

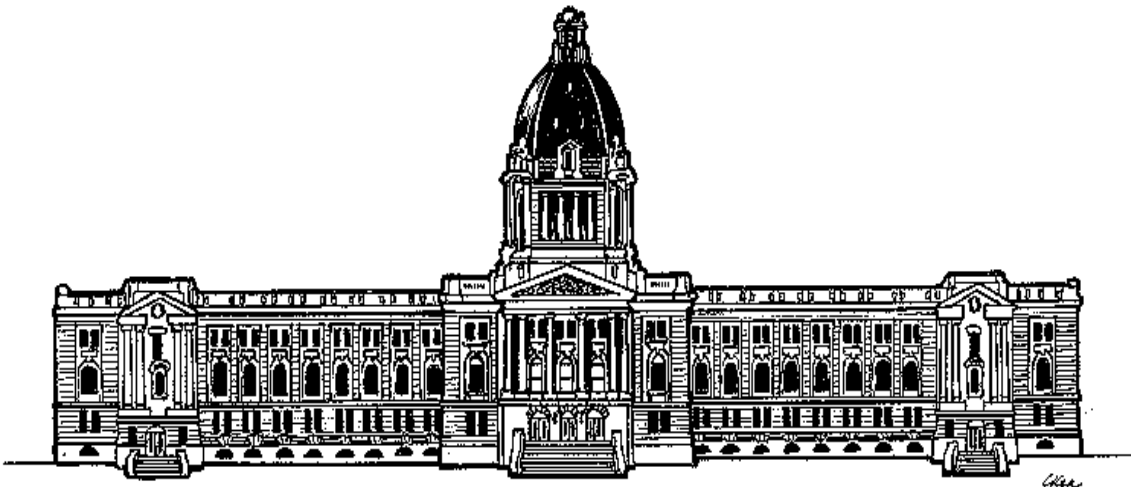


Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Ron Osika
Speaker



No. 1 — February 22 & 23, 2000

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Ron Osika, Chair
Melville

Bob Bjornerud
Saltcoats

Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Hon. Jack Hillson
North Battleford

Carolyn Jones
Saskatoon Meewasin

Myron Kowalsky
Prince Albert Carlton

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building

3:19 p.m. Tuesday, February 22, 2000

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Ron Osika, Chair
Mr. Bob Bjornerud
Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Hon. Jack Hillson
Ms. Carolyn Jones
Mr. Myron Kowalsky
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch

Staff to the Board

Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services
Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Margaret Kleisinger, Secretary

Officials in Attendance

Office of the Provincial Auditor

Wayne Strelieff, Provincial Auditor
Fred Wendel, Assistant Provincial Auditor
Angèle Borys, Principal, Support Services
Sandra Walker, Manager, Administration
Heather Tomlin, Assistant to the Manager, Administration

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman
Murray Knoll, Assistant Ombudsman

Office of the Children's Advocate

Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate
Bernie Rodier, Office Administrator

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

MINUTES Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, ordered, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #1/99 and Meeting #2/99 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1 Table Item: Members Accountability and Disclosure Reports for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1999

The Chair tabled the reports.

ITEM 2 Table Item – Audited Financial Statements and Schedule of Assets of the Government, Opposition and Third Party Caucuses for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1999

The Chair tabled the statements and schedules of assets.

ITEM 3 Table Item – Legislative Assembly Quarterly Financial and Fiscal Forecast Reports

The Chair tabled the reports.

ITEM 4 Table Item – Office of the Provincial Auditor: Addendum to the Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan Business and Financial Plan for the year ended March 31, 2000

The Chair tabled the report.

ITEM 5 **Table Item – Office of the Provincial Auditor: Memorandum of Audit Observations for BOIE for the year ended March 31, 1999**

The Chair tabled the report.

ITEM 6 **Table Item: Resignation Letter from Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, October 27, 1999**

The chair tabled the letter from Mr. Garnet Holtzman, Q.C.

ITEM 7 **Decision Item: Appointment of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk**

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Ms. Jones:

That pursuant to Section 68.32(1) of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, the Board of Internal Economy hereby appoints Kenneth Ring as Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk effective March 1, 2000 at a salary of \$6389 per month in the salary range of \$5916 – 7312 (Crown Counsel 2).

Employee benefits applicable to public servants of Saskatchewan and Legislative Assembly employees shall apply to the position of Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute # 1490

The Chair committed to forward a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board of Internal Economy to Mr. Garnet Holtzman, Q.C., for his work as the former Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

ITEM 8 **Decision Item: Appointment of Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner**

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

That Directive #19.1 be adopted to appoint Mr. Gerald L. Gerrand, Q.C., as Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner

And that Directive #20 be amended by deleting subsection (2) and substituting the following therefore:

(2) Effective Tuesday, February 22, 2000, pursuant to section 22 of *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act*, there shall be paid to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner an annual salary of \$60,000.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute # 1491

The Chair committed to forward a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board of Internal Economy to Mr. Derril McLeod, Q.C., for his work as the former Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

ITEM 9 **Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate**

The budget, in the amount of \$1,551,922, was presented by Ms. Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman.

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 2000-2001 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,477,000

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

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1492

The budget, in the amount of \$1,112,190, was presented by Ms. Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate.

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 2000-2001 Estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,082,190 and that such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1493

The Board recessed for a short time.

ITEM 10

Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor

The budget, in the amount of \$4,698,000, was presented by Mr. Wayne Strelloff, Provincial Auditor.

Moved by Mr. Hillson, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the 2000-2001 Estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$4,698,000

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

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1494

At 8:31 p.m. the Board adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on February 23, 2000.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building

10:51 a.m. Wednesday, February 23, 2000

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Ron Osika, Chair
Mr. Bob Bjornerud
Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Hon. Jack Hillson
Ms. Carolyn Jones
Mr. Myron Kowalsky
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch

Staff to the Board

Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services
Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Margaret Kleisinger, Secretary

Officials in Attendance

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Judy Brennan, Director of Hansard
Lorraine deMontigny, Director of Visitor Services
Shannon Ferguson, Supervisor, Administrative Services
Linda Kaminski, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services
Jeremy Phillips, Systems Analyst
Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian
Gregory Putz, Deputy Clerk
Ken Ring, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk
Mr. Pat Shaw, Sergeant at Arms
Gary Ward, Director of Broadcast Services
Margaret Woods, Clerk Assistant

ITEM 11 Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

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

ITEM 12 Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

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

ITEM 13 Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Chief Electoral Officer

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

That the 2000-2001 Estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, in the amount of \$892,959 (Statutory) be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1495

The Chair committed to begin the process for a reclassification review of the position of Chief Electoral Officer.

ITEM 11(con't) Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Ms. Jones:

That the 2000-2001 Estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$105,000

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

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1496

ITEM 12(con't) Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

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

That the 2000-2001 Estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$122,000

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

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1497

The Board agreed to meet "in camera" at 12:45 p.m.

The Board resumed public meetings at 1:05 p.m.

ITEM 14 Decision Item – Review of the 2000-2001 Budget for the Office of the Legislative Assembly

ITEM 14(a) Review Budget Document

The Board reviewed the Budget submission in the amount of \$15,960,290.

The Speaker made a commitment to review wiring requirements for information technology for caucuses and Members throughout the Legislative Building, and that information would be brought forward for Board consideration, regarding options, including the possibility of cost-sharing with SPMC.

