the base amount asked for by the Chief Electoral Officer but does not include the amount he asked for for election preparedness preparation, since there is a fixed election date in place now — or will be when the legislation is completed — for 2011. We felt that it was premature to include this in the budget at this particular point in time.

The Chair: — Further discussion? Seeing none, is the committee ready to accept the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Chair: — Committee agreed with the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

Moving on to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and a mover to the motion:

That the '07-08 estimates of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$821,800; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Have we got a mover to this motion? Mr. D'Autremont. And a seconder? Do we have any discussion around the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner? Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. This is not the request that the Information and Privacy Commissioner requested, but we feel this is more appropriate at this particular point in time. That is still a significant increase in his budget but is not to the extent that he wished.

What we are proposing and moving is that personal services be \$600,000 — that is a reduction of \$136,000 from his request; that contractual services be 130,000; advertising, 10,000; travel and business, 32,000; supplies and services, \$9,800; and equipment and fixed assets, \$40,000 — for a total of \$821,800.

The Chair: — Is there further discussion on the motion? Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would check the math. I don't believe that adds up to \$821,800.

The Chair: — Members, it's been brought to my attention, it would be a lot simpler if we had these on even numbers. Instead of 821,800 — 822,000. Are the members agreeable to that motion, or I mean that change? 822,000 — so we're agreed to change it and round it off to the nearest . . .

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — We can make supplies and services 10,000 even. That'll round it off to 822,000.

The Chair: — Okay. The Chief Electoral Officer will have to move up 175,000 to 1,071,000. Is the committee agreed to round it off to 1,071,000 from the 825, moving it up 175?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. So we've agreed, so the committee's agreed to move the Information and Privacy Commissioner's budget as changed to the 1,071,000.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. We'll move on to the Provincial Ombudsman.

A Member: — Chief Electoral Officer.

The Chair: — Pardon me? Well no, we hadn't had the motion carried on the privacy and information . . . Oh, I might have given you the wrong number. Sorry about that. Yes. Right. Sorry about that. 822,000 off the top of my head. Great.

Now we'll move ahead with the Provincial Ombudsman. And I need a motion:

That the 2007-2008 estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved as submitted in the amount of \$2,068,000, as follows: budgetary, to be voted, 1,898,000; statutory, 170,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A mover to the motion? A seconder to the motion? Have we a seconder to the motion?

Questions regarding the Provincial Ombudsman's motion? Seeing no questions, is the committee agreed with the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you.

Move on to the Children's Advocate. A mover:

That the 2007-2008 estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved as submitted in the amount of \$1,531,000 as follows: budgetary, to be voted, 1,361,000; statutory, 170,000; and further, that the estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Moved by Ms. Harpauer, seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Is there any discussion regarding the Children's Advocate, the motion? Seeing none, is the committee agreed with the motion as presented?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you. Now we need a motion here. Marilyn, you had some questions here. Okay. I wasn't paying any attention either. I was reading the numbers, but we need a motion that all the motions would read '08-09.

So could I have a motion:

That we correct the previous motions to read '08-09.

My apologies for not paying attention.

Do we have a seconder to that motion? I would take it there's no further . . . Mr. Hart will second the motion about correcting the dates. Any further discussion? Is the committee ready for the question?

An Hon. Member: — Question.

The Chair: — Are we agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Members, under item 10(a) we have decision item, directive #21 which was passed out to you in the minutes while we were having the motion prepared for the Legislative Assembly budget, where it says:

Directive #21, annual indemnity and allowance as revised, be adopted to incorporate changes as effected by minute no. 1652 and minute no. 1659, and that the date for monthly payroll payments be changed from the first working day of the following month to the last working day of the current month.

I have a mover to the motion. I believe this comes out of a BOIE [Board of Internal Economy] meeting, previous meeting.

Mr. Yates moves. A seconder? Mr. D'Autremont. Any discussion on the motion? Is the committee agreed to accept the motion as presented?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

And I'll just take a moment as of item 10(b) and Margaret will pass out, table some items regarding the New Democratic caucus audit and auditor's opinion for the fiscal year ended March 31, '07, which was tabled in the House in December '07; the Saskatchewan Party caucus audit auditor's opinion for the fiscal year ended March 31, '07, tabled in the House in December '07; and the MLA accountability and disclosure statements for the fiscal year ended March 31, '07, tabled in the House December '07.

So noted. Well is there any other business to come before the committee tonight? Just was wondering if there's any other

business to come before the committee tonight for discussion. Great.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Maybe the Legislative Assembly's budget.

The Chair: — I was just covering all the in-betweens till we had the numbers completed. I need a mover to the motion:

That the 2008-2009 estimates and action plan of the Legislative Assembly be approved as submitted in the amount of \$22,841,000 as follows: budgetary, to be voted, 7,925,000; statutory, 14,916,000; and further, that the 2008-2009 amortized expense for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$90,000; and further, that such estimates and amortization expense be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Do I have a mover?

Mr. Yates: — Does this require an additional motion to indicate that we want to have a further meeting and discussion about the disbursement of the RAR fund?

Mr. Putz: — Yes it will, because as you see in your budget document, we've given you options. I think that if you add them all up, it's \$273,000, so we're expecting some guidance from the board on what projects they'd like to proceed in the next fiscal year. So you'll need to consider those and let us know so that those then form part of what we do in the next fiscal year.

Ms. Borowski: — Do we need a motion on that?

Mr. Putz: — I think we'll need a motion when we come back at another meeting to make that final decision. At this point in time I don't think we need one.

The Chair: — . . . to that motion but to this motion in particular we really don't need to have that anyway. We'll just make note of the fact that we're going to give direction for that 272 . . .

Mr. Putz: — You've approved the full amount of the fund. You'll just have to decide how to apportion the fund into the various projects.

The Chair: — Just one second. Any questions to this motion as it was presented with the . . . Mr. D'Autremont.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. I was going to address the issue that Mr. Taylor raised as well. The gallery, the Cumberland Gallery, came forward looking for a request for \$25,000 grant for operations for the next year, for '08-09. Their previous request had been for 18,000. We didn't add an additional \$7,000 into that request but feel that the Legislative Assembly can find it within their budget to allocate an additional \$7,000 to support the Cumberland Gallery.

As well with the RARF program, as has been the discussion, the actual expenditures in there will come back to another meeting for the allocation for that.

The Chair: — Do we need a motion, or is that explanation fine? Do we need a motion for that? No, okay. Thank you.

And I think we have one further motion before us that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh I'm getting ahead of myself here. Time's running by here. Are there any further questions on the previous motion about the Legislative Assembly budget? Any further questions? Is the committee agreed with the motion as presented?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. One further motion before the committee tonight:

That the 2008-09 revenue estimates for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$5,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Can we have a mover for this motion? Have a seconder to the motion? Moved by Mr. Yates and seconded by Mr. D'Autremont that the revenue expenditure of \$5,000 be moved forward. Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Chair: — Committee agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Any further business for the committee from anyone? Darcy.

Mr. Hislop: — One question. Would it be okay if I have the test lighting removed from the Chamber?

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

The Chair: — Seeing no further business coming from the floor, this committee stands adjourned.

[The board adjourned at 20:07.]