



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 1 — January 24, 2023

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Randy Weekes, Chair
Biggar-Sask Valley

Mr. Terry Dennis
Canora-Pelly

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Hon. Everett Hindley
Swift Current

Mr. Matt Love
Saskatoon Eastview

Ms. Alana Ross
Prince Albert Northcote

Ms. Nicole Sarauer
Regina Douglas Park

[The board met at 09:00.]

The Chair: — I'd like to call the meeting to order. Joining us today from the government are the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, the Hon. Everett Hindley, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Alana Ross. And from the opposition, MLA Matt Love.

I would like to have a motion for two things. The approval of the proposed agenda for today's meeting, could I have a mover and a seconder? Mover, Minister Harrison. Second, Mr. Love. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. And also I would like a motion to approve the minutes from this meeting. Could I have a mover and seconder? Minister Hindley, mover. Seconder, Mr. Love. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Item no. 1, I would like to table the *Mid-Year Report on Progress* for the period of April 1st to September 30th, 2022 for the Legislative Assembly Service.

Information and Privacy Commissioner

The Chair: — Item no. 2, a decision item, a review of the 2023-2024 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Ron Kruzeniski, Information and Privacy Commissioner, and ask that before he does his presentation, he introduce his officials. We have 30 minutes set aside for presentations, just roughly 20 minutes for the presentation and leave some time for questions. But you know, that's just a rough guide. Mr. Kruzeniski.

Good morning. Any time that you're ready, you can start.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I'd like to start with introductions. To my right is Diane Aldridge who is the deputy commissioner and has been with this office a good number of years and certainly has a great knowledge of the office and who'll be here to assist me in answering any questions.

To my left is Tristan Hungle, who is the director of corporate services. This is Mr. Hungle's first time attending the board in this position and is responsible and has helped me prepare the estimates that are in front of you today.

I know our presentation and our request has been circulated. And before discussing the actual request, I'd like to talk a little bit about the last year, and it's been a good year. In the past I've come to this board and asked for funding for additional staff, and I assure you this year I am not asking for additional staff. And I think the important thing is that the file load this year has gone down, and we've really been able to make some progress in terms

of closing files and turning around files quicker.

So I first would like to refer you in the presentation to . . . Starting at the bottom of page 7, there's a chart there and then there's two more charts on page 8. And chart no. 1 starts to tell the story. And if you look there, files opened in 2022 it was 259, and that's down from the previous year. And why is that important? Well it's important in the sense that if fewer newer files are coming in, we were given the opportunity to focus on existing files and allowed us to in effect close a number of those and in effect start to catch up.

If you look at chart no. 2 at the top of page 8, it kind of continues that story when it talks about active files open. And you can see that we had an increase in files open, but by the end of 2022 we were down to 80 files open. Again that ability to focus on existing files and get them closed.

Chart no. 3 is the one where we still need to do some work, but we've certainly had progress. At the end of 2022, we were issuing reports, on average, in 288 days.

Now we have a target and that is that it is our wish that we would be closing all files within 180 days or six months. So we have some room to improve. But the way we are going, it's my prediction — and I know it's risky to make predictions — but I think by the end of 2023, we will be at or pretty darn close to closing files within 180 days.

I really believe that the citizens of the province and the public bodies we work with, when these issues arise, that they need what I call quick decisions. They need to be able to deal with it. The citizen needs to know whether we recommend release, and the public body needs to know whether we agree with the position they've taken or where we're recommending some change. So our hopes and desires and wishes for 2023 are in effect to be issuing all reports in 180 days.

Before I talk a little more about the estimates, I want to take a moment to talk about other goals that we have for 2023. And it starts at page 2 in the presentation. I'm not going to go through all of them, but I want to flag a few.

One of our goals is, if everything continues the way it is, that we go back and start to upgrade our resources. We have started work on our guide to *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which we call the *Guide to FOIP*. We have other guide work to do and other resources. And the whole purpose of having the guides up to date is just making it easier for everybody that works with us to kind of know what the legislation says and what the expectations are.

Another goal, and we've had this one in the past, is to continue to promote annual privacy training. I'm sure all of you have heard about breaches that have happened in our province and across the country. I think the latest news is the breach at the Sick Children's hospital in Ontario. And what experts say is many, many breaches start with an employee doing something maybe unintentional, accidental, that somehow gives the hackers a back door to get into our systems. So there's a real need to focus on data security. And part of that is every year I'm giving training updates to staff, and we need to promote that.

We want to promote organizations using their websites. When people file an access to information request, it creates work for the public body but also, if the citizen is not happy, for our office. And the more information, the stuff that's regularly requested over and over again, if we can encourage organizations to put that on their website, hopefully in due course it just assists the whole system and takes less time.

Another goal is to promote the safe transmission of personal health data, and this involves sort of lessening or eliminating our reliance on fax machines. Many of our breaches that occur in the province occur because a fax gets misdirected and goes astray. A very recent case out of Ontario: one hospital had 981 breaches, a good amount of those caused by misdirected faxes. We have the issue here, maybe not as in large numbers as that one, but it certainly catches your attention to the problem that we have.

Another goal we have is to promote wherever we can whenever legislation comes in front of the Assembly, the modernization of the professional statutes. The legislature gives professions the privilege of organizing and issuing licences, and we in the public rely on licences, whether it's a lawyer or an engineer, a doctor or a dentist, a nurse. But we need to know when difficulties occur, what is their discipline process? Who's under discipline? So we continue to promote those organizations putting up as much information on their website as is possible.

I'm repeating myself here, but that goal of getting all our reports out in 180 days and dealing with any summary advice, when people call us, within 72 days.

If I can turn now to talk about the estimates that we provided to you, some assumptions. We have not put in a COLA [cost-of-living adjustment] clause. That hasn't been determined system-wide, and therefore it is just not there, and I guess has to be dealt with at a later date.

We have included something for performance reviews. We kind of follow the same approach that the Public Service Commission follows, and staff within range receive increments depending on their performance.

We've got rent increases. Those come from SaskBuilds. And we've included 2.3 per cent for other operational increases.

In total we're requesting a budget of \$2.605 million. And if I can just touch on a few of the items that make up what we've requested.

The increase over last year is \$85,000. In that there's components of some things of relatively small amounts. Again I note there's no request for additional funding of an additional position. And I do thank the board over the last three or four years for approving funding that allowed us to increase staff and I think have allowed us to kind of get control over our reports.

We have a request in there for security protection. I talked about the Sick Children's hospital breach. We have an eHealth breach. Eastern Health in Newfoundland had a breach. Sask gaming and liquor had a breach. The Ontario liquor board commission had a breach. Security breaches are out there and they seem to be happening more frequently. In our materials we don't say "if" a breach occurs; it's almost "when" a breach occurs. And when we

get a report of a breach, we are sometimes critical of what the organization has done or has not done. And it made us realize that if we make this transition, the last thing we need in the *Leader-Post* or *StarPhoenix* is a headline saying, Privacy Commissioner's been breached.

[09:15]

So we've been studying some things. With Tristan Hungle's help here, we're trying to develop things that we can do to in fact increase our security. And that's why we've asked for that \$20,000. We have some plans in place that, if you approve, we will act on almost immediately.

We've included, as I indicated earlier, a cost of operations increase of 2.3 per cent. SaskBuilds has notified us that our accommodation or rent budget will go up by about \$7,000.

Performance review, we've included in there an amount of \$28,000 to cover any in-range movement that takes place.

And finally, we put in something called a salary realignment. I haven't requested this before. But in hiring you sometimes indicate what you think you will spend, but somebody is the successful candidate or the best candidate and they come from somewhere else where they're at a higher salary. So they usually get the offer and it puts pressure on the budget. Also there have been some reclassifications as we reorganize. We estimate that this salary increase is \$36,000. We feel that we can absorb some of that by vacancy management or other ways, and thus are requesting \$25,000.

So as a result, I'm requesting that the board consider a budget for the coming year of \$2.605 million. I certainly thank the board for their support in the past. Thank you for listening to me today, and I, plus my deputy commissioner, will try and answer any questions you might have. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I'll open it up for questions from the board. Any questions? Minister Hindley.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thanks, Commissioner. Just one question here I think. Accommodation increased, the rent at 7,000. Was there a rent increase last year? I don't recall.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — I'm going to . . . There might have been. This is one of those numbers that we don't negotiate. Prior to coming here, we usually get a notice indicating what they expect our rent will be. They have their formulas for calculating it, and to date we've never quibbled. But I don't recall if there was an increase last year. There might have been. I can get that number for you after we get back to the office.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your presentation.

Chief Electoral Officer

The Chair: — We'll move on to item no. 3. The decision item is review of the 2023-2024 budget and motion to approve the statutory estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Saskatchewan.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Michael Boda, the Chief Electoral Officer, and ask that before he does his presentation, please introduce your officials. Mr. Boda.

Mr. Boda: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting us to discuss our coming budget for the fiscal year '23-24 with you and with board members. So good morning, everyone.

Beside me I have Jennifer Colin. Jennifer is our chief operating officer at Elections Saskatchewan and our deputy chief electoral officer. And with me, behind us, we have Richard Hall — he's our executive director for the Office of the CEO [Chief Electoral Officer] — and Aaron Thompson, who is our director of finance.

So with your permission, Mr. Chair, I'd like to take about 20 minutes to offer an overview of our budget estimates document to highlight some of our plans for the coming year and really for the next two years as we set the stage for our 30th general election, scheduled for October 28th, 2024 which, as the countdown clock in our office reminds us, is 643 days from today, or about one year and nine months. So start counting.

And you know, that might be a significant amount of time for some organizations, but it's right around the corner for an election management body and for potential candidates. So do mark that on your calendars.

So I'd like to move ahead, with your permission, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Please go ahead.

Mr. Boda: — Okay. Well you've read in our budget submission that I have described the upcoming election as an historic one for our province. Bringing forward significant change to something as important as our voting process cannot be taken lightly.