ITEM 14(b) Decision Item – Office of the Clerk Reorganization and Position Requests

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky

That a new permanent position of Clerk Assistant (Committees) be established effective April 1, 2000; and

A new permanent position of Office Assistant in the Office of the Clerk be established effective April 1, 2000, and

That the Speaker approve the classification level for each position following the appropriate review by the classification consultants.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1498

ITEM 14(c) Decision Item – Director of Information Services Permanent Position Request

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

Effective April 1, 2000, that a new permanent position of Director of Information Systems be created; and

That the Legislative Assembly work with the Assembly's classification consultants to determine an appropriate classification level and that the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly approve the classification level for this position.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1499

ITEM 14(d) Decision Item – Directive #7.1 Caucus Grant s– Information Technology Expenses

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Ms. Jones:

That Directive #7.1 Caucus Grants – Information Technology Expenses be approved, as attached, and recorded in the minutes:

DIRECTIVE #7.1
(s.50(3)(n), c.L-11.1)

CAUCUS GRANTS – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXPENSES

- (1) An allowance in the amount of \$825 per year for each Member shall be paid monthly in arrears to each caucus for information technology expenses. Members of the Executive Council, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party and the Speaker are considered to be part of a caucus for this purpose. "Caucus" is defined by clause 50(1)(b) of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* to mean a group of two or more Members who are elected to the Assembly and who belong to the same political party.
- (2) Any vacancies occurring due to death or resignation of a Member shall reduce the base numbers accordingly. Any vacancy filled by a by-election shall likewise increase the base size of the caucus for purposes of calculating the grant.
- (3) On April 1, 2001, and April 1 of each year thereafter, the allowance set out in clause (1) shall be increased or decreased by the annual change in the Consumer Price Index for Saskatchewan, and this Directive may thereupon be reproduced to include the indexed amount without further amendment.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1500

ITEM 14(e) Decision Item – Amendment to Directive #6 Constituency Assistant Expenses

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Bjornerud:

That effective April 1, 2000 Directive #6 Constituency Assistant Expenses be amended as follows:

By adding the following at the end of subsection (4): "*Constituency Assistants shall receive paid sick leave benefits similar to public service employees and be entitled to benefits under an Employee and Family Assistance Plan.*"

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1501

ITEM 14(f) Decision Item: Amendment to Directive #21 Annual Indemnity and Allowances

Moved by Mr. Hillson, seconded by Mr. Bjornerud:

That Directive #21 Annual Indemnity and Allowances be amended by adding:

- (7.1) The sessional allowances set out in subclause 7(b) shall be paid in monthly installments, in arrears, on the first day of the month for each previous month provided that any balance owing with respect to the amount of the sessional allowance for a Session is paid in the month following the date the Assembly prorogues for that Session.

And that the position of Opposition House Leader be moved from (7)(a) to (7)(b).

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1502

ITEM 14.1 Decision Item: Special Warrant Request

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Ms. Jones:

That the special warrant request for the Legislative Assembly for the 2000-2001 fiscal year in the amount of \$60,000 be approved and forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1503

Decision Item – Other Business as Raised by Members of the Board

Moved by Mr. Bjornerud, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That Directive #10 Grants to Independent Members be amended by adding 1.1:

(1.1) Each independent Member is entitled to receive an allowance in the amount of \$825.00 per year for information technology expenses to be paid monthly in arrears to that member.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1504

ITEM 14(a) Motion to approve Budgetary and Statutory Estimates

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

That the 2000-2001 Estimates for the Office of the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$16,098,000 as follows:

Budget to be voted -- \$5,758,000
Statutory budget -- \$10,340,000

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

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1505

ITEM 15 Decision Item: Legislative Assembly Classification Plan

Moved by Ms. Jones, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the Legislative Assembly Classification Plan as presented in the attached Classification Manual be received and recorded in the minutes; and

That the Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services be directed to maintain the Classification Plan information to reflect cost of living increases and approved classification changes.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1506

ITEM 16 Decision Item: Classification Approval Process for Legislative Assembly

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

That the Board continue to be responsible for establishing new positions in the Legislative Assembly, and

That the Speaker, in consultation with the Board, be responsible for approving the classification level of all positions in the Legislative Assembly following an appropriate classification review process.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1507

ITEM 17 Decision Item: Review of Directive #24 Constituency Office Equipment and Furniture Provision

A debate arising, the item was deferred to a later meeting.

ITEM 18 Information Item: Survey of Visitor Services in Canadian Legislatures

The Speaker tabled the report.

The meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

The board met at 3:19 p.m.

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call our meeting to order, if I might please. The first meeting of the Board of Internal Economy in the new century in the year 2000.

What I'd like to do at the outset is extend a very warm welcome to new members to the board. I share a great many things with you; this is my first time on the board as well. I know Dan and Bob, as you mentioned you've been here before but not been allowed to participate so now you're going to get even with everybody.

And Bob, welcome as well to Carolyn and Jack. Also a welcome to the senior members of the board — Mr. Lautermilch and Mr. Kowalsky.

A Member: — The older ones.

The Chair: — As the older ones, that's right. As was mentioned to me this morning by a visitor from the United States, he said in any new position pretty soon you get to become an old pro. And I said, in my case I'll probably be old, not necessarily a pro.

This being the first meeting since the new board was appointed following the recent election, just a reminder and I'm sure that each and every one of the new members as well know and understand that the board is responsible to provide financial authority and overall direction to the operation of the entire Legislative Assembly. The Board of Internal Economy has statutory responsibility to review the budgets of officers of the Legislative Assembly as well.

And you will have . . . the members will have received materials and have hopefully had the opportunity to speak to members from your caucuses that have served on the board previously so as to zero in on those issues that we'll be dealing with. I'm sure that the previous board members will also have indicated that the accountability and the support rests with the board for all the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

Now at this point in time, and again given that we do have new members in the board — and I hope it's not an inconvenience — but what I would ask and I would ask the board members if they would agree to a brief, short . . . a brief in camera meeting to perhaps discuss some of the logistics that our meetings will follow perhaps over the next couple of days or whatever long it takes — forms and claims and so on.

Would it be the wish of the board to accede to that proposal? To meet for a short time, a very short time, so we can discuss some of our internal logistics?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Everybody agreed. I thank you very much, board members. We will ask then our visitors and the staff to excuse us.

The board continued in camera.

The Chair: — I'd like to call the meeting back to order. And the first item on our agenda is the approval of the proposed agenda. Is the agenda approved? Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded . . . seconder, please? Ms. Jones. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

The next item is approval of minutes from the meeting on . . . the first meeting in 1999 and the second meeting in 1999. Now those minutes were in fact distributed and may be found in your binders.

So if there are no questions about the previous minutes, previous meeting minutes, I need a mover to accept those as distributed. Mr. Kowalsky. Secunder, please? Is there a seconder? Mr. Lautermilch. Any discussion? All those in favour of the motion? Opposed? None. Carried. Thank you.

The first item to deal with is the members' accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1999. They had been previously distributed and tabled in the House and there has been one distributed to each caucus. So that is merely for your information.

If there are no comments, we can move on to item no. 2 which is also a tabling item, and that's the audited financial statements of the government, opposition, and third party caucuses for fiscal year ended March 31, 1999. Once again, these have been previously distributed and tabled in the House, so unless there are any questions or comments we'll move on to item no. 3.

The Legislative Assembly quarterly financial and fiscal forecast report. The third quarter report has been enclosed with your package and others have been previously distributed. Once again, unless there are any questions or comments with respect to those documents we'll move on. Thank you.

Item no. 4, Office of the Provincial Auditor. It's an addendum to the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan business and financial plan for the year ended March 31, 2000. This report or this addendum has also been sent out to members previously. Any questions or comments? If not, thank you.

We'll move on to item 5. Table item — Provincial Auditor — Memorandum of audit observations for Board of Internal Economy for the year ended March 31, 1999. Any questions or comments with respect to the memorandum? That's in your documents.

If not, we'll move on to item no. 6 which is a resignation letter from Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk dated October 27, 1999. That should be in your package as well. Any questions? Comments?

