



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 5 — August 15, 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 13:05.]

The Chair: — Okay, I'd like to call the meeting to order. It's 1:05. And I'd like to introduce the board members in attendance today. From the government, Hon. Jeremy Harrison, Hon. Everett Hindley, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Alana Ross, MLA Terry Dennis, and from the NDP [New Democratic Party] opposition, MLA Nicole Sarauer and MLA Matt Love.

I would like someone to move and second the approval of the proposed agenda. Mover?

Mr. Dennis: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Dennis. Secunder? Ms. Sarauer. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. And if I also could have a mover and secunder for the approval of the minutes from the meeting 4/23. Mover? Ms. Ross. Secunder? Mr. Love. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, I would like to table items 1 to 6.

Item 1, the first quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2023-2024 and the revised human resources and financial management policies for the Legislative Assembly Service of Saskatchewan.

Item no. 2, the first quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2023-2024 and a letter advising of no changes to the human resources and financial management policies for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Registrar of Lobbyists.

Item no. 3, the first quarter financial report for the financial year 2023-2024 and the revised human resources and financial management policies for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Item no. 4, the first quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2023-2024 and a letter advising of no changes to the human resources and financial management policies for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth.

Item no. 5, the first quarter financial report 2023-2024 and the revised human resources and financial management policies for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Saskatchewan.

Item no. 6, the first quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2023-2024 and a letter advising of no changes to the human resources and financial management policies for the Office of the Ombudsman and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Item no. 7 is a discussion and decision item which is the consideration of the proposed Chief Electoral Officer directives, and we have in attendance today Mr. Boda. You're at your seat.

Please introduce your official that you have with you, and whatever comments you have, please go ahead.

Mr. Boda: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the CEO [Chief Electoral Officer] directives and to discuss plans for the province's next general election, scheduled by legislation for October 28th of 2024.

Beside me I do have Jennifer Colin. She's deputy chief electoral officer and chief operating officer for Elections Saskatchewan. Before I start, let me first thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the members of the board for agreeing to meet during the summer months. I understand that this is difficult given many competing schedules, and I and our Elections Saskatchewan team certainly appreciate it.

My hope is that when I depart here today that I will have clarity as to what our general election will look like from an administrative standpoint. As you know, earlier this summer I submitted CEO directives to the board in accordance with legislation, and only the board can offer that clarity.

I've been Saskatchewan's Chief Electoral Officer for just over 11 years now, and I recently took a few minutes and reviewed the very first annual report that I'd written. And even in those early years when my focus was primarily on building a team at Elections Saskatchewan and stabilizing our election system to deliver elections, the need to modernize processes and procedures comes through.

Still, the path to modernization became much more evident after the province's 2016 election. And in my volume 4 report that followed, I laid out a path that would see modernization introduced slowly, methodically in general elections for the 2020 cycle, the 2024 cycle, and the 2028 cycle. As the calendars moved from 2019 to 2020, my office was rapidly preparing to offer a modernized voting experience, complete with electronic poll books and vote-counting equipment in advance polls in about half the province, a key first step in modernizing our election system.

Of course we all know the saying "best-laid plans." The possibility of an early election — combined with this pandemic we had — meant the suspension of our planned modernization activities. All was not lost however as we were able to greatly improve and modernize our vote-by-mail system, something I hadn't originally envisioned to come about until 2028.

Last October I released my second volume 4 report, a document which outlined an updated path forward, continuing down the three-phase path already introduced but updated to account for the setbacks experienced in 2020. Ultimately legislation was introduced that allowed modernization to move forward through the use of CEO directives, but with the requirement that the board offer approval for these directives. On June 30th of this year, I provided the board with a set of six proposed directives. Now I won't discuss the directives in detail, but I will briefly introduce each one.

The first, under the heading of polling divisions, would allow the CEO to modify the legislative instructions around polling

divisions and move away from a strict 300-voters-to-one-polling-division rule, a key first step in any plan to modernize or introduce technology.