Those of you who've been on the board for some time will have heard me use the analogy that an election system is more akin to a cruise ship than a speedboat. We can change course; we can turn the ship. But we cannot do it quickly, and we can't do it without seriously considering the impact lest the ship turn over. Of course it's my job, my responsibility, in fact, to ensure that this doesn't happen, and that's why I've been intentional about bringing forward change in a manner that I know is both achievable by Elections Saskatchewan and is acceptable to our stakeholders across the province.

Modernizing Saskatchewan's election system is something I've been focused on for the past decade as CEO, and this board has been an integral partner from the very beginning of these efforts, something I'll speak to in a few minutes.

Of course an election management body is always focused on the date of the next general election, but we're here today to talk specifically about year three of our cycle, fiscal year '23-24. And to begin with, I think it's best if I describe a few of the challenges that we face but also to highlight what we're doing to address those challenges. Our submission lists both the assumptions on which this budget has been built along with noting various institutional challenges that my office faces moving forward. I'm not going to speak to all of them, but I would encourage you to look from pages 5 to 9 to get a fuller sense of these.

The first challenge I would mention, one that I included last year but remains outstanding, focuses on the upcoming overlap of municipal and provincial election dates. On October the 28th, 2024, the province will host its next general election. Just over two weeks later, the province's municipalities will hold their own elections. I've written two CEO papers, discussion papers on this and have recommended a solution, that being to move municipal elections to May 2024 and every four years thereafter.

Now I appreciate that this is not an easy problem to solve and that there are many stakeholder groups and many opinions on how to best move forward, including remaining with the status quo, as government has indicated it intends to do. For today I want to reiterate, however, that I do not believe voters, political stakeholders, parties, and candidates are well served with elections two weeks apart in the fall of 2024. There are other options, and we can do better as a province to ensure both the provincial and municipal elections are given adequate time on the calendar in order to avoid the problems that such overlap creates.

A second challenge I want to mention has to do with the possibility that an early election might be called, leading to a fixed date of October 28th, 2024. I want to be clear that I don't dispute the legislative authority of the Premier to call an election early. Given the historic nature of what we are embarking on as a province in 2024, I need to be sure that everyone involved is making such a decision by understanding the impact that calling an early election would have.

And I'm speaking both about an actual early election call and the impact that strong speculation by key figures in the province could have. In 2020, just the speculation of an early election led to the cancellation of planned modernization activities — what we called advance voting services modernization — which would have seen technology introduced at advance locations in about half the province.

In the current election cycle, this kind of speculation would again almost certainly lead to the cancellation of planned modernization activities. It would mean we spend more money, as we would need to, to make rapid shifts to our planning position, purchasing supplies and procuring equipment at a much more rapid pace.

I'll end my summary of this challenge by noting simply that I cannot prepare for two different elections at once. Elections Saskatchewan does not have the manpower, the resources, or can it manage the risk involved in preparing for a second election if historic changes are to be implemented. To be straightforward, for this particular election, one in which we're moving toward change that will influence the way that we are moving forward in the decades ahead, I'm going to have to rely on our partnership with you to ensure certainty in the process if we're going to be successful. If an election earlier than late October 2024 became a real possibility, I would have to shift towards preparing for a traditional election and abandon the plans we've laid out together, regardless of the impact it would have on long-term plans we have agreed to together.

A final challenge I need to mention relates to our plans for modernization and the role that you have as the Board of Internal Economy. Recent changes to *The Election Act* mean that as CEO, I'm able to put forward directives authorizing modernization to

our election system, but I need to secure approval from you as a board. While I understand the reasoning and the rationale in having legislators hold final approval over the design of our voting system, the approval step does add an additional layer to our planning and development of modernization.

In a few minutes I will outline the process I intend to follow with regard to the CEO directives and how I'm hopeful that we can collaborate to facilitate change to our election system. My hope is that through active communication and understanding of timelines we can work together to ensure that our system can modernize in a way that's supported by legislators, in a way that's consistent with the modernization framework that I've been putting forward for many years now in a variety of reports — most notably volume 4 which I tabled last October.

So having highlighted three of our most pressing challenges, I'd like to offer a closer look at priorities we've established for FY [fiscal year] '23-24 as part of the budget we have submitted.

Board members who've reviewed our budget in the past may recall that we have, for 10 years now, differentiated between two types of costs, an approach that's consistent with best practice in election administration. The first type of expenses are classified as ongoing administrative expenses — so office rent, staff salaries, utility bills, so on. The second are those directly related to administering an electoral event. It's these event-related expenses that rise and fall with the election cycle. Ongoing administration costs are relatively flat from year to year, typically rising with inflation.

With our ongoing administrative budget, the primary story this year relates to inflation and the pressures that come with it. There is no one line item or category which has risen sharply, but simply a number of smaller increases across the board. We've experienced some savings in our staff category simply due to the presence of new staff members at different salary levels or at different positions within the salary ranges. Given inflationary pressures, we're projecting an increase in administrative spending at 5.7 per cent, less than the StatsCan annual inflation rate from November of 6.8 per cent, but an increase all the same.

[09:30]

Transitioning to the electoral events side of the budget, I'd like to note some key priorities that we will pursue during this third year of the electoral cycle. These priorities relate to preparations we're making to deliver the province's coming general election, doing so with integrity and security while facilitating accessibility to the ballot.

Consistent with last year's presentation, I want to initially focus on two primary items that are part of our overall modernization activities for 2024 and then turn back to spend some time on some other key items we're working on this year.

Our first key priority for the coming year is on making further progress to our voter services modernization project. Now I've used the word "historic" to describe the changes that we are envisioning, and I want to emphasize that this should not be taken as hyperbole. What we're trying to achieve together is truly historic.

A voting location from the province's first election in December of 1905 wouldn't have looked that different from our 2016 election or even our 2020 election, COVID precautions notwithstanding. My aim is that come 2024 that will no longer be the case and that we can implement technology in a way that preserves the integrity of our system while adding significant benefits. Because quite simply our system of administering elections is too reliant on an army of short-term, primarily one-day workers. The current system is just not sustainable moving forward.

Now earlier I had mentioned how integral this board has been with respect to the discussions we've had on modernization. Well moving forward, the board will continue to play an integral role by approving these directives that will set the parameters for modernization. Those directives will be the first item that we will work on together, and we'll begin moving forward before the end of the fiscal year.

My plan is that the very first directive that I provide to the board — and I expect that this will be in the next few weeks — will be what I will refer to as a general directive. This general directive will set the stage for the key and more specific directives that will follow, outlining more specifically the elements of modernization.

The general directive will not contain every detail but will instead list the general areas that will be covered in future directives. My hope is that the board will approve this general directive, allowing my office to continue working on the detailed process documents that go into preparation while also ensuring, as we draft and submit subsequent specific directives, that we will already know that the board will look favourably on the direction that we are moving.

I'll leave the topic of voting service modernization for now, but I'm looking forward to sharing my vision and formalizing our approach in the weeks ahead. This is an exciting time for our voting services system, and I very much look forward to working with you on this.

The Chair: — Thank you. I'll open it up for questions.

Mr. Boda: — I'm sorry. I'm not quite done.

The Chair: — Oh, sorry.

Mr. Boda: — Is that all right?

The Chair: — I thought you were done.

Mr. Boda: — I will be done soon. Second of our key priorities for the coming fiscal year is our continued work on our new election management system. For those who are new to the board, an EMS [election management system] is a software tool that allows a modern election management body to function and to deliver an election. An EMS does things like securing and tracking voting locations, the management of election workers including assigning workers to specific locations. There are a variety of things that the EMS does and it truly sits at the heart, at the very heart of the work that we do.

Since my last budget, we've made significant progress on the

EMS which as of quite recently has been named SEMS, the Saskatchewan Election Management System. Several modules within SEMS are complete or will be substantially complete before the end of the fiscal year. Much of the remaining work to be done within SEMS is based on outstanding decisions related to our broader modernization plans. And as those decisions are finalized, progress will be made.

One final point I would make is that we took very seriously the name SEMS, Saskatchewan Election Management System. It's not focused on Elections Saskatchewan; it's focused on Saskatchewan. It's my hope that over time, municipalities in the province will be able to use certain functionality within the system to administer their own elections.

To that end, we have had preliminary conversations with the administration at the city of Saskatoon, and I know they are very interested. In the coming months and years, I hope to expand these talks to other cities. The benefits are obvious. The municipalities would gain access to a system far more robust than they could likely develop on their own, while we can share development and system costs in a mutually agreeable manner.

Now finally, let me briefly mention a few more items that we'll focus on. First there's the recruitment of our FLT. That's our field leadership team. Recruitment is a fact of life for election management bodies, and we'll continue to recruit what I call the class of 2024. We've already begun recruiting returning officers to manage the election process in 61 constituencies and will continue to do this moving forward, recruiting returning officers followed by election clerks.

There will also be our work of procuring supplies and equipment that will be needed in 2024. And I do want to very much emphasize the importance of this, having just come from meetings with chief electoral officers in Ottawa. I sat next to the CEO of Alberta yesterday, and he's in preparation for the coming general election there and just expressed how fundamentally difficult it has been in procuring supplies and equipment and that it is necessary that we begin that process very early, moving forward.

Among these others, there is a final priority I'll mention, and that has to do with continuing to develop relationships with key stakeholders. And this includes all of you sitting around the table as well as your respective political parties. It also includes agencies that we are going to contact with — already in contact with — and rely on if we're going to succeed in 2024. SaskTel is a perfect example. We will need their cellular network if we're going to introduce modernization effectively. It's fair to say that our success or failure is going to depend on SaskTel's cellular network.

And of course there are many others. We list a number of them in the budget document, breaking them into categories: those we serve such as parties, candidates, voters; those we work with to administer voting, the provincial Health Authority, First Nation chiefs and councils; those we contract with to procure various things, SaskTel, Canada Post, etc. It's critical that we have effective working relationships with these organizations, and this will be a key priority, particularly for me, in the weeks and months ahead.