If not, we proceed to item no. 7, and this is a decision item. Appointment of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

As you are probably aware, the permanent position of the Legislative Counsel Law Clerk has been vacant since October 1998. The duties have been appointed . . . or have been performed through acting appointments since that date. The selection process for the recruitment has been completed and it's now the responsibility of the Board of Internal Economy to

make the permanent appointment.

There are background notes in your document binders with respect to this particular item. And the recommendation that is being proposed is that pursuant to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act that the Board of Internal Economy hereby appoints Kenneth Ring as Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk effective March 1, 2000.

The employee benefits applicable to public servants of Saskatchewan and Legislative Assembly employees shall apply to the position of Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk. Any . . . Is there a mover? Mr. Kowalsky?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I would move the recommendation to appoint Kenneth Ring be approved.

The Chair: — Thank you. Should we perhaps have a seconder first, for a discussion? Do I have a seconder to this motion?

Ms. Jones: — I'll second it.

The Chair: — Ms. Jones. Comments? Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What was the process that led up to the selection of . . . or recommendation of Mr. Ring?

The Chair: — Can I call on Gwenn?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes. This was previous. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was a previous board decision.

In March 31, '99 the board approved a selection process and that was to have a national competition where it was . . . the position was advertised in the Saskatoon and Regina dailies, *The Globe and Mail*, and the *National Post*. In addition to that, it was distributed to all Parliamentary Counsel offices across the country, the similar offices to this one, and to the drafting . . . legislative drafting offices across all the jurisdictions in Canada.

Thirty-seven applications were received and the selection committee as approved by the board, which was the Speaker, the Clerk, and the director of human resources, reviewed the applications, and interviewed six candidates. The Speaker then, according to the Act, is to recommend an appointment to the board. It's section 68.32 of the Act. The Speaker then recommended the appointment of Mr. Kenneth Ring.

And at that time the board . . . a board meeting was scheduled to consider it, but it was cancelled due to the election. And this is the first opportunity that the board has now had to meet and consider the formal appointment. In the meantime, all caucuses agreed in October of '99 with a proposal to contract with Mr. Ring on an acting basis to provide assistance to the House and to members in the meantime, until the board could be organized following the election and meet to consider the final appointment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Ronyk. Any other questions? All those in favour of the motion to appoint Mr. Kenneth Ring as our Legislative Counsel? All those in favour? Opposed?

None. Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I would request through you if the committee would permit me to go back to item 6 for just one minute, or for one question; item 6 regarding the resignation of the Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

The Chair: — Yes

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just want to know what the procedure is when somebody like this resigns. We asked Mr. Holtzmann to come and serve us when we were in a position where we needed somebody. I'm wondering whether there's any protocol that has already been conducted in terms of a thank you letter or whether it be appropriate for this committee to recognize his . . . the work he has done for us and thank him on our behalf.

The Chair: — Thank you for that. I do think it would be appropriate and if it's not been done, it certainly will be based on your suggestion and I'm sure concurrence with the other board members.

Mr. Hillson: — There was a motion of thanks moved by this committee.

Mr. Kowalsky: — That's right. Could you do that on our behalf, Mr. Speaker?

The Chair: — I'd be happy to.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. Item no. 8 — as we move along — appointment of the Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

After we reconvene, after a break, we'll bring back an appropriate news release for your approval on the appointment of the Law Clerk . . . on the Legislative Law Clerk.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You mean a news release on the appointment of the Law Clerk?

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Why do we need a news release? You mean, okay that somebody is being appointed? Okay.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I thought it was . . . you were advertising for it. Sorry.

The Chair: — No, no. Just to notify folks that we have one.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'm not altogether familiar with the events that have led up to the necessity for this. Perhaps we could get some clarification on that.

The Chair: — For?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, the reason we need an Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

The Chair: — As you are aware, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has resigned.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You see, that was the part I wasn't clear on. I wasn't . . . I'd heard rumour, but . . .

The Chair: — Oh, okay. We do have letters . . . effective January 31, 2000, Mr. Derril McLeod had submitted his resignation as Saskatchewan's Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and that was under The Members' Conflict of Interests Act. The Act, I'll just briefly mention, that authorizes the Board of Internal Economy to make an acting appointment to hold office until the Legislative Assembly makes a formal appointment.

So following consultation with all parties up to this point, the appointment of Mr. Gerald L Gerrand, Q.C. (Queen's Counsel) of Regina is being proposed. It authorizes the Board of Internal Economy also to fix the salary and so on as with other legislative offices. And the recommendation that's been brought forward is that directive 19.1 be adopted to appoint Mr. Gerald L. Gerrand, Q.C., as acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

And secondly, that directive # 20 be amended by deleting subsection 2 and substituting the following therefore:

Effective Tuesday February 22, pursuant to section 22 of The Members' Conflict of Interests Act there shall be paid to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner an annual salary of \$60,000.

So those are the recommendations for the appointment of an acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Moved . . . yes?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I just remembered. Reg Downs asked us to make sure that he knew when he was allowed back in. He's not . . .

A Member: — I've looked for them but I didn't see anybody..

The Chair: — Oh I'm sorry. Oh there's Tricia. Tricia is here.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible) . . . the recommendation.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Lautermilch. Do we have a seconder? Mr. D'Autremont. All those in favour of the motion, please indicate. All those opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

It takes us now to . . . I'm sorry.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is there on the last item any idea how long this may be acting?

The Chair: — It will be up to the Assembly to make the final appointment. We do have a background item, I'm told, on Mr. Gerrand, if you'd like us to share that with you board members. We would be happy to supply it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Gerrand and . . . something law firm in Regina.

The Chair: — Well we'll get that for you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Sure, if you would, please.

The Chair: — There's a need to also have a motion on the amendment to the directive — directive #20.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I move that as well.

The Chair: — Okay, moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont. All those in favour of the motion, please indicate by raising your hands. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you.

That takes us to item . . . yes . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — Once again, I would ask that, with the concurrence of the committee, if you would undertake to write Mr. McLeod and thank him for his service to the Assembly, I think he being the first and only Conflict of Interest Commissioner we've ever had.

The Chair: — Excellent. We'll take that undertaking; we have that undertaking, we'll follow it through.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Decision item no. 9 — review of the 2000-2001 budget for the offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate.

And I would like to call on Ms. Barbara Tomkins, the Ombudsman and Murray Knoll, who is the deputy Ombudsman. Welcome.

I'm wondering if it, if the board members might also allow Ms. Deborah Parker-Loewen for the Children's Advocate office. Since some of the budget items involve sharing of office space, there may be answers that might be given by Ms. Parker-Loewen. And also Bernie, Bernie Rodier, who is the office administrator for the child's advocate. Would you have any objections if they also sat at the table and were there to answer any questions that would relate? There appears to be no objections, so please join us at the table.

Sorry for the delay on this. I know that the Ombudsman is very, very anxious to present to the Board the proposals for budget for the year 2000-2001. And perhaps without causing any further delay I will allow Ms. Tomkins to proceed and give us a background and presentation on a budget.

Ms. Tomkins: — Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'll start by mentioning I think that when you came in this afternoon Margaret gave you a replacement copy of the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate budget submission. I like to assure you that there's no difference in anything substantive between this copy and the one you were given previously.

Basically the changes that exist consist of changing a couple of periods to commas in numbers on a table. But more importantly, the footer at the bottom of the pages had the wrong year. I can't explain how that came to be. But I thought for purposes of reference, especially in future years, it would be

helpful to correct it. But that's the only difference between what you saw previously and what's before you now.

In terms of what's before you now, I'd like to make a few comments which are perhaps a little unusual. I expect that some of you struggled or were troubled by the budget submission that I've put before you. I would like to assure you very sincerely that I have been very troubled by it as well.

When I appeared before this board last year I alerted the board to the fact that our Saskatoon office was required to re-tender its lease this year — in the coming fiscal year — that it was likely that we would be required to move. At that time we had rough estimates and I knew the cost would be substantial. It was my intention and certainly my desire that when I came before you today the only thing I would be requesting were increases necessary to cover the costs of that move. I realize that those costs alone are substantial.