The second introduced the idea of polling period, what I refer to as voting week, in place of a traditional advance and election day voting period.

A third CEO directive introduces the use of electronic poll books. For clarity, an electronic poll book, that's a laptop computer loaded with specialized software that allows for voters to be struck off, to take place. This is the technology that allows Elections Saskatchewan to share real-time information on who voted and when with candidates and parties in our ongoing elections.

Vote-counting equipment was introduced in a fourth directive, and please note that this was vote-counting equipment, not a voting machine. All vote-counting equipment does is scan a hand-marked paper ballot and record the results.

A fifth CEO directive introduced the ability to vote anywhere, meaning to vote outside of your constituency.

And then a sixth and final CEO directive provides for a vote-by-mail process, consistent with what we did in 2020.

If approved, these six CEO directives would create a new framework for voting, one that had substantial benefits for voters, for candidates, for parties, and for the thousands of workers that Elections Saskatchewan hires to administer a general election.

I do have a number of important items that the board should consider. First, these CEO directives are written for an election that's to take place on October 28th of next year in accordance with legislation. Should that change, I would need to re-evaluate our options and update the board as to the impacts.

Second, the directives are submitted as written. With each, there are dependencies on other directives, and changes within one could impact a different part of the system.

Third, the operational window for my team at Elections Saskatchewan has all but closed. While we are in the midst of administering three by-elections, we have simultaneously been continuing our planning and preparing for October 2024.

Fourth and finally, I'll discuss the path forward should the board choose not to approve all six directives as presented.

Now I understand from correspondence from the Government House Leader that the government members of the board are unlikely to approve the entire framework I have presented, having particular concerns about the use of vote-counting equipment. I want to be clear about what I've been articulating for many, many months. I'm not offering an opinion. What I'm articulating is best practice and would allow us to avoid significant risk as we modernize our election system in Saskatchewan.

[13:15]

Vote-counting equipment has been used and has proven reliable

in many jurisdictions, including right here in Saskatchewan. The cities of Saskatoon and Regina have used this equipment for more than a decade. To my knowledge, every study of vote-counting equipment — whether conducted by an academic institution or an election management body or even a third-party observer group — has found vote-counting equipment to be more reliable than hand counting, especially hand counting by election workers who have already put in more than a 12-hour day.

And finally, this equipment and the procedures in place when it is used have built in significant measures to ensure the count is accurate and the equipment is functioning correctly. This includes both pre and post logic and accuracy tests along with a confirmation process where a pre-established number of paper ballots, often from a randomly selected ballot box, is hand counted in front of observers.

So yesterday here in Saskatchewan for these by-elections, we went above and beyond the national standard and inspected all ballots counted by vote-counting equipment for the constituency of Regina Walsh Acres, where the closest margin between those who finished first and second was found.

In the other two constituencies, Lumsden-Morse and Coronation Park, a confirmation was conducted on one randomly selected machine and a ballot box. In both Lumsden-Morse and Regina Coronation Park, the count of paper ballots in each box matched the number provided by the machine. It was the same in the larger confirmation in Regina Walsh Acres, and in fact in two of the five boxes, it was those who counted by hand who made an error. And after they recounted the paper ballots, the numbers matched those provided by the machine. This took place yesterday in front of representatives from both of your parties.

The other point I'd like to raise is that modernization, dating back to discussions in my report from 2016, is that vote-counting equipment needs to be paired with electronic poll books. As board members, I have written to you and I have said many times that electronic poll books introduce considerable efficiencies on the front end when it comes to checking voters in and striking them off the list. If this front-end efficiency is not matched with a back-end efficiency, which vote-counting equipment provides, then you have a system which is off balance. And when the system is off balance, you have introduced significant risk.