So I want to end where I began, by focusing on how important I expect the coming general election to be for the people of Saskatchewan. It's true that the electoral cycle leading to the 2020 general election was unprecedented as our province conducted a constitutionally mandated election that ensured a continuation of governance in our province. And it wasn't easy; in fact it was unlike any other election that I conducted in what is coming up to three decades of work on elections. And I'm grateful for those in the room, in the Legislative Assembly, in your political parties and across the public service that work closely with us in Elections Saskatchewan to allow the province to succeed in a very trying time.

We've not only seen this abroad but right here in our country, that success should not have been taken for granted. So the period leading to 2020 was certainly unprecedented, but I believe that the current cycle leading to 2024 is likely to be looked back on as actually historic for the long-term impact it will have.

A transition of our election system to the framework that has been discussed with stakeholders over the past decade will introduce a 21st-century approach to elections that will contribute significantly to, and shape, Saskatchewan's democratic processes for the decades ahead.

Just before rising in December, the Legislative Assembly passed Bill 123, *The Election Amendment Act*. Presently our team is assessing the operational implications of that bill and what it will have for *The Election Act* moving forward. Once this assessment is complete, I will, within the framework that is provided in the legislation, come back to you with the general directive I discussed earlier.

For now, I only want to thank you for your ongoing collaboration as we work together to determine the framework for the coming election based on legislation. I want to emphasize my genuine appreciation for your willingness to focus on this being an historic and important change to our election system, and appreciate your patience and support as we work to facilitate a 21st-century democracy in our province.

So, Mr. Chair, Elections Saskatchewan's budget request for fiscal year '23-24 continues to balance an ongoing commitment to providing the highest level of electoral integrity and accessibility during our next scheduled general election, while remaining mindful of the broader economic conditions in the province.

I would ask the Board of Internal Economy to recommend to government that the allocation of \$8,858,209 be approved for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to take some questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I'll open it up to questions. I believe Minister Harrison has a question.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure, maybe some comments and perhaps a couple of statements as well. I appreciate the presentation from the Chief Electoral Officer and appreciate the work that has been done and gone into modernization and recommendations to the legislature through this board as far as the path forward. And you know, I think we've made significant progress in this space, and I would point to what I really think is

a quite unique collaboration that has occurred here in this province over the course of the last decade or thereabouts between the Chief Electoral Officer, between the government, and between the official opposition. I don't think you would find another jurisdiction in the country where you would have had that collaboration result in unanimous passage of amendments to election statutes over now three different cycles, through three different elections, where we have really worked in a very, very collaborative way in moving forward on that.

And I really do want to give a lot of credit to both the Chief Electoral Officer and the official opposition for what has been a very productive, collaborative, good-faith effort in all of this, which really manifested itself again in the last sitting of the Assembly where we were able to move forward unanimously changes to the boundaries, do that in an expeditious way, that we were able to move forward with very substantive amendments to *The Election Act*, which was done in a unanimous fashion in the Chamber as well. And that was the result of a lot of work that went on behind the scenes that included both parties, the CEO's office, and the Ministry of Justice as well who have done great work as far as drafting and implementing direction based on agreement between legislators.

So I want to very much acknowledge that and say thank you to all of those involved in it because it really is a very, very unique process, where you would find in almost any other jurisdiction, you know, significant discussion and in many cases very deep disagreement on how these matters are dealt with.

I would note as well, I mean as far as the budget, the vast majority of the increase is statutory. So I mean there's very little that the Board of Internal Economy can do and by extension, the legislature which approves and the government which proposes any of those matters.

But I would note, you know, the budget . . . just kind of looking back through some of the past documents back to '12-13 when the CEO took the Chair. Budget for Elections Saskatchewan in that cycle was \$2.5 million, and today, you know, we're just about at 9. So there has been a near-400-per-cent increase — not quite, maybe 350 per cent increase — in the budget over that decade, period of time, you know, which I think reflects the fact that there's been very significant work that's gone into modernization.

[09:45]

But I would posit that not another ministry in government has seen a 400-per-cent increase in budget over that period of time. So it has been significant, and government, the board, has been very forthcoming supporting the modernization efforts of Elections Saskatchewan in a financial and political and administrative context as well.

As far as kind of some of the points raised by the Chief Electoral Officer with regard to election timing, I want to specifically address, I mean, speculation. I mean we, as government, can't control speculation that comes from media and third parties and all the rest of it. I want to be very clear. We have, as government, the full expectation that the next election will happen as scheduled. I think it's late October, this one in 2024. I can't be much more clear than that. I mean speculation that comes from

media or others, that's something beyond our control. It is our full intention that that is the election date.

You know, and I'd note as well, just as far as some of the recommendations . . . And I know we've had some discussion both behind the scenes and publicly as well about different elements. You know, we may not always agree with where recommendations come down from the Chief Electoral Officer, but I would say that we remain committed to working in a collaborative way on these things. And I really do think that has manifested itself through really quite a unique process and how we have had consensus on some very detailed changes over the years.

So I really just kind of want to conclude more with a statement saying we've appreciated that partnership, and look forward to it continuing.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Boda.

Mr. Boda: — I wonder if I could just respond by just reiterating how important the partnership has been with this board. Mr. Harrison has articulated that clearly. I feel very much the same. The work that is done between the two sides within the board — government, opposition — but also working with the other registered political parties in order to move our system in a way forward that is free and fair, has been really effective. So I genuinely appreciate that.

I also am grateful, on behalf of my office, for the clarity with which we have worked. There hasn't always been agreement. And guess what? There may not be agreement always going forward, but we have a structure and a framework in which we work effectively. And within this legislation, you have offered clarity to me in a way that I am able to move forward to come back to you with clear directives in which you are clearly able to offer comment, and we're able to move forward together towards October of 2024. So I am generally grateful for this.

And, Mr. Harrison, you are correct that I believe that we have a very different arrangement here in Saskatchewan that we have worked on together over the last decade. And I hope that we can continue to do that work moving forward in working together with both sides of the aisle and my office. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments? Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I'll just join in and also express thanks for your work, and acknowledge the work that my colleagues have engaged in, members who serve on this board currently and previously, to collaborate both with the government and with yourself and your office to move these changes forward.

As someone who is so fairly new to this board, I really appreciate your presentation today, just to reiterate some of the key points from your previous reports and as well as the budgetary asks before us this morning.

You touch on a number of things that really jumped out to me when I read through your report, and I'm just wondering if you could offer any . . . you know, on the current topic of the uncertainty and timing and the extra work that that creates. Reflecting back on this point — it might be kind of a convoluted

question here; I'm hoping you can pick out what my question is — but reflecting back on this stage in the electoral cycle, in the previous cycle, you know, so we're looking at the changes year over year, but of course where it falls in a cycle. How would this compare to that at this point in the previous cycle?

And any other details that you might offer as far as what you had to, with speculation . . . You know, I appreciate the minister's comments that that's not always within the government or the Premier's, you know, ability to control. But with all that speculation, what changes did you have to pull back? And what kind of financial strains did that put on your organization, you know, so late in that electoral cycle? And what have you learned from that experience that . . . I hear a request for a strong commitment from you today for that October 2024, but what did you learn through that experience last time that you're applying at this stage in the cycle?

Mr. Boda: — So I'll start with the first question regarding where we're at in the cycle in terms of the third year of the cycle and how that relates to prior cycles. And I would like to add again how much I appreciate the investment this board had made into our democratic processes in the province, particularly the electoral process, because the fact is that upon my arrival in 2012 the budget was very small. Those who were around know that Elections Saskatchewan was not a professional election management body. It was behind the curve in the country by far. It had four employees, which I found unconscionable.

But that was part of my coming back to Saskatchewan after being abroad for a couple of decades working on elections. I believe that I was given a modernization mandate at that point in discussing it around the table. So this has been a matter of moving forward together, and there was a significant increase in funding in those early years.

What I will say is that — I have the numbers in front of me — that on the administrative side of the budget we have worked very, very hard to flatline, to control that. And from 2017 onwards we have been actually under CPI [consumer price index] in terms of coming forward on the administrative side.

On the electoral events side, that is where you have invested in terms of transitioning the system and making it more sustainable for the 21st century. And that goes up and down depending on what project you're working on. So in terms of administration, we are at pretty much the same, with inflationary additions, as we were in the last third year and the prior third year.

Another thing I would like to just emphasize in terms of cost is I would really encourage you, as a new board member, to go back and look at volume 3 that was written this last time and the prior time as well. Volume 3 focuses on the vision that I've had for controlling the cost of elections over the longer run. If you go back in time, 2007, 2011, 2016, our elections were increasing overall the implementation by 50 per cent, and I wanted to get that under control. I've been determining how we can get that under control.

For 2020, when I put forward the cost of elections or the budget for the 2020 election pre-COVID, we had flatlined. We'd been able to get that under control. And that is what the goal is for the longer run and really, frankly, is part of what we're doing in

terms of modernization and trying to figure out how we can get this under control for the longer run by reducing our reliance on 12,000 people to run an election — reduce that.

But we are going to have to replace that by technology. There's no other way to do this. So it's a matter of trying to determine how, in the longer run, we can control costs. We may not be able to do that in the first cycle as we introduce technology, but we're trying to control those costs. And volume 3 really will give you that bigger-picture understanding. So that's your first question.

The second question really has to do with speculation. And again, I want to reiterate that I am not questioning the Premier's ability to call an early election, particularly when there's a minority government. That's not the issue here.

The issue really is that we are entering into a very transitional period, a historic period, which will require a partnership arrangement. To go early would throw everything off in terms of being prepared to transition a system we've had in place since 1905 and get the 12,000 people to work together to move forward. So that speculation undermines our ability to offer stability to democracy so that you can compete as candidates and that there aren't questions that are raised about how the system works.

In the past cycle, in early 2020, there was speculation about an early election call and that had costs. And those costs were about \$1.75 million because we had to transition away from moving towards technology. But the big cost was really we had to hurry up. We had to bring people in and start preparing immediately, and those costs go up when you're not doing that methodically moving forward. So there are costs.