However, circumstances conspired against me as the year progressed. Two-thirds of my staff were reclassified by the Public Service Commission and raised one level, which increased their salaries a minimum of 8 per cent — I'm sorry — a minimum of 6 per cent. There's a formula for determining how new salaries are fixed when classification levels are changed. But the minimum was six.

Other things occurred which I think are detailed in the submission. I would ask as I go through the submission — and I'm not going to read it to you — but I would like to comment on certain aspects of it. I would like you to keep in mind that I'm very much aware of what I'm asking you to do. But I would also like you to be aware of where I'm asking you to do it and to note that in virtually every case, and not literally, but almost every case the increases which are being sought relate to fixed expenses. They relate in large measure to expenses which will not recur. They relate to expenses which we have no choice but to accommodate. And they are in an amount that my entire discretionary budget, were I able to apportion it all in that manner, could not cover.

I'll now go to the submission itself.

The mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman is fundamentally to promote fairness in the provision of services by the provincial government when dealing with the public. We do that basically in four manners I suppose: one is through the investigation and resolution recommendations regarding public complaints; one is through own motion investigations; another way is through alternative case resolution processes; and lastly through public education initiatives.

In regard to public complaints, our situation is much improved from what it was when I appeared before you last year, and very substantially improved from the year before that. I've given a few numbers at the bottom of the third page dealing with the progress we've made on clearing the backlog, and I think as important or more important, the progress we're making on completing investigations much more quickly than we have.

I also was advised by Mr. Knoll this morning that the percentages I've given you there are not quite accurate and that the real percentages are better. I think this is what comes with

giving numbers to lawyers. That's certainly what comes from giving numbers to this lawyer.

In fact I'm told now that almost . . . where I've got that a half of complaints are . . . that a third of complaints are completed within 90 days, Mr. Knoll advises me the number is more accurately about 50 per cent of complaints.

So we've made great progress. We're not where we'd like to be but we're certainly a lot closer to where we'd like to be, and we're prepared and able, we believe at this time, to continue to make progress with the resources that we have.

Own motion investigations continue and the major investigation which was undertaken during this fiscal year was the investigation of correctional facilities, conditions of custody in correctional facilities in Saskatchewan — that is ongoing at this time. Other smaller and not at this time public own motion investigations have been undertaken and are underway and we're satisfied we can continue this work with the existing resources.

Our alternative case resolution process has been, for want of a better word, a real delight to me. We're finding it far more valuable than we even anticipated, and valuable in more and different ways than I anticipated. The resources we have available for that work are adequate, and it's very quickly become an integral part of the work the office does and I think a very valuable part.

For public education and communications, I have asked for a modest one-time increase of \$10,000. That relates to maintaining a web site on the Legislative Assembly web site. We don't have our own web site but the Legislative Assembly site includes links for the Speaker's office, for the legislative officers, and so on. And if you hit a button that says legislative officers, then the names of the five offices come up. And if you hit that, you're at the Ombudsman web site, which until a few months ago included the text of our I think 1997 or '96 annual report. It was a particularly uninteresting web site.

We recently received a request from the Legislative Assembly office that we please do something with our web site. We did as a stop-gap measure put some different information on it, some brief information there.

We would like an opportunity and I think the Legislative Assembly would like us to have an opportunity to do something a little more sophisticated and a little more interesting with the web site link. We don't have the skills in the office to do this or the resources and we're requesting a one-time funding allocation of \$10,000 to undertake that work.

When I said circumstances conspired against me, they conspired perhaps even more than is apparent from the budget submission. Our Regina office lease also expires this year; by SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) rules it must be put out for tender. So the possibility exists that our Regina office will be required to move during this fiscal year. I have included no budget request for that eventuality because I think it's extremely unlikely to occur.

We are satisfied, based on estimates from SPMC, that our

Regina office rent will increase whether we move or not and we believe we can absorb that increase within our existing allocation for the balance . . . oh, I'm sorry, for the balance of this lease term, and there will be a new lease commencing February 1, 2001. That one, SPMC estimates will increase \$39,000 annually. And on the basis of that estimate, we're requesting an increase of \$6,500 for additional increased Regina office rent.

That, if you look at it this way, is not necessarily in a sense an increase because we have been for the last five years enjoying particularly low rent, very substantially lower than most comparable properties in the area, for a whole bunch of reasons, mostly having to do with the market and the desire of the owner of the building at the time the space was leased to encourage tenants.

So in one sense we might, if we were anywhere else in town, have been requiring a larger allocation for rent for the last five years, and in that sense this is just us catching up as opposed to increasing beyond the norm.

As I indicated, we're not requesting tenant improvements. I'm going to assume that we don't have to move the office and certainly hope not. We're very satisfied with the space that we have. It's very reasonable. It's modest but it's very acceptable for the work that we do.

The difficulty comes with the Saskatoon space. In Saskatoon the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate share space which was acquired in December of 1996 and which was, quite frankly . . .

A Member: — Sorry, it's '95.

Ms. Tomkins: — '95. I'm sorry. That's five years this year. Good point.

The space that we acquired, many compromises were made at the time we tendered for that space. And to be completely honest, the space was not really adequate at the time we moved in, or certainly not much more than adequate in terms of space available for staff and programs that had to be housed there.

Over the years we've come to the point where in the Advocate's side of the office, child advocate's, which is roughly the equivalent of an ombudsman investigator, are sharing offices. For the better part of last year, our boardroom housed three staff and was not available as a boardroom. Our storage room is an office for one of the ombudsman staff. Almost all staff have their offices being used for storage; at least almost all ombudsman staff and I think most advocate staff in the sense that filing cabinets, dead storage, library books, everything is housed within staff offices, which were adequate but that compromises the suitability of those offices for staff.

I can assure you that we've given serious thought to whether there are alternatives to this move, and we're satisfied that there is not. The existing circumstances are simply not workable for the kind of confidential work that we do. Furthermore, our existing facilities do not meet SPMC standard.

Further, SPMC requires that all offices leasing space through

their office must re-tender every five years and our five years are up. We have no choice but to tender; in fact, SPMC put the tender out in January.

What will happen when we receive the tender proposals back? One possibility is that there may be space available in our building. This is our greatest hope, and that we will be able to expand within the space that we now . . . expand to space adjacent to the space we now occupy.

We will have very little discretion over how this happens. SPMC will consult with us, but in effect will make the decision as to cost-wise what is the best alternative and they will seek the cheapest alternative calculated, if I understand it correctly, by determining the rent over the next five years, as the bid proposes, adding in the costs of moving; and the lowest of those will be assessed as the logical or appropriate place for us to be for the next five years. As I say we will be consulted but I think the direction will come fundamentally from SPMC.

The numbers we have given in the submission regarding that move are numbers that were provided to us by SPMC. They are estimates, and I would give you my undertaking that if the funds . . . if funds are allocated for increased rent and for tenant renovations and if the estimates turn out to be high and there are funds not required for that purpose, I'll give you my undertaking that they will be returned.

The next major pressure on my office relates to salary increases. My office has a total of 18 staff, not counting myself. During the course of the last fiscal year, 12 of those staff were reclassified, as I indicated previously, one level higher. Two in-scope staff were awarded pay equity increases. There is a 2 per cent increase for all staff out of scope effective July 1. There's in-range movement increases that we must consider for all staff effective July 1.

And finally as of one day of last month, my salary was increased without my request, and properly so. My salary is fixed by legislation, I do not negotiate it. I do not have any say over what I'm paid and my salary is determined by reference to the provincial court judges. An independent commission determines their salaries and my salary is statutorily whatever that commission determines. And in this regard, and it's a difficult argument for me to make because it seems very self-serving, but I believe that where a salary or any other expense is statutorily fixed it is inappropriate for budgets not to be increased to accommodate those fixed statutory expenses because I think the premise of the statute assumes that those expenses are reasonable and the funds should be allocated in order to cover them.