What are the risks? For complete details, I'd have a look at my May 10, 2023 memo, pages 3 to 5, but basically I said this: there is increased administrative errors due to a mix of technology and paper-based processes; an increased possibility of multiple ballots being deposited in a ballot box; increased likelihood of counting errors; and the possibility that the number of votes in a ballot box will be greater than what a person can reasonably count at the end of the day.

Now I know well that there's considerable rhetoric and disinformation about vote-counting equipment. I understand that there are a very small number in Saskatchewan who would prefer that votes simply be counted by hand, either out of mistrust of the technology or a belief in traditional methods. What I will say is that Saskatchewan is not unique to the problems and issues that have led administrators in Ontario, in New Brunswick, Manitoba, Alberta, BC [British Columbia], many other jurisdictions to transition to vote-counting equipment. And as Chief Electoral

Officer, it's my responsibility to continue advocating for and pursuing this change responsibly.

So I've been clear, clear about what is best practice and what I do not feel comfortable moving ahead with — eliminating half of the technology that has been proposed. At the same time, I have worked with this board for more than a decade now and will again articulate my strong commitment to the rule of law and good governance. I will implement the coming general election in line with the wishes of legislators. I will work to implement an election in line with the instructions that you give, and I can adjust the procedures to compensate for ensuring the integrity of our system. That's what I'll have to do.

This means that certain allowances and compensatory measures will have to be introduced, measures in this case that would account for the absence of vote-counting equipment and would help alleviate risks and work to restore a balance to the system. Given correspondence that I've received from government members of this board, I have given considerable thought to what measures would need to be taken.

A first measure is found on page 7 of my June 30th submission memo to you. I articulated clearly that if the directive allowing for vote-counting equipment were to be rejected, that the board should consider withdrawn from consideration directives related to both electronic poll books and vote anywhere. The directive focusing on vote anywhere, it has to be withdrawn because a vote-anywhere system cannot be introduced without vote-counting equipment.

Ultimately the three directives mentioned will necessarily need to be replaced by two other directives. A first would focus on the scope and use of electronic poll books alone. A second would focus on revisions needed to the count, changes that would compensate for the imbalance and reduced integrity of the system that an elimination of vote-counting equipment brings.

A second measure is to ask you to accept the other three directives related to polling divisions, polling period, and vote by mail, but to make clear that I am likely to need to amend those, particularly with the one related to polling period, in order to bring it in line with the two newly introduced directives.

In the interest of ensuring speedy approval however I want to provide the board with an overview of what this change will mean for the administration of the next election. The inability to use voting equipment will mean a difference in how the election is administered in urban constituencies versus rural ones. Urban constituencies will most likely include the list of cities I provided in appendix A in my general directive submitted on June 12th, including the four largest cities but Yorkton, Swift Current, and The Battlefords as well — essentially any constituency that's fully enclosed in an urban area.

These urban constituencies will have electronic poll books and a more limited footprint of voting locations, and we will rely on the same locations through the polling period. The exact number will be based on the constituency and also on what my team thinks will result in a realistic number of ballots for election workers to count at the end of the night.

Rural constituencies will not use electronic poll books and will

be served in a manner very similar to 2016 and prior. An exception is that the work of our election officials will be made simpler by the use of the voting record, meaning no one needs to handwrite voter names.

Consistent with our approach during the ongoing Lumsden-Morse by-election, we will have limited number of voting locations in the early part of the voting week, and then a larger number on the last day. Our institutional commitment will remain that no voter travels more than 30 minutes to vote wherever feasible.

There are several reasons why we're pursuing an approach with distinct systems in urban and rural constituencies. First, by limiting the use of electronic poll books to urban constituencies, we limit the footprint of technology to a size that my office can support without introducing a level of risk that I cannot accept.

Second, we should be able to access suitable cellular coverage in most voting locations.

Third, it ensures we comply with section 5.4 of the Act, which requires electronic poll books, if they're to be introduced, to be used in all constituencies which are part of a city with more than 20,000 inhabitants, those being Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw. And again we've added Yorkton, Swift Current, and The Battlefords to the list.