Elections in Saskatchewan have been about a \$30-million enterprise, but that would have been the cost back then. There was that issue but then COVID came and things changed drastically. But it was that that made me have to pull back from introducing technology in 2020. It wasn't viable. The risks were too high. And so a decision had to be made, and I made what I believe was the right decision.

Mr. Love: — Thanks, Dr. Boda, I appreciate that. Maybe just my second question here, Mr. Chair, is just related to the challenges of cell and broadband coverage. And you mentioned that you've engaged in some advocacy to see improvements made through SaskTel to make your modernization plan effective and able to be realized in the province. Can you just offer any other detail on that as far as any successes, wins, challenges, and outlook moving forward to ensure that the infrastructure is there for the modernization of our system?

Mr. Boda: — Sure. Going back to the special relationship that we have with the board I think in this province, another unique factor is that we have SaskTel in this province. The access to the cellular network across the country has been something that our office has been very, very focused on. It is fundamental to what we need to modernize, keeping in mind that it's kind of at the heart of what we will require in order to modernize.

So as I say, we've looked at other jurisdictions, but Saskatchewan is unique in that we have SaskTel. And the fact is we are already working closely with SaskTel to ensure that we understand,

moving forward, where the cellular network is strong and where it is not. And to our advantage, to the province's advantage, it is strong in most places in the province. So every constituency will have access to that cellular network.

That said, we have a lot of rural and remote areas where it is not strong, and I would say it would skew towards the remote rather than the rural, because there is very good coverage. But we're already working with SaskTel. We've met, I've met with their senior executives, and we have met with their program team. We have a liaison committee between the two organizations that will be working together moving forward.

So I feel very confident. That said, elections are a very complex process, and I will tell you that we have to work very hard to make sure that we're doing our due diligence and that we are building the capacity to run this election correctly moving forward.

Mr. Love: — I understand. Well, thank you again on behalf of the opposition for your leadership and for your answers here to my questions today.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much, sir.

[10:00]

Advocate for Children and Youth

The Chair: — We'll move on to item no. 4, review of the 2023-2024 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth. I'd like to introduce Ms. Lisa Broda, Advocate for Children and Youth, and ask that before she does her presentation, please introduce your officials.

Ms. Broda: — Good morning. Joining me today is Caroline Sookocheff. She's our manager of finance and administration. Welcome, Caroline.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and hon. members of the board, for the opportunity to present our budget proposal today. We're very pleased to be here. We'll of course do our best to answer questions post our presentation today and provide any supplemental responses after these proceedings.

Prior to making our request for fiscal '23-24, I'd like to make a few introductory remarks. I've had the privilege and honour to serve the children of this province as the Advocate for Children and Youth for the past three years, during which Saskatchewan, the other provinces and territories, Canada and countries across the world have endured some extremely trying times.

Sadly, the issues facing children and youth never end. The needs of children were high prior to the pandemic and have only worsened since then. Those who respond to calls to help children or who work to support children and their families, providing them much-needed services, know this, and our office certainly knows this.

We often hear people say the children will get through this; they're resilient. However young people have been put to the test.

And while we know children and youth are indeed resilient, we also know they continue to suffer greatly.

The overall mandate of the Advocate for Children and Youth is not only to act as an independent voice for children but to make certain they receive services to which they are entitled and to seek sustainable, long-term systemic change that benefits all young people in Saskatchewan.

Our work includes educating government, agencies, communities about our office and to educate children about their rights and to make recommendations to government on legislation, regulations, policy, and practice that align with the interests and well-being of children. It's through advocacy, investigations, public education, and our research that we work towards better systemic outcomes to hold governments to account for the services they provide.

We do this impartially and unbiased, fair and transparently, and we also operate under the foundation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Saskatchewan Children First Principles, and Touchstones of Hope.

These core functions of our mandate and the principles that guide our client service delivery are vital in this province to children. The ongoing issues facing Saskatchewan children and youth are substantive. They're progressively complex and have increased within and across systems post-pandemic and intensifying as we continue to deal with it.

Families reaching out for services are facing more barriers than in previous years due to a variety of issues systemic in nature. Our office continues to see children impacted by food insecurity and poverty, lack of opportunity, trauma, a lack of support for mental health and addictions, and of course the ongoing intergenerational trauma pertaining to Indigenous children, youth, and families due to residential schools. As a direct result, our caseload, both advocacy and investigations, has increased proportionally.

While this is the reality throughout the pandemic, our office has continued to fulfill its mandate in all strategic priorities despite the challenges and constraints the pandemic has presented. We are pleased to note that since the beginning of the 2022-23 fiscal year, our regional advocate staff have been out across the province, meeting with stakeholders, educating the public about the role of our office, and meeting with young people, introducing them to our newly developed self-advocacy workshop.

The result, as expected, has been a significant increase in calls to our office requiring advocacy and increased requests for in-person engagement presentations and information regarding children's rights.

With respect to the number of child deaths and critical injuries this fiscal year, we are again noting an upward trend in child deaths which surpasses all previous years. While we are still unpacking these trends, it's extremely troubling. Equally concerning is that the number of critical injuries has tripled this past year. These injuries pertain specifically to sexual assault and suicide attempts. We're deeply, deeply troubled by this. As to the

contextual nature of these particular injuries, our office is in the process of analyzing these cases to determine what themes emerge or what gaps in services exist.

When it comes to child death and injuries, our office sees a subset sample of what's going on in the province and really regionally, nationally, and internationally. We monitor research trends in this regard to cross-compare our work to that of other jurisdictions for parallel or differential learnings. This allows us to remain current and build knowledge in this area and provides a better understanding of the best way to address issues with government going forward.

With respect to our systemic work overall, this year we engaged in several consultations on legislation such as *The Child and Family Services Act* and policy to support governments and entities in their work towards better outcomes for children. We provide a rights-based focus and make recommendations to ensure that laws, regulations, and policy development address gaps in intervention and prevention that keep children safe and protected.

We also released a major systemic report on the provincial services of mental health and addictions entitled *Desperately Waiting*, of which we made 14 recommendations, the major one a provincial child strategy. Addressing these recommendations will require a commitment, an investment of resources, and support from government now and across sectors and well into the coming years, bringing people and entities and government together to foundationally set up a proper strategy for children that reflects increased investment in early intervention and prevention to interrupt the cycle of issues children face and shift the focus in a positive direction.

The establishment of a strategy such as this is key towards keeping children's interests and needs at the forefront of all sectors that serve children in a manner that prioritizes their safety protection and allows them to grow strong, as the young people today are our next leaders tomorrow.

Now to shift to the tabling of our budget request, our office has continued to adapt and adjust within the context of the pandemic to fulfill our core responsibilities, advance our strategic priorities, and maintain a strong operational team. We continue to engage in ethical and responsible stewardship of our mandate as it pertains to serving children of this province and in managing our financial resources to do so.

By way of example, last year we indicated we've been implementing a new case management system. And I'm pleased to note that this is nearly finished, all within last year's budget allotment.

For the '23-24 fiscal year, you have before you a written budget. I would like to draw your attention to page 7, the details of our funding request. As you will see there, we are asking for some additional funding to cover approved salary increases and estimated growth in the consumer price index forecasted for 2023.

Additionally, we are asking for one-time funding to undertake leasehold improvements to accommodate our office space needs. As indicated in last year's budget submission, our current lease

will be lapsing in just about two years, a little under. To proactively address the situation and the deficiency in space, we are requesting funding for the acquisition and leasehold improvement process with the assistance of the ministry of SaskBuilds.

With that, I respectfully request the Board of Internal Economy recommend to the Legislative Assembly an appropriation for the Advocate for Children and Youth, vote 76, as outlined in page 8 of our submission for the fiscal '23-24 year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission and allowing me to make remarks, and for the tremendous privilege to serve the children and youth of the province. It's with gratitude we do this work, and I'm thankful to our staff for their commitment and passion in serving the children of this province. Thank you. And I'd be pleased to take any questions.

The Chair: — Thank you for your presentation. Any questions? I recognize Minister Harrison.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, maybe just one question. Firstly though, thank you very much for the presentation. Thank you for the work that you do. It's definitely greatly appreciated.

With regard to, you know, the obvious item which is the accommodation one-time request, I just want to get a sense of the discussion and work that's been done with SaskBuilds up until this point. I know in the materials, you know, there's some discussion with regard to projected per-square-foot cost and those sort of things.

I'd be interested in kind of those discussions, and just kind of say as a bit of a statement as well, I mean often what we have done within government — not just, you know, with regard to officers of the Assembly, but you know, when we're looking at these sort of things and not sure as to when the costs would be incurred — is really seek clarity on that over the course of that period of time, working with Builds on it and then coming back for additional appropriation when we have a clear idea as to what it is, which may be where the board lands. I'm not sure yet. But I just kind of want to get a sense though as far as where things are at with Builds.

Ms. Broda: — Thank you for your question. Yeah, we engaged with SaskBuilds about eight weeks ago to sort of understand the process and get their advice about, like what's the outset of timeline that's required so that you can get, you know, sort of have your ask based on some of their numbers. So you know, they said about 18 months you would need in order to secure, and you know, do all your renos or whatever is required to bring the space to fruition. And so with that in mind, you know, we thought this is the appropriate time now then before our next lease expires to start the process. And with that we talked to them about what the anticipated costs would be, and we based our number there based on the cost figures they had given us. And so we can't proceed with them any further till we're sure we have funding.

But I do note that there was in 2013-14, I mean, our office and my predecessor and, I believe, the Ombudsman at the time came back, and it was sort of too short of a turnaround time, so then there was some coming back to the board for the funding. So I would say in summary, and I hope this answers your question,

that we've been working with them about eight weeks, six to eight weeks. The numbers that are there are based on the figures that they've given us and anticipated costs of what the current market is.