I will also give you an undertaking respecting my salary increase. I've indicated in the report that there are discussions underway regarding whether that increase will in fact come or not. I will again give you my undertaking that if it does not, in whole or in part, funds not needed for this position will be returned.

I skipped over previously, and if you have questions about this I'm going to seriously ask you to speak to Mr. Knoll and Ms. Rodier about it because this is an aspect of our budgeting that I go in circles about. But there is an indication, and I think a

fairly succinct explanation of how it comes to be that \$30,000 will be transferred from the Ombudsman's budget to the Advocate's budget and our budget allocation can therefore be reduced by that amount.

In addition, we were allocated \$10,000 last year for a file server and that money need not be allocated again this year. We've also have an allocation requested for \$9,368 for furnishings for the new space in Saskatoon.

And the last thing in the budget submission, and I have very carefully not called this a pressure and I am not suggesting to you that this is something that we cannot function without, and it is the only thing, I think, in the budget submission that could be classified as an enhancement to the office or to the services that we offer, and that is a request that the board members give consideration to an allocation to enable us to hire a part-time administrative person, or administrative officer.

At this time, Mr. Knoll, to my left, carries the bulk of the administrative work for the office assisted primarily by the deputy ombudsman for Saskatoon. I think I've advised the members who have been on the board previously have heard this little speech before, but I've never previously asked for funds, I've simply previously indicated it's something that troubles me. It troubles me that senior people with substantial experience, 17, 18 years in the office, with substantial educations are undertaking work that could much more appropriately be done by people dedicated to that purpose at substantially lesser cost.

I've indicated in the budget submission that this is a sort of false economy and I believe it is.

The dollars at the end of the day are lower; I certainly see that. But in terms of getting value for those dollars, it's a very expensive way for us to have administrative support in the office when the resources that we have in Mr. Knoll and Ms. Sereda could be much better utilized elsewhere and much more effectively.

I put that request before you for consideration only. I understand, as I've indicated previously, that my budget submission this year requests a large increase. I am fully prepared to accept if the board does not think it appropriate to allocate funds for that purpose at this time, but I will also indicate to you that you will hear about it again in future years.

In total then there's a summary of our funding requests on page 12 and then a chart on page 13 which is just a different representation of the same numbers.

I'd just like to reiterate that I understand what I'm asking for. I hope you understand why I'm asking for it. We have calculated the total of discretionary funds available to the office and that's money that's not used for essential things — rent, salary, phones and so on. The total available to our office is \$114,000. All of that is not discretionary. It's allocated in various areas and we certainly are required to expend some funds in each of those areas.

I mention that only to indicate that we don't have the flexibility that a large department may have where there are virtually

always a vacancy in staffing or something where some money may be accruing. In a smaller office those kinds of economies are not always available and I ask your serious consideration of the budget request as it's presently framed. And I appreciate your listening to me and I'd be pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Tomkins, for your eloquent presentation. I'll open it up now to board members for any questions with respect to your presentation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, thank you for your presentation. I'm new to the board so this is the first time I've had the opportunity to review your budgets and your presentations.

One of the items, I guess, that bothers me is you have itemized the increases but you haven't laid out for me — because I haven't seen your budgets previously — where your other annualized expenses are. Does 80 per cent of your costs relate to salaries? Does 80 per cent of your costs relate to accommodations? I don't know that.

So I wonder if you have something that is more itemized that you could present.

Ms. Tomkins: — I can give you those numbers, sir. I don't have . . . You're correct; it isn't included in the submission and that's a good suggestion and I've made note of it. We'll do that in future years.

At the present time our budget is comprised 75.1 per cent for salaries; 10.3 per cent rent; 2.7 telephones; 1.8 CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) travel and vehicles; and 1.2 per cent for travel. That totals . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — 1.2 is additional travel over the CVA?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes. That totals 91.1 per cent. And it also totals in dollars based on the 1999-2000 budget, \$1,214,400. And that's where I got my one thirty-four number I think I gave you, or one twenty-four.

Now what's not included in that is, for example, communications — I wish I could find my copy of that because I wrote it on there — what's not in there is communications, libraries, staff training, postage, computer support, other day-to-day things; and that's what I meant when I said even though we have this 124,000, we have to spend some on postage, some on computer support. So I'm saying even if we be very careful, I don't have that whole sum available to me.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And so these other items would make up the additional 9, roughly 9 per cent?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes. Yes, that's the additional money.

The Chair: — Any other questions, board members?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering if we could have copies made of the expense increases and decreases with percentage. I must say that I'm somewhat concerned with the format in the presentation of budget proposals, in that it doesn't . . . it's I guess somewhat different

than what I'm used to in terms of budget analysis because we don't have year over year and percentage increase, decrease; nor do we have a breakdown other than, you know, fairly general and large headings. So it's very difficult to determine areas just, you know, by a year over year expenditure and pressures to be able to determine at a quick glance where that takes us.

And I don't know if anyone has ever articulated a government format that would be used for presenting budgets to the Ombudsman or the Children's Advocate, but I notice the same in the request from the Children's Advocate. And so I'm thinking if we could have those numbers . . . that I think you were sharing some of those with Mr. D'Autremont, and if we could have someone make some copies of those, it would be sort of helpful as we go through this process if it gives us more information than maybe what is here.

I think I'd also want to say, in the future, I'm wondering if we couldn't have a format that would give us year over year with a breakdown in categories that would . . . I think it would really make it a lot easier for the board to determine what we're looking at. I mean we generally try and compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges and travel and accommodation year over year, rental pressures, telephone — those kinds of pressures you know that are on you. When we've got that before so that you can do that year over year comparison, it just makes it a lot easier for us to attempt to understand where the . . . where your office is going.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes. I first of all wanted to say that I appreciated your comments with respect to the way your salary . . . the salary of the Ombudsman is linked . . . I believe you mentioned it was linked to the legislation.

Ms. Tomkins: — By the legislation.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And sometimes this does create a sort of an awkward situation so I appreciate what you're saying there. I think of another example where city council in Prince Albert had linked their salaries to MLAs salaries at one time, and then when the McDowell commission came in the whole thing was changed and the city council had to look at a different system of establishing the salary of the council.

So I think what I'd like to see — I can see it right now: we're bound by the legislation — but I'd like to see some way of getting around that. And I guess we'll have to look at doing that in a different forum than at this forum.

Ms. Tomkins: — Can I comment on that?

Mr. Kowalsky: — What's that?

Ms. Tomkins: — Could I comment on that?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes, please.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's something that a lot of people don't understand why my salary is legislatively set out. It's something that's considered a fundamental part of securing the

independence of a legislative officer. It's not what it's tied to. But one of the premises is that to secure independence you tie, you set conditions of employment statutorily, so that there can be no fear of repercussion or favour depending on the kinds of conclusions you reach and the kind of reports you issue and so on. What it's tied to is not as important as the fact that it's tied.

And that's the reason it's tied, and that's far more common than not. It's certainly something that when you look at academic studies or other studies about ombudsmanship and legislative officers that's always one of the fundamental characteristics is that you have statutorily fixed conditions of employment.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Do you have any suggestions as to what it could be appropriately tied to, say, minister or deputy minister or Clerk or Speaker, or anything like that? Have you had a look at any of that?