Fourth and finally, it results in a cleaner, simpler election for our field leadership team members to implement. Urban constituencies will have technology at all locations on voting days, while rural ones will rely on traditional methods. While introducing a mixed system within a constituency may be technically possible, it would introduce so much complexity and make the administration of the election so much more difficult that I believe it would result in the system shutting down. We can't take that risk.

As I conclude my remarks this afternoon, I want to thank the board for its continued co-operation and its collaboration. In November 2021 the Legislative Assembly appointed me to a second term as CEO. Key to this role is the responsibility to implement an election in accordance with the legislation. But also central to the role is the responsibility to advocate for electoral best practice and to push for responsible, measured change.

If I did not firmly believe that vote-counting equipment was the best option for the province, I would not have recommended its use. And in the coming years, I will continue to push for a modernization framework that was first developed after our 2016 election.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take questions from the board as to my CEO directives or the framework under which our next general election will be administered. So thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Boda. Any comments or questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Sure. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. And I want to say thanks very much to the Chief

Electoral Officer for that presentation, for the work done in the drafting of the directives in front of us here today, for your work during the by-election, and for your work over 11 years. And I've had the privilege of working with the Chief Electoral Officer over that entire period of time as a member of this board and have very much appreciated your professionalism and very much supported, along with our colleagues in the official opposition, your reappointment to a second term as the Chief Electoral Officer.

With regard to the particular and specific decisions in front of us today, we have really, I think the Chief Electoral Officer very well laid out, you know, six directives that go together in three particular cases and three that are probably a little bit separate from the others.

And as the CEO knows, and official opposition, there has been, you know, a significant amount of discussion, not all of it in public, not all of it in the legislature, but very good collaboration in working towards modernization. And you know, really that has been a long-term project that has reflected itself in both legislative change, in policy changes that have required, you know, really very close collaboration between all of the different elements of the electoral system and government, political parties, and the Chief Electoral Officer's office.

So with regard to the proposals in front of us here, we have been very clear, I think, through the process, both in consideration of volume 4 as submitted by the CEO in the drafting of *The Election Act* amendments and going forward over the last number of months as regarding the government's position. Really what I'm saying is a reflection of the discussions within the government caucus which are, you know, I think something that we have really worked hard to come to a position on.

And where we have landed is support for three, outright, of the directives, and that's with regard to the polling divisions, the polling period, and the vote-by-mail directive. So there is strong support from the government for those changes.

With regard to the electronic poll books and the vote anywhere, I would say that there is support in principle for those going forward but understanding that those are, in particular areas, contingent on the vote-counting equipment directive. And on that I think we have a difference of view with the Chief Electoral office and the official opposition as well.

The government's position is a principled position that a vote cast by hand should be counted by hand, witnessed by accredited scrutineers. And that position really precludes the consideration of the use of vote-counting equipment. So I think this is not a surprise to anyone around the table. It certainly should not be. Our view is that votes cast by hand should be counted by hand as they have been in democratic systems around the world going back to Greek democracy and Rome. So I will kind of leave that there as far as the position that we have taken.

What that though leads to is kind of the concluding comments that you had made, Chief Electoral Officer, with regard to the steps going forward because obviously that would mean there would need to be consideration given to changes to the draft directives submitted with regard to both poll books and vote anywhere. So we are fully cognizant of the fact that that means

there are going to have to be changes made to those draft directives. We are supportive of changes being made such that those provisions can be utilized in urban settings: Regina, Saskatoon, and the communities that you enumerated, really where there are enclosed urban areas where you can administer the process without that vote-counting equipment.

[13:30]

So we would ask on the side of government that the drafting of amended directives be undertaken by Elections Saskatchewan. We would give the undertaking from the government side of the board that when able — and I know it's going to take a bit of time for that work to be done — that we would make ourselves available as government members of the Board of Internal Economy on very short order, understanding that there are implementation and operational implications for your office in administering the next provincial election.