And I just will add that it will account for some of it up to, we understand from SaskBuilds, that there's an up-to amount of 40 per cent of tenant improvements that a lot of landlords will offer. So we're fairly certain with the places we may be looking at, according to SaskBuilds, would offer some incentives there upon signing a lease. So you know, we anticipate coming underneath that up-to amount that's listed on page 7.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — No, I appreciate that answer. And I mean, Builds really are kind of the subject-matter experts on the space, so I appreciate your working with them on this.

You know, going back into kind of that time period, '13-14, you know, I was on the board at that point. And there was a lot of work that went into getting the offices into that same place and a lot of work that had gone on on the part of both offices at that time. Government Central Services, I think, was the ministry responsible. So you know, we might be able to maybe chat about that a bit latter too, but I appreciate the response.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, thank you, Dr. Broda, for your report here today. It's good to see you again. I think we've been in the same room three times in the last week. So thanks for all the work that you do. And it was great to see you out at those events in public and doing just the incredible advocacy work that you do for our children and youth.

But in your report you mentioned something that was somewhat troubling, and I hope it troubles all of us. And I'm wondering if you could just share more details on that and correct my understanding if it's incorrect. You mentioned the increase in the serious injuries and deaths and serious injuries including sexual assault and suicide as that's increased by three times. What was the time frame for that? Can you share more details on that?

And I guess my real question is, do you feel like your office is adequately resourced and staffed to address the incredible challenges? You talk about mental health, and in particular as we are not through the pandemic yet, but as we emerge from the pandemic, has a massive impact on a lot of folks in different demographics, but on our young people. Do you feel like your office is adequately resourced and staffed to address these troubling statistics?

Ms. Broda: — Yeah, thank you very much for your question. I appreciate it. No doubt it's very troubling. I can't recall if I noted in our submission, but that was the tripling of the critical injuries is a result of our advocacy in obtaining those notifications from the ministries involved. So before that we weren't getting them. What is probably most important about that is the egregious nature of which some of those injuries, you know, are in front of us. And they all are actually, but you know, some worse than others.

So in terms of your question, we'll put some analysis to that. And I'll speak more to it in our annual report, upcoming annual report

in April. However, to your question about enough resources, yes we are able to manage in our existing allotment with what we have currently. However we'll know more probably through the next year how that actually looks in terms of our review of those cases, our analysis to those cases. But at this point in time, you know, we're confident in our resources to be able to look at these and our entirety of our operational workload and case delivery system.

So I think that the important piece to note is these are from January to December. We started receiving these in January. And so, you know, this is so our first year of putting some analysis to it. And then we can make recommendations out of that work to the governments involved to help them and support them in better practices or better outcomes or, you know, have discussions how we'll move that forward in terms of what interventions may be required to address any gaps in services, or anything else for that matter that pertains to those particular cases, but also in the total picture of deaths and injuries.

Mr. Love: — Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: — Anything else? Seeing none, thank you very much, Ms. Broda.

Ms. Broda: — Thank you.

The Chair: — So we have 15 minutes before our scheduled break. Mr. Herauf, are you prepared to make your presentation at this time?

Mr. Herauf: — To answer, we are.

[10:15]

Conflict of Interest Commissioner Registrar of Lobbyists

The Chair: — The next item is a review of the 2023-2024 budget and motion to approve the budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Registrar of Lobbyists. I'd like to introduce Maurice Herauf, Conflict of Interest Commissioner and office for the lobbyists registrar, and ask that before he does his presentation, please introduce your officials. Mr. Herauf.

Mr. Herauf: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Members of the board, before I begin, I wish to acknowledge the presence of Sandra Arberry, the deputy lobbyists registrar and executive operations officer for the Conflict of Interest office. Sandra's assistance to me is always invaluable. And to show how important we think this process is, I've brought my whole staff with me. And I also wish to acknowledge the assistance we receive from the staff from LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] for their contributions and assistance in all financial and IT [information technology] related matters.

Sandra and I both avoided COVID for the first two and a half years of the pandemic. Unfortunately that changed with the reintroduction of in-person conferences. I attended the commissioners' conference in early September in Yellowknife and came back with COVID. Sandra attended the lobbyists' registrar conference in early October in Quebec City and came

back with COVID. So other than these unfortunate occurrences, COVID required little change in our daily work routine.

On the commissioner's side, the financial disclosure process for 2021 went well again. There was 100 per cent compliance with the statutory timelines, and we're now gearing up for the 2022 disclosure process. And all members will have received notification of their requirements, and so far I can say that 7 of the 61 have already complied and sent in their financial disclosure via our new process.

Anyway, the mention of the 2022 disclosure process provides a good segue to our most significant accomplishment during the last fiscal year. That is the launch of the commissioner's website in October of '22, and a new rebranding of our office and logo.

Our new branding and logo are more reflective of the fact we are a statutory office, but still reflective of our province. We removed the crest and gold lettering and replaced it with an outline of our province with the Legislative Building superimposed with a green background. Our page on the Legislative Assembly website now has a link to our COIC [Conflict of Interest Commissioner] site. The launch of our website brings us in line with most other jurisdictions in Canada that have a stand-alone website.

The other exciting part about the launch of our website, as you already know, is the feature of the fillable online forms for disclosure and gift purposes. This feature should streamline your disclosure process from year to year and make disclosing gifts more efficient. I look forward to receiving all of your private members' disclosure statements via this electronic format.

We have to acknowledge the help of Engineered Code Consulting for their assistance relating to the development of the website. ECC [Engineered Code Consulting Inc.] is the same company that was awarded the contract to develop the lobbyists website and registry. Their name will be mentioned again when I discuss the lobbyist aspect of our budget.

Before I leave the commissioner's portion, I have one rather sad item to note. Ron Samways, who has been an integral part of the financial disclosure process for the past 13 years, will retire at the end of the 2022 disclosure process, likely in May or June of this year. I have stated repeatedly, as has former commissioner Ron Barclay, that the success of this office meeting statutory time limits around disclosure is as a result of Ron's active participation in the process. He will be missed. Sandra will assume this responsibility going forward as well as continuing with her other duties. We will monitor that to see how it all works out.

With regard to lobbyist work, the lobbyists registry, which was launched in 2016, has been relatively free from any significant issues. However, as I mentioned last year, the move to Microsoft 365 necessitates some major changes, upgrades, and costs to the lobbyists registry and website in order to migrate the entirety of these two pieces into the cloud.

This upgrade will be our next major project for this fiscal year. We are once again working with ECC to complete the upgrade. We have worked closely with them to identify the steps and upgrades required, along with what we feel is a workable budget.

They indicate to us that, although the software and program we are using for our lobbyists website and database is aging, it continues to function well enough so that a full-scale overall is not required. We anticipate the cost for this upgrade can be administered out of the budget before you, with the caveat that this would be pending any unexpected expenses such as an investigation.

Administratively, both in-house and consultant lobbyist registrations have been increased, so that has been keeping us busy. We spent a large portion of our time over the past year clarifying the gift rule, specifically as it relates to inviting members to lunches and open-house events.

Now let's look at our proposed budget. Over the past four years the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists has largely maintained a status quo budget, increases largely accounting for salary adjustments and the occasional one-off event. This year is a bit different in that, as I mentioned, our lobbyists registry and website requires some upgrading in order to make it compatible with the changes to our system that we underwent last year during the migration project to Microsoft 365.

Now with respect to salary, my salary as set out in the Board of Internal Economy is currently paid at 100 per cent, based on the average of all deputy ministers and acting deputy ministers, which is the salary of the other statutory officers. Their compensation is fixed by statute whereas mine is not, although there has been some recent movement to codify my salary in *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. And my salary amount as well as Sandra's has been budgeted in line with these comments.

With respect to travel and business, although both Sandra and I contracted COVID after attending our respective conferences, it was beneficial in a professional capacity to attend these in person. I finally, after over two years in the job, have met the ethics integrity colleagues, and these personal connections have already made a difference in discussions and questions moving forward.

We continue to budget for attendance at three professional development conferences, that being the annual conflict of interest commissioners conference, registrar of lobbyists conference, as well as the conference on government ethics and law, which I can mention Dr. Broda is currently the Chair for this current year. The budget for this line item remains largely the same.

Contractual services. The year sees a significant increase in contract services . . . decrease, excuse me. This is largely due to the retirement of Mr. Samways as well as monthly cost savings realized as a result of the migration project.

There's a slight change in communications. We have limited ourselves to printing our annual budget. We have been notified that the printer we have traditionally used has been purchased by a larger company, with a resulting slight increase in printing costs.

In supplies and services, this is the area where you'll see the largest increase. The reason for this can be directly attributed to the lobbyist website and database upgrade. As mentioned, in

working with ECC we feel we have found the best solution to continue using our existing system for a few more years and feel the cost is reasonable, albeit necessary, due to other system changes.

In equipment and assets, there is a \$9,000 decrease in this line area. As I mentioned in the budget submission, I am now the happy owner of new office furniture that is not only functional but does not bear the scars of the rather rough handling by former Commissioner Barclay.

So our final budget request for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists is \$628,000. So any questions?

That concludes my submission.

The Chair: — Questions, members? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, not any specific question, but I just want to say thanks very much to the commissioner, to you and your team — Sandra — for the work that you've been doing. And as always, it seems to be a very long history and tradition of the commissioner having very reasonable and prudent management and requests for the office, and that tradition continues. So I just want to say thank you very much for that, and we genuinely appreciate the work that you do.

The Chair: — Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I'll express my thanks as well from the opposition for the work that you do. And I did have several questions about your drawers that "actually close," but I'm just glad that you have a desk that works now. And thanks for the work that you do and for the report here today.

Mr. Herauf: — Thank you, Mr. Love.

The Chair: — Well I have a question. Not going to let you get off easy. Just a question about how busy . . . how many applicants for the lobbyist side of your portfolio. Is it an increasing number, or could you just give an idea of what's happening there?