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't wish to be difficult but I don't think it's appropriate, for the reason I said, for me to be involved in a discussion of an appropriate salary for the office. I think it has to be fixed elsewhere and the appointee accepts it or doesn't. But I don't think it's something I can be involved in negotiating or discussing.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much. I have a couple of other questions, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that we're faced with in government is that how fast our growth is within government, the growth of our income. And it's been . . . We've certainly have a steady income growth of approximately someplace between 2 and 3 per cent. So in order to keep balanced budgets overall, you have to have a budget that comes in at that range. And you have to make occasionally . . . I guess it is our job to decide which priorities need bigger increases and which ones need smaller increases to allow for the bigger increases. Otherwise we'd probably try to look at increases that are in the range of, say, this two and a half per cent for sustainability.

Otherwise what happens is if we, for instance, if we're not able to do that, then within 10 years, 5 or 10 years, we would be putting, putting a lot of these jobs, these positions out of existence. So I want to get back to some of the places where you're asking for increases in view of that.

And that would . . . I'm looking at your, first of all, your administrative office, administrative support position. Is there any possibility that this position could be added to your office and absorbing costs elsewhere? And if you did that, what would be the consequences?

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't think there's a possibility realistically of doing it or, quite frankly, we probably would have done it. The alternative is to simply not do it, and frankly that's what we've done for the last 25 years and, and we manage. It's just not the optimal way to use the resources that are available to the office. But it's certainly a workable solution and a preferable solution to the alternatives.

Mr. Kowalsky: — That might be what we ought to do, Mr. Speaker, is wait till we can get a description — or pardon me — a comparison, line by line comparison of this report.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — If you're done? Okay. Well, I think we've . . . if we could perhaps send someone out to get copies of the document that you were dealing with, Ms. Tomkins, I could . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — Well, what I was reading from . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . or if you have copies that you could give to us?

Ms. Tomkins: — What I was reading from is the top of an e-mail note, and I'm not going to let you see the bottom of the e-mail note. But how about if . . . Is it all right if I show you what I was reading from, and you can tell me if it's useful? I have a feeling it may not be as much as you were thinking it is. Do you want to pass this through?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. I don't, I don't think it needs to be censored.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm still prepared to show you what I have. I just don't know if it is in fact what you want.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. Well, but while we're . . . I have a couple of other questions — and while we're, while we're waiting for that — that I think I'd like to ask you. With respect to public education communications on page 5, you have a request for \$10,000 with respect to upgrades in the area you describe. I'm wondering if you could share with us what the deficiencies of your existing situation are?

Ms. Tomkins: — The existing web site?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

Ms. Tomkins: — Now there's . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm a little hard of hearing. So if you could just . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — Okay. Well there's something I could . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . really belt it out I'd appreciate it.

Ms. Tomkins: — . . . show you if we had a computer here, now that I've learned how to find web sites in the last month or so. If you go to our web site now . . . We don't actually have a web site; we have a link to the Legislative Assembly's web site.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Tomkins: — But if you go there, right now you find a brief explanation of what an Ombudsman is and what our office hours are and that our service is free. I think if you printed it out — I haven't — it would probably not be more than a page in length.

It's frankly better than what was there before which was just a copy and text format with no . . . not even any differences in titles or anything, just run on pages and pages of our annual report from two or three years ago. The problem we have is that there's no one among our staff who is skilled in designing web

sites or setting up web sites. We would pretty much have to contract someone to do it and the \$10,000 is . . . is an estimate of the cost that would likely be incurred in doing that.

I would assume that a somewhat smaller sum, we could do something that would be a little less nice. I'm told that the \$10,000 that we've asked for is not the top of the range either, it's . . . you can . . . It's like any of these things, you can spend as much as you want or as little as you want, and I understand the 10,000 that we're requesting is a fairly middle-of-the-road sort of web site. And I'm not a technical person so I'm really not very good at answering these kinds of questions. Murray may know a little more . . . more than I do. He'll certainly confirm that I'm not high on the technical stuff.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, thank you. I see that you have some changes that you're anticipating with respect to your leases for this year in both Regina and some Saskatoon accommodation that will require some changes. And I don't . . . maybe you can explain to me a little more on page 6 the transfer of funds between the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman's office with respect to the \$30,000 that you refer to there. And I know it's there, but I've just never seen this between departments and this kind of an arrangement before.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm going to take a shot at explaining it because I think if I can explain it . . . because I have trouble understanding it, it might be best if I take a shot at explaining it. We'll see, and if not Mr. Knoll will correct me.

When the advocate's office was first set up, her budget allocation included \$30,000 for rent.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Tomkins: — At the time that the advocate first paid rent, it was decided that since we were sharing space it'd be just as easy if the advocate's \$30,000 got transferred to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman paid all the rent. And that's how it was for years and years. Then when we . . . when the rent increased in our space, then we would take the increases and apportion them half and half or 60/40 between the advocate and the Ombudsman and we would each pay our share of the increases. But the Ombudsman would continue to pay — for want of a better word — the base rent, because we had the advocate's \$30,000 that covered that base rent.

And as years have gone by, what we're saying is we're now at a point at where we apportion all the other expenses for budgetary purposes and it's time to apportion the rent. And so it's the \$30,000 that in a sense we were transferred by the advocate in 1995, we're saying let's give it back to the advocate and she can pay her share of the rent and we'll pay ours instead of us paying ours and a piece of hers and Deb paying the balance of hers. Does that make any sense? Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

Mr. Knoll: — That's pretty accurate, it really results in the fact that rents were fluctuating during the first few years that the advocate's office was established and there was new space purchased in Saskatoon. Then they added to that space and the rents went up so we've been paying as we were able to over the

years.

And I think it just is a cleaner situation and probably the Provincial Auditor would approve of us trying to make sure that the rents are being paid in proportion to the usage. As the usage was fluctuating over the years, it wasn't always that congruent with where it should have been directed. With the proposal of new office space, we think now is the time to make that exactly reflect the usage of the space. So that's why we're trying to clean it up right now, basically what we're trying to do.

Ms. Tomkins: — Fundamentally a book entry.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This will then be much more defined and so we'll be able to compare this year to next year in increases and pressures with respect to this.

Ms. Tomkins: — And the total dollars is the same. It's just \$30 used to be in our budget is now going to be in Deb's budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Now I just have to follow my somewhat convoluted notes. I was wondering about the Saskatoon office furniture and the \$10,000 pressure there and then as it relates to the building expenses. And I can't remember where I found those but I know they're here somewhere.

The tenant improvements, I guess in . . . this would all be in Saskatoon, so you're budgeting . . . and you're suggesting a pressure of \$73,000 for tenant improvements and rental increases of 17,500. This is Saskatoon office still. And then furniture, pressures for Saskatoon that would house the boardroom and an ergonomic workstation.

So then the changes up there that you're looking at for the next fiscal year would include 73 plus 17, also office equipment of 10.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes, of which 84 is one time only, which is the good news, I guess, if you want to look at it that way.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You know, I'm looking at the overall budget and, you know, as you've indicated, it's a fairly substantive increase, year over year. I think the figure from, just from what I can see in terms of the total budget allocation is about 16.68 per cent. And I'm looking through some of the budget requests that we're receiving in the context of the overall budget. I think it's pretty clear that these numbers aren't, for us, sustainable.

I think Mr. Kowalsky indicated about a two and a half per cent growth in our economy, which is really the growth in terms of the money we're going to have to spend.

And in spite of the fact that a million and a half is a small component of our overall government expenditures, and the work that you do I think is very, very important for the people of Saskatchewan — certainly if that weren't the case we wouldn't be as a government supportive of the operation as it exists — but I think that I would really like to work this afternoon to see if there's some areas where we might be able to pare back some of the expenditures.