So you know, really in summation, I mean we're prepared to vote on and pass three of the directives here today. Two we suggest be amended to reflect the fact that on the sixth that we will not be providing our support for, and that's on the electronic vote-counting equipment.

So with that, I know the official opposition have comments as well, but you know, we tried to be transparent through this entire process with all of the partners around the table and, I would say, have appreciated the working relationship, understanding that we're not always going to agree. So I will leave it there.

The Chair: — Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll start by joining my colleague opposite by thanking yourself, Mr. Boda, as well as your entire team for the presentation today, all of the work that you have done over the course of the last 11 years, and in particular the work you've done most recently on the by-elections that we've all recently come through. So thank you so much for that. We very much appreciate it.

We are very grateful to be able to have this discussion finally at the BOIE [Board of Internal Economy] table. I think, and I recognize the fact that I have not been involved in this process as long as my colleague opposite has, but I have had the opportunity to speak to those who were a part of the process prior to myself and can say quite conclusively that we feel that the opposition members of the BOIE have been very supportive of the work that you've done, in particular toward modernizing the electoral process in Saskatchewan.

That has not changed today. You won't be surprised to know, as my colleague has indicated, we are — and it is actually rare at the BOIE table — we are not in agreement on the approving and not approving of the directives as you have presented, which I know has caused some struggle for you in your office. And I do recognize that, and I appreciate you taking the time to allow us to have the opportunity to have that discussion at this table. And hopefully we can move forward after this meeting.

I did want to speak a bit about a concern that my colleague opposite has raised in correspondence in the past. I don't think he brought it up today, but in particular around the legislative

intent when section 135.1 was removed in the most recent amendments to *The Election Act*. And as had been mentioned by my colleague, as you well know, the amendments that happened with respect to *The Election Act* typically are done through a collaborative process behind the scenes, done in a way to remove as much of the politics from that as absolutely possible. As such we didn't put comments on the record, nor did government members put comments on the record. As you well know, that piece of legislation passed through all stages very quickly.

I just want to be very clear because there has been conversation about the legislative intent behind removing that section. From our perspective and to be clear, as should be well known, government members do not speak on behalf of opposition members, in particular around intent in the legislature. Our intent was to continue to allow you to do your work, you and your office to do your work, around modernizing the electoral process and that does not limit anything that has been presented in your previous reports.

In fact conversations behind the scenes led us to the assurance that the directive process would allow you to explicitly implement vote-counting equipment in general elections. From my perspective in reading 135.1, for members, it allows the CEO to direct the use of electronic poll books and vote-counting equipment at advance polls, subject to a small number of legislated requirements.

It's the only portion of the legislation which explicitly mentions vote-counting equipment. But it's really, as has been mentioned in correspondence from Dr. Boda's office, it's really irrelevant at this point, this section, because it was implemented initially from what I understand as a phase-in process for vote-counting equipment . . .

The Chair: — Ms. Sarauer, we have a problem with the mikes. We'll just pause for a minute.

Ms. Sarauer: — Oh, okay.

[Due to technical difficulties, the board paused from 13:35 until 13:36.]

The Chair: — Okay.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm not entirely sure where I was, and I apologize. But what I was saying is that section 135.1 was introduced as a phase-in process, from what I understand, for vote-counting equipment. It speaks specifically to advance polls. Obviously the directive is allowing vote-counting equipment in all of the polls, not just advance polls. And advance polls actually don't really exist anymore; we call it voting week. So that was our intention when we agreed to remove that legislation. In fact there's nothing in the legislation which explicitly excludes the use of vote-counting equipment, which would speak positively to the legislative intent that has been ascribed. So just to be clear, the inferred legislative intent is incorrect. I still haven't heard a reason why government members are not supportive of vote-counting equipment.

I do want to say that I believe that we as legislators have a higher calling to support making elections as integral and fair as possible, and that voting is made as accessible as possible. We

firmly believe, and I think the experience of jurisdictions other than ours — including ours, actually — prove that vote-counting equipment will do that. Faster results; allows for vote anywhere; requires less staff.