Mr. Herauf: — We have this right up to date, Mr. Chair. All lobbyists last year was 830 registrations. This year, to date, it's 873, so it is increasing. And part of that is a result of amendments that came into effect just after I started in 2020, where charities had to register if they were lobbying, if they had more than five staff members. So that accounts for some of it.

But it's generally just a natural process if there's more going on in the province and there's more people interested in lobbying fine gentlemen such as yourself and the board members for various things.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. If there's no more questions, we will take a 15 . . . Well we will reconvene at 10:45 with the report from the Ombudsman and public interest disclosure. So be back at 10:45, please.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

[10:45]

Ombudsman Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

The Chair: — Okay, colleagues we will reconvene now after our break. Decision no. 6, a review of the 2023-2024 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. I would like to welcome and introduce Sharon Pratchler to her new role as Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, and ask that before she does her presentation please introduce any officials. If not, go right ahead with your presentation.

Ms. Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because we had some positive tests in our Regina office last week, I took the precaution of not inviting — or disinviting, I guess — my financial people from Saskatoon to attend just to reduce potential for any spread. But they are a text away and I've been texting with them this morning.

I would like to thank them though for their work on my budget submission and they include my deputy ombudsman and deputy commissioner, Rob Walton from our Saskatoon office; my director of corporate services, Andrea Smandych from my Saskatoon office; the director of communications, Leila Dueck, from my Regina office; and Niki Smith, my superuser on my case management system and a complaints analyst on the front line from my Saskatoon office.

I also want to make a number of other thank yous to people from Legislative Assembly services who provided valuable assistance to me since I started my position on November 1st. There were quite a number of things that needed immediate attention upon the commencement of my duties as Ombudsman and commissioner.

I've had the most exceptional level of support from the staff in the Speaker's office, Sheila Sterling and Twyla Wilson. I've also had the benefit of very sage advice from Dawn Court and Sonya Leib who is my contact person at Legislative Assembly services on the financial side and of Tammy Gedak and Hanna Ly on the human resources side. As well, Levy Bay of Legislative Assembly services has helped with getting all my new hires set up and established, which numbers four since November 1st. To all of these wonderful folks, I just wanted to extend my thanks.

Secondly, as I mentioned in my budget submission, every day my team and I are grateful for the work we get to perform. We talk every day about fairness and how to accomplish fairness, and we recognize how privileged we are to do that work. We are also very fortunate to have very good space in both Saskatoon and Regina that meets our needs to a T, and we have the support of our building managers and Deputy Minister Kyle Toffan from SaskBuilds and Procurement who have a particular understanding of and support for the work we do.

The population we serve, a good proportion of the population we serve is marginalized and low income, and that is always reflected in our approach to things and how we manage our budget. A more recent example to the ones provided in my budget submission, the written submission, is a discussion that I had with my team about what sort of long service recognition they would like. Their preference was for a low-key, in-office

event that didn't pay a lot of fuss to them. I have the privilege of working with a highly dedicated and passionate multidisciplinary team who are sensitive to the population we serve and the potential perception of how we spend money among that population.

Our request, my budget focuses on the needs of my team to consistently deliver timely and efficient service. The best metric to demonstrate that is this past year's outcomes on delivery of services. Our goal is to resolve 90 per cent of cases within 90 days, and that's an optimistic and ambitious goal. For the last calendar year, my team in fact resolved 97 per cent of our cases within 90 days, which is a fantastic, knock-the-lights-out number. This was in fact an improvement over the previous year of one percentage point, and that result was achieved even though we were down by as much as 25 per cent of our staff for most of the year. So that's a fantastic result for my team.

Many of my staff have been with the office for 10 years or more, so they are able to very quickly and efficiently resolve matters. They've invested years in building relationships with members of various ministries and the entities that we engage with, so they often resolve matters simply with a phone call. Our work is very much like an iceberg, with our annual report reflecting the work that is visible, while much of the work is done every day below that surface simply from making phone calls and making the system work better. With some few exceptions, there is a high degree of responsiveness from the entities we engage with in relation to which we receive complaints.

The most profound experience since becoming Ombudsman was being invited to attend the discovery announcement on Star Blanket Cree Nation. A member of my team is also a member of Star Blanket. Chief Michael Starr invited me to be in community for the announcement. My deputy from Saskatoon, who drove down my member of the staff, and I attended to provide support to our team member and to the community. We brought gifts of tobacco, broadcloth, and flowers.

As my deputy described it, it's one thing to see on TV these announcements; it's another to be in community when it happens. I was introduced by Chief Starr to the other chiefs in attendance from the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council and was also introduced to Chief Bobby Cameron.

The pin that I wear on my lapel is a replacement for a pin that I left with a survivor in the receiving line at the end of the announcement. And we were all invited to come forward and touch the teal box which contained the remains of the four- to six-year-old child that had been discovered by part of the security team. I left tobacco at the box.

In addition, I handed one of my fairness fidget spinners to another survivor, and I explained that the triangle in the middle of the spinner represents fairness. And she responded by saying, that is what we all need right now. The image of the teal box containing the remains of the child will remain with us as we do our work, and we will continue to support our team member from Saskatoon on her healing journey.

Turning to our funding request for 2023 to 2024, we are requesting funding for salary increases as well as the increased cost of goods and services. No funding is being requested for

program growth, but rather we are focused on maintaining existing operations and maintaining our level of service. Our office has a strong record of being fiscally responsible. In preparing our plan for 2023 to 2024, we were mindful of the government's emphasis on controlling expenditures and identifying efficiencies with a focus on recovery, stimulus, and the growth plan 2020-2030.

Our 2023-2024 funding request is for 4,534,000 — 82,000 more than our 2022-2023 budget. All of the increase is associated with increased operational and wage costs. Twenty-five per cent of the 82,000 relates to non-salary expenses and is consistent with the CPI projections provided in the 2023-2024 budget call. The total cost for performance pay and increments related to salary is expected to be \$57,000.

In response to the question, Minister Hindley, that you asked earlier of my colleague, Mr. Kruzeniski, we receive rent increases every year that are small in nature. 0.6 was the percentage for this coming year for the Regina office, and if we sign a new lease or move to a new location there's always a larger, much larger increase in our costs. Twenty-five hundred is the increase for our Regina office, which is not significant relative to our lease and we do get really good value for money from Central Services and our building manager.

In asking for the increase to our appropriation, we are simultaneously managing other pressures to our existing appropriation. This past year, for example, we developed our new case management system within our 2022-2023 appropriation. That project involves not just the installation of a new case management system but also the decommissioning of our old server and replacement of our IT infrastructure with a new server and backup server.

I'm pleased to report I met with all the involved parties last week. Have been having ongoing meetings, but particularly last week was a key meeting. Our developer, A.Net, our service provider, Lexcom, and our electrical engineering consultant, Al Thibeault, all confirm we're on track for our March go-live date, March 10th, which will see us transitioning from the BC Ombudsperson's system to a Saskatchewan system located wholly in Saskatchewan.

Though we've kept the design of our new case management simple to meet the core needs of our program, we expect we'll see level 2, 3, 4 as we go on. But we've started very simply just to meet our key needs.

If further work is required after implementation, which is pretty likely given it's a new system, we'll hope to manage those costs through our existing appropriation. But if we can't do that, we'll come back to the board.

I want to also speak about the work we are doing on our classification system for staff. An important piece of work that we'll undertake in February is the review of our classification system. This was identified as one of the issues leading to a retention issue in our front-line staff, five out of seven complaints analysts that we've turned over in the past year. Despite an evolution in their role — they're the ones who review complaints to ensure they're within our jurisdiction and attempt to do early resolution, with an increasing emphasis on early resolution —

they continue to be two classification levels below the investigators. So it's a significant disparity, and so through the classification review we hope to address that.

This issue was identified during my 360 review which involved a one-hour interview with each member of our staff in both our Saskatoon and Regina office. And the questions were simply: what do you like most; what do you like least; if you had a magic wand and were me, what would you change right now or long term; and is there anything else I need to know?

I'll do a summary of the 180 handwritten pages that I obtained through that process and do a follow-up with each member of the staff and give them each 15 minutes. And I'll tell them why I did what they asked or why I couldn't do what they wanted, or whatever else they need to be told in response to what they told me in the 360 review.

There's a real lack of fit between the public service classification system and our needs, and from talking to ombudspople across the country, that's a consistent problem across the country.

It's our 50th anniversary this year but we are not asking for any additional appropriation to fund events. We are not big gala people, but we'll be doing public education events in the community, with maybe one event like a garden party or a tea. We are simply doing a brand extension of using a tag line on our logo for the 50 years instead of refreshing our logo. It will likely be 50 Years of Fairness.

As we re-engage with community outreach, we have many engagements upcoming which include a presentation to all the Justice lawyers tomorrow with my team; doing a presentation in a group home in Regina as part of a life skills program for residents so they are aware of our services; presenting to the intersectoral mental health group in Saskatoon in a community church, which includes representatives from the Saskatoon Tribal Council; presenting a keynote speech this summer on inclusion and accessibility for better citizenship experience at the Public Sector Network conference to talk about innovations. We will also be restarting our training programs in 2023 for social services and municipalities, which were paused, in 2023. So it's all about getting back out in the community and resuming our work.

[11:00]

One of the pressures which we would not be able to absorb in our requested appropriation is a change in our office space or our location in Saskatoon. We understand there's a request before you regarding space for the children and youth advocate. I just want you to know, because we are currently co-located on the same floor, any change in their space has a significant impact on us.

And just to give you some insight into why our Saskatoon location and space is so important in the delivery of our services, our office is in geographic proximity to pretty much all the agencies and entities that are within our jurisdiction, or a good chunk of them. So if someone is unhappy with services after attending to one of these locations, they literally can walk to our office and talk to us. We are located close to the income support services, child and family, Saskatoon City Hall, Saskatoon

police, Workers' Comp, and SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance].

We are also close to the Gathering Place which, if you're not familiar with that service in Saskatoon, is support for refugees and immigrants. And we are close as well to the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] and the other organizations that work out of their building and provide services for newcomers and other members of the community.