And I'm wondering if we were to postpone, say, and I guess . . . Let me just ask a question. And I know we want public access and your agency communicating with the general public. If we

could perhaps look at a one-year delay in terms of the web site? I mean I'm looking for ways to suggest that . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — I understand that and I make very clear the web site, the admin. person, those things are things that if we do them this year, next year and another year they enhance service and that's great, but if it's not the year to do them, it's not the year to do them. The other pressures are pressures and they're pressures we can't deal with. And I understand that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You're estimating \$10,000 for a web site. Exactly what were you envisioning with this web site? While I haven't personally been designing any web sites, we have been involved in it and our costs have certainly not been anywhere near that.

Ms. Tomkins: — Is that right?

Mr. D'Autremont: — I mean if you're offering \$10,000, somebody will build you a web site for that price.

Ms. Tomkins: — Oh, that's right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But if you enter into the marketplace you can make substantial savings on that. Our web site, we change it virtually everyday, and we're not anywhere near that price range.

Ms. Tomkins: — It was apparently based on \$60 an hour for basic design and \$90 an hour for interactive design over a period of approximately three weeks was what was anticipated. And I . . . it was the communications staff who developed those as the logical or as an estimate of the time that would be required and cost.

I certainly, as I said to Mr. Lautermilch, I don't see it as the highest priority in my office in any event.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, I think you can get a . . . and I don't know what your purpose for your web site, what all you want to have on it, but basically if you want to provide information that, how do contact you and what kind of services you provide, you really don't need an elaborate web site.

Ms. Tomkins: — No, I understand that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And I would think that you could easily get away with 30 per cent of that cost.

Ms. Tomkins: — We're looking at something more than how to contact us but we're not looking at anything near so fancy as what I see on my television. I don't look at the Internet very often so I don't know really what's there but I've seen . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, when you sought and got these numbers, did you ask for proposals, tendered proposals, or . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — No, it's an estimate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But even a tendered estimate, I think you could make major reductions there.

Ms. Tomkins: — No, it's internal.

Ms. Jones: — I think Mr. Lautermilch wanted to finish his line. Thank you. I'll defer to him.

Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm finished with the web site here.

I've just looked at this, the information that you shared with us now. The in-province travel and the out-of-province travel at .6 per cent. That would be . . . that's of budget?

Mr. Knoll: — The number in the left-hand column is the actual dollar figure.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Mr. Knoll: — So of the total budget for the current year of 1.328 million, the numbers in the left-hand column are the dollar value that we presently have assigned in those codes.

The percentage on the right-hand side is the percentage of total budget.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Of total budget? Do you have year-over-year?

Mr. Knoll: — No, we don't. I don't have that.

Mr. Lautermilch: — I think this is part of my difficulty because I just . . . I know it's not large amounts, but I think we're in the process, with this whole budget process, we're dealing with millions and probably billions, but we're also dealing with pennies to make thousands, to make millions. So it's difficult for us in terms of the in-province and out-of-province travel.

I can't compare, year-over-year, CVA costs — difficult to determine. Rent, I think I have a better idea because you're outlining that, you know, in a fairly detailed way here. Salaries — we have, you know, some sort of a global view of that.

Mr. Knoll: — Some of those figures, for example the salaries, we have divided out each year in our annual report. Now I could gather those figures for you relatively quickly in terms of the actual dollar figure of salaries for each of, say, the last five years versus the total budget.

I'm not sure if we've got rent separated out of that in our annual report. I don't think we do. I think it's just salaries and then other — is traditionally the way it's been reported in our annual report. And those figures would be readily available.

What we've been presenting to the board over the number of years since we've been appearing here for the budget is simply the changes from the previous year's budget. So that if we're asking for something different, then all other things are staying the same.

So, for example, the things we're asking for this year are the only increases. The other items are staying fixed at where they're at. That's not to say that we might not have done some internal shuffling of the various codes from year to year, but the total value of all that shuffling has stayed fixed.

Mr. Lautermilch: — See, I think we would like to look at

travel year over year. I think we would like to look at in-province and out-of-province travel year over year. I think there may be some merit for looking at telephone year over year. Last fiscal year to this to what you're projecting for next year.

These are, I think, the kinds of pieces of information that I find to be somewhat deficient in the presentation here, that I think would be most helpful for me in terms of my questions.

I want to ask one more before Ms. Jones . . . You're requesting 35,000, which I'm assuming would be full-time support for . . . or is that a part-time position?

Mr. Knoll: — It'd be a three-quarter time position.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The 35,000?

Mr. Knoll: — It's estimated at three-quarter time position.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Three-quarter time. Okay, and how long have we been functioning without that kind of support?

Ms. Tomkins: — Forever. We've never had that kind of support.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. All right. I'll pass to the Chair, Ms. Jones.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Lautermilch. Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also new to the board and so I have a question that may relate more to the way government departments do budgeting. But under your tenant improvement category with a pressure of seventy-three seven sixty, and perhaps even under . . . even the web site perhaps could be handled in the same way, but my understanding would be that usually if you have tenant improvements, if you have to renovate a building in order to move into it, those improvements are amortized over the length of your lease. In general, that's my understanding of how they work.

It seems to me that if this were handled in that manner that it would put a lot less pressure on your one-time costs, even though they wouldn't be one time any more. I don't know if I'm suggesting you do that because I haven't even discussed this with any of the members of the board, but I'm just wondering why it wasn't handled in that way.

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't know that we've ever been offered that opportunity before. Ms Rodier may be able to help. I don't know if you heard the question . . .

Ms. Jones: — Don't misunderstand. I haven't offered it to you either. I'm just wondering . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — No, I'm not. But our circumstances are that SPMC comes to us and says, your lease is up, you must tender. This is what you must do, this is the estimate of what this will cost. I don't think that it's ever been put to us that amortizing the tenant improvements over the course of the lease was an option.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes, actually it was put to us.

Ms. Tomkins: — Oh, I'm sorry. I back out.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And that's one option that SPMC would . . . They have a point system that they utilize for determining which proposals would be acceptable and one way that they can use these points is through an amortization so it can be considered, and it is part of the mix in terms of how they allocate which proposals they would look at.

Ms. Jones: — But it would be automatically put forward as a one-time cost and then if necessary it would be attempted to go at it in an amortized fashion?

A Member: — If somebody was willing to amortize that then they would get sort of more . . . (inaudible) . . . on their tender.

Ms. Rodier: — I haven't talked to them about that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'm not certain of the exact formula that they use but there is a process for considering that or considering doing it as a one-time expense in the year that the tenant improvements are actually done. And we haven't had those discussions with them. What happened was the tender went out at the end of January, so once the proposals come back and once we know what your decision is here, then we would take a look at those with SPMC. So I'm not totally answering your question. That is a part of the process and I'm not sure of the technicalities of it.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm assuming it would depend on, and this is only an assumption, it would depend on the willingness of the proposed landlord to amortize this cost as opposed to have the tenant make the investment.

Mr. Knoll: — Traditionally what has happened over the course of the last two moves that we've had in the last six years was that the tenant improvements are provided in our budget as a capital cost item. And we are only allowed to spend those based upon the actual expenses being submitted by the contractor to SPMC. So these payments are always made by our office to SPMC for the actual work that's been done.

And to this point in time, six years ago when the Regina office relocated, it was an expenditure based on the actual costs incurred by SPMC in the move. And I believe the same thing happened when the Saskatoon office opened and when the renovations were done. The contractor finishes his work, submits the bill to SPMC, and then SPMC bills our office for the full amount of the capital cost.

So it would either require the landlord to agree to accept those or the contractor or SPMC and to date it's my understanding that they've been wanting those costs at the time they incur them.

The Chair: — At this point, excuse me; I don't like to interrupt. Could I just ask you to please keep in mind for the benefit of *Hansard*, when you're speaking, to try and be close to one of those microphones, please, in order that we may have all the verbatim. Oh, you could pull that other one over as well, perhaps Murray. Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, Ms Jones to have interrupted.