I will say anecdotally, having been on the doorsteps a lot during the two Regina by-elections, we heard a lot from voters who were very excited about the ability to vote anywhere and voting week. Those were two big improvements in terms of accessibility, we found anecdotally.

The question remains, what has changed for government members since this work began? And like I said, more and more jurisdictions are using this. We're not going to be trailblazers here. But there are attitudes that have changed and Dr. Boda has mentioned that. We've all seen what happened south of the border. We've heard about Take Back Alberta and their push to remove the vote-counting equipment that exists in Alberta. And I would hope, very much so, that government members are not making decisions based on this type of rhetoric, but at this point one is left with no other explanation.

I think, as had been mentioned, these by-elections are a perfect example of how this equipment works. I also, if you'll indulge me — and I'm not trying to filibuster — but I do want to speak to one specific personal experience I had with vote-counting equipment because the city of Regina has been using this equipment for quite a while, for well over a decade.

I ran for the Catholic school board in 2012 and in Regina they don't do a ward or riding system for the Catholic school board; it's just the top seven get in. I came in seventh, and the difference between the seventh and the eighth place candidate was 13 votes. So we ended up having a very long recount for that election. And I pulled up the old numbers. It says there was 77,000 electors who voted in that race. And you couldn't separate who voted for the Catholic school board, who voted for the public school board. They were all mixed together. It took seven days for that vote recount to happen, to count at least — and I don't know if this includes public and Catholic — at least 77,000 votes. Judge Dawson approved that, confirmed the results that that vote-counting equipment, but imagine how long that would have taken if that had to be recounted by hand.

I know my colleague Mr. Love wants to speak a bit about some information he learned at the CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] conference regarding Alberta's experience recently with their election. But I do want to conclude by just being very clear that on behalf of opposition members, we are very supportive of this work. We are supportive of the use of this equipment. We do not fear technology, and we do not cater to conspiracy theories. We want to make decisions based on facts, and in this instance we feel the facts are very clear.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Love.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to my colleague Ms. Sarauer for her comments and to Dr. Boda and your staff for joining us here today. I am asking members of the board to consider comments that we're putting on the record. Ultimately we, my colleague and I in opposition, are making these comments for you to consider, not simply to be read by others but by those at the table. So I do ask you to consider our

comments today.

Before I get to my experience at the recent CPA conference, I want to mention that I did have the opportunity to take up the invitation from Dr. Boda to visit Elections Saskatchewan during spring sitting. It was in May. And I had an opportunity to visit the headquarters here in Regina to go through a demonstration of the new voting system that would be implemented in the by-elections and that aligns with the directives that you've brought here to this board.

I had an opportunity to cast a fake ballot to see how it works, to see the whole system, to — I think most importantly — ask questions on a number of hypotheticals. What if this? What if that? And received very much a satisfactory answer to every question that I could come up with. It was valuable for me to see that first-hand, to see how the new system will work both for voter registration and the e-polling and the vote tabulators. It was meaningful.

And a quick question before I continue: I'm curious, were there any members of the government caucus who took up your invitation and went through a similar orientation to these?

Mr. Boda: — Well the invitation was to the registered political parties, and so every single registered political party was invited to attend. You were obviously part of that on the party side, and that's why you were invited. There have been many from the government side, the Saskatchewan Party, who have joined us, reviewed, looked at the machines, and I've answered all those questions. So I don't know that there were any MLAs that attended, but there were certainly representatives from the political party.

Mr. Love: — Okay, thank you for that. Again I want to put on the record that seeing it first-hand, you know, having my questions answered — those from our party as well; I did attend with the CEO [chief executive officer] of our party — and it was very meaningful. And I would encourage members of the government side to do that as well.