We have a secure underground parking for our staff. Why that is important is because we have safety issues. If we have a volatile individual at the front counter, which we do, we will be asked by the staff — and they have expressed concern in the past — about getting to their vehicle safely. So we are ideally located to get them to their vehicle safely, because they only have the pass to get to the parking. And in fact I just received a notice on Friday that there's increased security being placed in the building so that you'll have to use your pass card to get into the building and have to call in to get services, so we'll have to figure out exactly what that looks like.

We also have a gym located in the building, which is unusual but is important for self-care for my staff because they literally are dealing with complaints all day and de-escalating people. And so to do that effectively, they have to stay de-escalated and calm.

And finally I will end as I started by returning to Star Blanket and our engagement with Indigenous peoples, which is one of my priorities. Very unusually, our office building in Saskatoon has a full kitchen with a stove. This is not luxury location by any means. It's a very small, compact, very well-thought-out design. But what I would say and share with you is that my team member Sherry Pelletier, who is a member of Star Blanket, has a tradition of making bannock in that kitchen for our staff, and more recently for a tea-and-bannock reception we hosted regarding trauma-informed practices. Serving fresh-baked, still-warm bannock on location on such an occasion was significant and remarked upon by the Indigenous people that were present.

Our plan is to host a treaty flag installation ceremony in our offices this year. And I plan to return Chief Starr's invitation and ask him to attend along with a member of his band that is a member of my team. And I will ask her, and I expect she will gladly prepare bannock for her chief when he attends. And the symbolism there is huge.

I don't know the details of the proposal being put forward by the child and youth advocate in relation to our co-located space. Of course I flag that any change there impacts us.

I should note that in those four recent hires of complaints analysts, they are actually located in the Regina office because I don't have space to add any staff in Saskatoon, but their manager is located in Saskatoon. So we've had some interesting discussions of how we move forward with that. So we certainly could use more space in Saskatoon if that's possible.

Those are pretty much the high points of my submission and I'm certainly able to answer any questions that you may have.

The Chair: — Thank you for your presentation. I'll open it up to questions from the members. Minister Harrison.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Not really any particular question, but I just want to say thank you to you and through you to your staff for the work that the office has been doing. And I know how busy the first couple of months have been. And kind of interesting hearing first-hand from you on that transition and how it's going. So I just want to say thank you. No particular question with regard to the submission. Very well done and appropriate.

Ms. Pratchler: — Thank you, Minister Harrison. And I have a fantastic team and I will pass your comments on to them and they will be appreciative.

The Chair: — Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I'll join in and I want to thank you for the way which you've taken on this role and you shared about that 360 review. And you know, I'm sure that's a lot of extra work on your plate to touch base with everyone within your organization that's just looking to you as a leader. And I think that that personal check-in time and follow-up, I'm sure it would have been significant for all of those folks. So thanks for doing that.

Maybe just a bit of a question here just for my own clarity with your office needs. So you've talked about the ways in which your office functions in terms of, you know, issues around not just professionalism and services to the public, the clientele that you serve in seeking fairness in our province, but also the needs for your staff around self-care, hosting the types of delegations you might be hosting, and the way in which you'd like to do that in a good way, but also being impacted by the changes coming to the child and youth advocate.

Do you have any specific asks? Like I want to make sure I'm not missing anything. Or are you kind of in a bit of a holding pattern waiting to see what happens? Is there anything . . . What's the best way that I can understand all of those . . . You know, you shared a lot of what your office needs, but is there a specific ask or need that you want to make sure that we are aware of?

Ms. Pratchler: — Yeah. I think that I would be quite happy to expand and take over the rest of the floor to give my staff some breathing space. We are efficient in the use of our space but we're tightly packed in. So I don't know, and certainly everybody has a standing invitation to visit us.

But essentially the office is divided in two with 60 per cent of the space — but probably maybe not even 60 per cent — on the children and youth advocate side. And so we have a straight run down one quarter, so adding two practicum students from First Nations University who sought us out has been sort of a juggling act. So one goes to reception; one goes to an inside office. So if we had more space to spread out.

But it is a chicken and egg for me. I don't know what our needs are and what the impact is until I know what the children and youth situation is. But we certainly are able to expand into the rest of the space and would make valuable use of it. We have a common meeting area and we have a common sort of . . . like it's sort of a meeting area where we could do public education. But we also have a small meeting area that we share with the children and youth advocate.

But there are other resources I can put in place that relate to

self-care but also relate to more engagement with practicum students. Even an articling or summer student I could bring in if I had more space, but in Saskatoon I don't have a lot of space at this point in time.

I would say that we are seeing more requests for engagement as we talk about trauma-informed. That one article that I did, or interview I did with *StarPhoenix* generated a ton of interest from immigrants. In fact I've been talking to an immigrant from Morocco on LinkedIn recently and she's sharing recipes with me and excited about the potential of immigrating to Saskatchewan.

So part of the role that we do is also providing information services. I can't give you a specific proposal at this point because I just don't know what the impact is. I'm concerned about the impact because my staff have been through a lot recently in terms of their workload, and so any additional thing on their plate is significant, so I want to make sure it's managed in a way that's respectful of their needs. And so what would work best for them is to be able to stay and not be disrupted and to, you know, have a bit more room to breathe. For me, the bathrooms are on the other side of the floor, so you know, it's sort of an interesting layout. You know, it's maybe not optimum, but it's pretty good space.

I hope that answers your question. I would say also, FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], their investigator and I, we've had discussions — Jason Stonechild. And there's a lot of interest in ensuring that things that they have in intake are referred to us if they're within our mandate, and that's very significant engagement on their part.

I also am interested in providing them with referrals of cases that I can't deal with because they're not within my jurisdiction and I can't provide support services. They have the ability to provide wraparound services that I can't. So that is a relationship that is starting as well and is helpful for both of us.

Mr. Love: — Thank you. That's very helpful.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments? Seeing none, thank you very much, Ms. Pratchler, for your presentation.

Ms. Pratchler: — Thank you.

Legislative Assembly Service

The Chair: — We will move on to item no. 7. Item no. 7, decision item, review of the 2023-2024 budget of the Legislative Assembly Service: (a) approval of the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund for IT modernization, (b) approval of the Assembly budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates and revenue estimates.

I'd like to welcome and introduce Iris Lang to her role as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and please introduce your officials before you make your presentation.

Ms. Lang: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And good morning to members and to everyone that's here this morning. Before I begin I actually want to take this opportunity to publicly thank you for recommending that I lead the Legislative Assembly Service. The team has a tradition of providing professional advice and

excellent service. That will not change under my leadership. I envision that the LAS will continue to be responsive and innovative in support of services that we provide to you.

Today it is my honour to present my first budget as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. After several decades of providing support and services to the Legislative Assembly, I look forward to leading the team.

Now I'd like to take a moment to introduce the team at the table who has joined me: Dawn Court, chief executive, member and corporate services; Sonya Leib, acting principal director, financial services. And to help answer some specific operational questions, other members of our leadership team who are available: Melissa Bennett, Legislative Librarian; Kathy Burianyk, Principal Clerk; Kari Olson, acting director of parliamentary publications; and Cindy Hingley, executive director, corporate projects and financial services.

I'll provide some brief introductory remarks about the proposed 2023-24 budget, and then I'll hand the presentation over to Sonya, who will walk you through the details.

The challenges and uncertainty brought on by global events continue to impact LAS operations in a different way than prior years. These events continue to result in prolonged supply chain issues and a significant increase in the cost of doing business. Through all of this, we continue to be mindful of the importance of adaptable and sustainable service delivery.

At this time, I wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank the LAS team for their support. I appreciate their resilience and for adapting to the organizational challenges we have faced over the last several years. I look forward to their continued dedication as we work together through the challenges and opportunities ahead.

[11:15]

In 2023-24, the LAS will stay focused on ensuring the continuity of our services to the members of the Legislative Assembly while continuing to enhance service delivery and modernize our service delivery. You'll find key goals in the first section of the budget document. The actions for the 2023-24 outline our plans to enhance client services, support priority initiatives, and focus on modernizing several technology-based systems and services. So if you're following along in the book, we're on page 5.

Now getting to the budget before you, on page 11 you'll find the principles and assumptions that we used for the budget. In developing the 2023-24 budget, we endeavoured to be fiscally responsible, mindful of the province's current financial situation, and respectful of the information provided to the Board of Internal Economy by the Minister of Finance.

As one of our budget development assumptions, we used an estimated increase of 2.3 in the consumer price index. This affects members' indemnity and additional duties, travel and living allowances, caucus resources, and constituency services. The actual CPI adjustments has recently been provided as 6.6 per cent. We did anticipate a much higher rate than 2.3, and we are confident that our modest adjustment accurately reflects expected total member expenses, as member travel and expenses

have consistently been below budget.

Our next assumption is that our base funding for LAS salaries incorporates in-range progression but no cost-of-living adjustments. This is consistent with the public service.

The cost of goods and services have increased, and we also applied the same modest increase of 2.3 per cent to existing goods-and-services budgets. Our budget is based on the standard 65 sitting days of the Assembly and the ordinary time for meeting and adjournment.

Finally, changes to security services in this building resulted in savings in the Sergeant-at-Arms budget. We are recommending that some of those savings be redirected to offset increases in members' allowances and other high-priority areas. The overall budget represents a modest increase of \$175,000 or 0.58 per cent from last year. That's found on page 13 if you're following along. And 65 per cent of the Legislative Assembly budget is statutory, which includes services for members. So total statutory funding for 2023-24 increases by \$214,000 to \$19.583 million. The increase, as I said earlier, is due to CPI adjustments to members' payments and expenses. And if you're following along, that's on page 16.

The non-statutory portion of our budget represents 35 per cent and includes funds for the LAS and the Office of the Speaker. The non-statutory portion decreases by \$39,000 to \$10.618 million. This decrease is a result of a proposal to utilize the savings in the Sergeant-at-Arms budget to offset increases required for enhancements to parliamentary services, LAS operations, and the reinstatement of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association grant.