Mr. Boda: — And to be clear, I would be very pleased to have any Member of the Legislative Assembly to come over. Happy to show you those machines, how they operate — both the electronic poll books and the vote-counting equipment — and to talk more in depth about the system itself and what's unfolded over the course of the by-election. Because this has been an excellent process of learning for us, to understand how we would do things moving forward.

Mr. Love: — Ultimately, Dr. Boda, you mentioned that representatives from parties were there, but it is elected MLAs who sit around this table, and I do encourage my colleagues to take you up on that invitation to see the technology at work first-hand.

The second thing I wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, today, was the recent Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Canadian regional conference that you hosted here, and did a fine job. And it was wonderful to see legislative colleagues from across the country here in Regina.

[13:45]

And there was something from that time that struck me as pertinent to this conversation, and that was the 14th Speaker from the Alberta Legislative Assembly, the Hon. Nathan Cooper presented a regional report in which he referenced the Alberta general election, which included, I believe for the first time — although perhaps Dr. Boda can correct me here — for the first time in an Alberta general election, many of these directives that you're proposing to us at work in Alberta, including a voting week, a vote-anywhere strategy, e-poll books, and vote tabulators.

And he spoke glowingly to those in attendance. Mr. Speaker, you were there. Several members of the government caucus were there. And he spoke about the increase in voter turnout, which is obviously something that we want to see, more people engaging in democracy by casting their vote. But also he spoke to the integrity of the system. There were several close races that he referenced that required a hand recount and that those recounts confirmed what was delivered on election night with the results. So it was a very positive report at that conference here in Regina with the Alberta election just a few weeks, you know, several weeks previous.

And I believe that it's important for us to consider that this technology has been implemented not just in municipal elections that we've all used, hopefully several times, but it's happening in provinces across Canada. In some places they're newer to this technology like our neighbours in Alberta and the reports are positive. We don't have anything to be afraid of.

I want to close by just commenting on, responding to something that was mentioned here by the Government House Leader who mentioned that the government belief is that a vote cast by hand should be counted by hand as it always has going back to the early stages of democracy in ancient Greece. And I want to comment that democracies change. Democracies change. Of course if we want to look to ancient Greece — and I'm by no means speculating that this is what the Government House Leader is suggesting — but we know that women, slaves, foreigners were not allowed to vote. We know that in ancient Greece, leaders were chosen through a process known as *boule* which is selecting people to govern from a group of citizens, not by election but being chosen essentially by lot to lead a democracy.

That is not our system. Democracies change; ours can too. And I believe that the work presented to this board by Dr. Boda and Elections Saskatchewan is the change that we need, so our democracy can continue to thrive into the future.

The Chair: — Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, thank you. I'd actually like to move a motion, seconded by my colleague Mr. Love:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve all the CEO directives as presented; and further,

That these directives be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

The Chair: — I'll just read it again. Moved by Ms. Sarauer, seconded by Mr. Love:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve all the CEO directives as presented; and further,

That these directives be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

All in . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, would you like to . . .

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I'd just raise a point of order. You can't actually submit approval for all of the directives at once. They have to be individually considered. I defer to Mr. Speaker for the ruling on that, but you can't vote on multiple motions in one motion. Just as a point of order.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, I'd be happy to resubmit the individual ones but . . .

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — They will be, though. That's kind of the . . . They will all be coming to the board, all six of the motions individually.

Ms. Sarauer: — But you want this one amended. We want to vote on this vote-counting equipment. There should be . . .

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — There would be several, kind of, process issues with doing it this way, right. I defer to the Clerk here, but I mean there are kind of issues around voting on the same motion twice as well. If they were all six considered at the same time, that would preclude us then considering again the same motion afterwards.

So I get what you're going for and it's fine. I understand kind of the politics around this. But you know, I think we've been pretty clear. I don't want to kind of get into silly back-and-forth on motions here. We'll consider all six. I've made clear that we don't support one of them specifically, but that has an implication for the other two as well. Understand that; laid that out in my comments. You guys have made your point clear as well — understand it; respect it; don't agree.

Would love to get into a debate about Athenian democracy and the details thereof and the different processes because that is one of them. The member was correct on kind of the one element, but there were a number of different voting mechanisms depending on which Greek city state you were in. Anyway I won't get into it. But I would argue with your point is what I'm saying.

The Chair: — I would ask for a comment from the Clerk.

Okay, well I'll make a decision. We'll vote on Ms. Sarauer's motion. And then there's other motions I understand that you've had discussions that we can go to. In those discussions there's two directives that are in one motion, so that was going to be allowed. We can break them out and have three different votes if you like, or stay with what's written here and combine two and one.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I would just say, I mean that's fine. I mean I just don't want to preclude consideration of the further motions by giving consideration to this motion. And if the Clerk is comfortable in kind of the consideration of a number of motions in one motion it's . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — So I suppose, I think based on our conversation, I will rescind my motion, understanding that we will be voting on the motions that have been provided to us.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Okay.

Ms. Sarauer: — And just give me a second so I can find it.

The Chair: — All in favour of that, rescinding her motion?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — You don't need support . . .

The Chair: — Yes, we do. Are you in favour of rescinding it?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Okay, yeah approved, yeah sure. But just as a technical point too, we should give some thought to rules of order and how we interpret the rules if we've not done that before at the board.

The Chair: — There's a motion. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to move:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve CEO general directive — modifications to polling divisions and the creation of a polling period; and further,

That this directive will be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

I so move.

The Chair: — Seconder? Ms. Sarauer. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you. Second motion:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve CEO general directive — implementation of vote by mail; and further,

That this directive will be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

I so move.

The Chair: — Seconder? Mr. Love. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I will move:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve CEO general directive — implementation of vote anywhere; and further,

That this directive will be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

The Chair: — Secunder? Mr. Love. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — Opposed.

Ms. Sarauer: — Can we do a recorded vote . . .

The Chair: — Recorded vote. Opposed?

Ms. Sarauer: — Recorded vote by hand please.

The Chair: — All in favour put your hands up. Two in favour. Opposed, put your hands up. Three opposed. It's failed, defeated. Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I will move:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve CEO general directive — introduction of electronic poll books (voting record); and further,

That this directive will be in effect for Saskatchewan's 30th general election.

The Chair: — Secunder? Mr. Love. All in favour, raise your hands. Two in favour. Opposed, raise your hands. Three opposed. It's defeated. House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. So just kind of given the vote that we had, and I think I laid it out maybe not as clearly as I should in my opening remarks, but government . . . In the areas where Dr. Boda indicated the electronic poll books and vote anywhere can be accommodated given the government's non-support for electronic vote-counting equipment, we would ask that the Chief Electoral office prepare alternative directives in accordance with the June 30th letter. I think page 9 lays out that request or at least that possibility that those be returned to the board. The government has undertaken to reconvening when the directives as revised are ready. So that would be our view of next steps.

The Chair: — Any other comments? Okay. Thank you, Mr. Boda.

We'll move on to item no. 8. That's the discussion and decision item, Chief Electoral Officer funding request Lumsden-Morse by-election and Regina Coronation Park by-election and Regina Walsh Acres by-election.

[14:00]

The motion reads:

That additional funding for vote 034, Chief Electoral Officer be approved for the 2023-24 fiscal year in the amount of 1,512,000 as follows:

Lumsden-Morse by-election, 544,000;

Regina Coronation Park by-election, 487,000; and

Regina Walsh Acres by-election, 481,000; and further,

That the said amount be submitted by the Chair to the Minister of Finance for approval as a supplementary estimate during the fall period of the fourth session of the twenty-ninth legislature.

A mover please. Mr. Harrison. Secunder? Ms. Sarauer. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you again.

Okay, we've covered that. Is there any other business? Seeing none, would someone please move to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Love moves. This meeting now stands adjourned at 2:01 p.m.

[The board adjourned at 14:01.]