I'd like to turn the presentation over to Sonya who will walk you through the specifics of the 2023-24 proposed budget.

Ms. Leib: — Thank you, Iris. Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and board members. Our budget is comprised of four main components shown in the chart on page 13 of your budget book: members and Office of the Speaker with a requested budget of \$19.742 million, or 65.37 per cent of the total budget; Legislative Assembly Service operations with a requested budget of \$9.85 million, or 32.61 per cent of the total budget; Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund with a budget of \$350,000 or just 1.16 per cent of the total budget; and interparliamentary associations with a requested budget of \$259,000, which represents 0.86 per cent of the total budget. As Iris has indicated, our budget submission provides for an overall increase of \$175,000, or 0.58 per cent.

I will now direct your attention to page 14 as I focus on the details of our budget proposal. I would like to begin with last year's total budget and walk you through the year-over-year change to arrive at our proposed budget for 2023-24.

The 2023 budget approved by the board was \$30.026 million. Increases for '23-24 include a net increase to member payments and allowances of \$214,000 comprised of consumer price index increases totalling \$261,000, partially offset by reductions to transition allowances in the amount of \$47,000.

Proposed funding for enhancements to support parliamentary

proceedings in the amount of \$243,000. This funding is needed for the development of a digital format of the Assembly's records and provides \$165,000 for required consulting fees and \$78,000 to hire a digital publications specialist to lead the implementation and support the ongoing maintenance and improvement of digital publishing functions; increases to LAS operations totalling \$413,000 to provide a human resources consultant to address increased service requirements, a project manager to manage the delivery and timing of existing and upcoming projects in the LAS, an ongoing budget for conservation and digitization of items in the Legislative Library collection, access to an Indigenous advisor to assist in truth and reconciliation efforts, funding for net branch pressures including the in-range progression and CPI increases on goods and services. These increases can be completely offset by the savings from the Sergeant-at-Arms budget of \$870,000 to achieve a status quo budget.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association did not gather throughout the pandemic. As a result, funding for the CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] grant was suspended. With the CPA resuming its regular activities and events, we're reinstating the CPA grant at \$175,000 in '23-24.

This brings us to our '23-24 proposed budget of \$30.201 million. Page 15 provides our summary of appropriation and expense by subvote, including our breakdown between statutory and non-statutory amounts. This summary is presented in the format used in the Ministry of Finance's estimates display. Further breakdown of statutory and non-statutory expenses is provided on page 16.

Page 17 identifies our revenue estimates as \$10,000 for the upcoming fiscal year, which is unchanged from last year and a number of years, I believe.

The last section of our budget document, beginning on page 18, is the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund or RARF. Last year the board approved RARF at \$350,000 per year for a five-year term that ends March 31st, 2027. In recent years, RARF projects have largely been dedicated to enhancing the physical security of the Legislative Building and its surrounding precinct. With the transfer of that responsibility to the newly established legislative district security unit and the ever-increasing advancements and demands on technology, the LAS wishes to shift focus of RARF funding to its technological infrastructure to better support the Legislative Assembly.

The LAS is proposing that RARF funding be fully dedicated to information technology modernization. The LAS has identified a number of priority areas such as continued migration to Microsoft's M365 environment and the redevelopment of the legislative tracker application which are outlined on pages 18 and 19.

In closing, we feel that this budget will provide advancements to our service delivery while responsibly managing our resources. The Legislative Assembly Service remains dedicated to serving the Assembly and the people of the province effectively and efficiently. I would like to thank you for your time and consideration of our proposed budget for '23-24 and now invite any questions you may have for us.

The Chair: — Thank you. Open it up to questions. Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — First if you can share anything with the committee on . . . I see an overall significant savings from the Sergeant-at-Arms' operating budget, but were there any costs associated with the reduction in that office, the moving of offices within the building, and the creation of the, you know, creation of the new office? Where would those costs be represented in this budget?

Ms. Lang: — They wouldn't be represented in the budget because they would be costs associated with this fiscal year. So we haven't done the quarterly report. So at some point there will be an update to the board as to what the actual costs are. I haven't seen in total what that looks like yet.

Mr. Love: — Okay. So we can expect that in the next quarterly report for the actual costs?

Ms. Lang: — Yes.

Mr. Love: — Okay, understand. Thank you. I'm good for now.

The Chair: — Any other questions? None? Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Lang: — Thank you.

The Chair: — We have extra time here. I'm wondering if we should do item no. 8. After 8 we're going to go to in camera, but would you like to . . . We have the officials here so we'll move on to item no. 8: other business, proposed changes to directives #3.1 and #4.1 and to the members' capital asset and disposal policy. I would again introduce the Clerk, Iris Lang, to lead the presentation or introduce any new officials.

Ms. Lang: — Actually I'll pass it off to Dawn and her crew. They did the work on this particular item so I'll leave it up to Dawn and her team.

Ms. Court: — I'll just open that up for you. And I think before you, you have a copy of the directives and the proposed amendments to those directives — and those are highlighted in yellow — as well as the members' capital asset and disposal policy as well is in there and those recommended or proposed changes are highlighted for you as well. If you want specific details about what's in here, we can get Krista to speak to you on that.

The Chair: — Yes, go ahead. Questions?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I wasn't really going to ask a question. I mean I think that, number one, we want to just say thanks, Dawn, for the work that has gone into this. The Opposition House Leader and I have gone through it, and I think this is very much a representation of what we had discussed, and you know, a reflection of the fact that there's some evolving changes with regard to bylaws and the requirements that go along with that for property. So I think this is a very accurate reflection of what we had discussed. So I don't really have any questions and I think we're good to go forward.

The Chair: — Mr. Love, you're good?

Mr. Love: — I'm good.

or tracked on the Member's Capital Asset listing.

The Chair: — The motions for item no. 8, the first one is:

When the Member ceases to be a Member, no disposal authorization is required as the Member is deemed to be the owner of the assets."

That directive #3.1 be amended by adding after clause 7(a):

“(v) Property checks for insurance purposes;

Mover? Minister Harrison. Second? Mr. Love.

(vi) Property maintenance services in accordance with the City of Regina, The Community Standards Bylaws, Part IV — Maintenance of Yards and Accessory Buildings, Clause B(1).”

The next motion:

That directive #4.1 be amended by adding after clause 21:

A mover, please?

“The only exemption is the purchase of security system(s) outlined in Clause 4. When the Member ceases to be a Member, the Member is deemed to be the owner of the security system(s). Please refer to the Members Capital Asset and Disposal Policy.”

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison moved. The second? Mr. Love. All in favour?

Mover, please? Minister Hindley. Second? Mr. Love.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

We will reconvene at 1 o'clock. Thank you.

[11:30]

[The board recessed from 11:33 until 13:01.]

The Chair: — Carried. The next motion is:

The Chair: — Okay, colleagues. Could I ask for a motion to move into camera? Ms. Ross. We don't need a second.

That directive #3.1 be amended by adding after clause 7(c):

[The board continued in camera from 13:02 until 13:15.]

“(vii) Property checks for insurance purposes;

The Chair: — Okay, colleagues. We're coming out of camera at 1:15 p.m. We have a number of motions and we'll start with item no. 2:

(viii) Property maintenance services in accordance with the City of Regina, The Community Standards Bylaws, Part IV — Maintenance of Yards and Accessory Buildings, Clause B(1).”

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 55, Information and Privacy Commissioner, be approved in the amount of 2,605,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 2,366,000; statutory, 239,000; and further,

Mover, please? I recognize Minister Hindley. Second? Mr. Love.

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

The next motion:

That directive #4.1 be amended by adding after clause 4:

Mover, please? Minister Harrison. Second? Mr. Love. All in favour?

“A Member may choose to use this provision to purchase and install or upgrade a security system in their primary residence and secondary accommodation in the amount of \$2,000 per residence totalling \$4,000 per term of a Legislature.”

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mover, please? I recognize Ms. Ross. Second? Mr. Love.

The Chair: — Carried.

Okay. The next motion:

Item no. 3:

That the Members Capital Asset and Disposal Policy be amended by adding after clause D 3)(ii):

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer, be approved in the amount of 8,858,000 as follows: statutory, 8,858,000; and further,

“Exemptions

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

Security Systems

Mover, please? Minister Hindley. Second? Mr. Love.

Further to clause 4 of Directive #4.1 — *Constituency Service Expenses*, security systems purchased and installed in a Member's primary residence and secondary accommodation will not be asset tagged

Item no. 4:

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, be approved in the

amount of 3,026,000 as follows: budgetary to completed, [The board adjourned at 13:22.]
2,787,000; statutory, 239,000; and further,

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

Mover? Ms. Ross. Second? Minister Hindley. All in favour?
This is the important part. All in favour?

Item no. 5:

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 57, Conflict
of Interest Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists, be
approved in the amount of 628,000 as follows: budgetary to
be voted, 628,000; and further,

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

Mover, please? Minister Harrison. A second? Mr. Love.

Item no. 6:

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 56,
Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner,
be approved in the amount of 4,534,000 as follows:
budgetary to be voted, 4,295,000; statutory, 239,000; and
further,

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

Mover, please? Mr. Love. Second? Ms. Ross. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Agenda item 7(a):

That for the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Refurbishment and
Asset Replacement Fund be approved for information
technology modernization, 350,000.

Mover, please? Minister Harrison moves. Second? Mr. Love.

Item 7(b):

That the 2023-24 expenditure estimates for vote 21,
Legislative Assembly, be approved in the amount of
30,201,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 10,618,000;
statutory, 19,583,000;

That the 2023-24 revenue estimates for vote 21, Legislative
Assembly, be approved in the amount of \$10,000 as follows:
revenue to be voted, \$10,000; and further,

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

Mover, please? Minister Hindley. Second? Mr. Love.

Any other business? Seeing none, I'll entertain a motion to
adjourn. Ms. Ross. This meeting is now adjourned. Thank you.