Ms. Jones: — That's fine. I think it's explained as best it can be at this point. It just seemed to me that that would be a normal practice, in at least other areas, would be to have either the landlord pay for the costs of the improvements and then amortize it in the rent over the period of time. I know it just defers the payment but nevertheless it's deferred. Thank you.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have just . . . further to that, we have considered whether it would be more cost effective to attempt to do the tendering and the tenant improvements directly rather than via SPMC. However we don't have the expertise or the resources in our office to do the work that SPMC does on our behalf.

And so you know we've been examining a number of options about how we could reduce the expenditure on this move that looks like it's imminent given that our lease expires in November. So we have been examining a number of options and just for your consideration that's another one that we had looked at but it doesn't look feasible to us at this point in time.

Ms. Tomkins: — SPMC simply has the expertise and the resources and that's what they do but we don't . . . we couldn't draft a tender for a proposal. At least I couldn't . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are you done?

Ms. Jones: — Yes, thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'm on the same topic actually.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm not surprised.

Mr. D'Autremont: — On rent. You're going from \$87,000 per annum in '99-2000 to 95,000 for the year effective April 1 of 2000. Estimating going to 123,000 on a five-year lease that will take place, I believe. November is when it will be re-tendered?

Ms. Rodier: — December 1.

Mr. D'Autremont: — December 1. What gives you the indication that it'll be 123,000, that's a . . . really a 25 per cent increase over the 87,000?

Ms. Tomkins: — SPMC provides those estimates to us. We accept their expertise because we don't know Saskatoon market rates. It's not an area of expertise that we have. They do it for all of government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are you leasing an SPMC-owned building or it's commercial space that they have found for you?

Ms. Tomkins: — It's commercial space that SPMC will find for us. And that's where we are now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Has SPMC been in the market looking for space that they have these numbers available? I don't know what your offices are like at all, so I can't you know judge whether this is high or low, but has SPMC been in the marketplace looking for space for you already?

Ms. Tomkins: — The tender for space for us has already been published in the newspapers. The closing date is March 2, but SPMC — because it is responsible for acquiring space or securing space for all government offices — certainly has experience in the Saskatoon and actually in probably virtually every provincial commercial lease marketplace, and I will assume has the expertise to estimate rentals and renovation costs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — We don't actually have any . . . well I guess, Carolyn, you're from Saskatoon, I'm not sure if you're familiar with the real estate market in Saskatoon as to what's happening, but a 25 per cent increase seems to be a rather large increase in my opinion.

Ms. Tomkins: — Oh I'm sorry, it's not simply an increase in rent, it's a larger space.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, okay.

Ms. Tomkins: — Because the space that we're in was intended to accommodate certain programs and certain people I may have neglected to mention. Over the years, we have people sharing offices. We had given up temporarily — actually we have it back now for a bit — but we had given up the boardroom and three people were using it as offices. The tendered space that is being requested is a larger space than the space we're currently in.

So part of the increase relates to increased rental rates generally, and part of it relates to the fact that the space being requested is larger. I will say about that that the space that we are requesting is less than what SPMC standards would allow an office of our size and doing the work we do to do, but it is more than the space we now have.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How much space are you currently leasing?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Maybe Bernie Rodier could answer that.

Ms. Rodier: — Yes, we're just over 400 square metres, and what SPMC has put a tender out for is 614 metres square. So that's what they're projecting.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So it's a 50 per cent increase in space; a little better than?

Ms. Rodier: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And you currently have 18 . . . no, not in . . . How many people do you have working out of your lease space in Saskatoon?

Ms. Tomkins: — Eighteen plus contract people between the two offices.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But how much just in Saskatoon?

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm sorry between Ombudsman and Children's Advocate together in Saskatoon, 18, plus there are occasionally contract people, or there's almost always contract

people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So for this additional space, how many new offices are you estimating that you will be able to accommodate?

Ms. Tomkins: — For the Ombudsman's side, if I recall correctly we're estimating two new offices, but in fact replacing office space that we used to have and that since got eaten up by the expansion within the Saskatoon office.

For example, I had an office in the Saskatoon office — a small, modest office — and I was able to go to Saskatoon four or five days a month and work there. And it's very valuable in terms of only of managing the office to be in that office at times; that space became another staff person's office.

The other office that is included in the plans is intended for a position which we acquired last year and which is now based in Regina, primarily because there is no where in Saskatoon to put it. I think that's all.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I would just add that the Children's Advocate is also asking for an additional three offices. These are for positions that were added in the previous years, but because we knew the lease was expiring this year, in order to save the funds, we have just been doubling up for the last year. We have converted a storage room to an office. We converted our conference room; we had four people working in there. And we currently have in two of our offices, people kind of working shifts so we have part-time people sharing on different hours of the day. And so we're quite pressed for space in our current location.

And, in addition, the confidential work of our office is compromised in many ways by the revolving nature of the way that the desks are utilized.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are the — you mentioned people working shift work — are they working shift work because they can't be accommodated in the space or are they working shift work because the client base can come in at different times?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — The nature of the work is such that they're part-time employees so we've arranged their hours of work so that they accommodate each other. It's not directly related to the people that we serve in that way.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So why would the confidentiality be compromised then if they were sharing offices? Wouldn't they be able to put their files away in secure locations?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Actually I should correct myself. We're very careful with confidentiality so as far as I know it hasn't been compromised because we are very careful. It is very difficult though if you have someone . . . for example, we have a young person working in our office now whose job is to facilitate youth participation. And that employee doesn't have access to our complaints files, for example. And so we need to just be careful and watch how our office manages itself. It's not that we have compromised the files. It's . . . it's awkward.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But why would more space make that

any different?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Pardon me?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Why would having more space available make that any different?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well right now we spend time in our office managing how people come and go, and that detracts from us doing other work because it's quite time consuming to sort out people's space.

We have four permanent staff sharing space as well. And a lot of our work occurs on the telephone. So even though there isn't confidentiality issues in that regard, two of our advocates, for example, are in the same quite small environment and it makes it difficult for them to do their job — one talking to one person on the phone. Because a lot of our work with young people and parents and other community folks is on the telephone.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So in the expanded space, exactly how many new spaces would be allocated to the Children's Advocate?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'll just check with Bernie here for a moment. We're requesting three additional offices, which would alleviate the sharing of our permanent staff. And then we've requested some space for storage and resources, which are accumulating at a fairly rapid pace for us.

And we have currently no . . . we have a small conference room that we've reclaimed as a result of the contract work being completed with our office. But it's about a 10-person meeting room, and we regularly hold meetings of 20 or 25 people. We host, or we support, a youth delegation of 20 to 30 young people. I chair a children's child death review committee that is approximately 20 individuals as well. And if we're not able to do that in our office, we rent space outside of the office in order to host those meetings.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would it perhaps though . . . I don't know how often you would use a larger boardroom, a 30- 40-person boardroom. Perhaps it would be more economical to . . . You know, I don't know your building. Perhaps there's a boardroom someplace in the building that would be available . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. We . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — . . . to rent.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. Sorry.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. And that would perhaps be more efficient, more economical.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we've explored that. When we are all together for a meeting of our staff, we're 18, plus if the Ombudsman or our legal counsel are with us from Regina, we're 20. We're requesting space for a 25-person boardroom. So that would accommodate us internally and would also accommodate almost all of our outside meetings.

Within the building that we're currently leasing, there isn't a boardroom that we could utilize. We do occasionally rent a room which is in building across the street from us so we haul our stuff across there. And we've managed that for the past several months. Or we rent a room in a hotel. Is it more or less cost efficient? You know, that's a good question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How often would you need a boardroom?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well if you include staff meetings, which we have a staff meeting weekly, as does the Ombudsman, and then we have these external meetings: the youth participation group meets four to six times a year and the Child Death Advisory Committee meets three times a year. And then over the year we have hosted and participated in a number of other meetings which include numerous community people. Excluding our internal staff meetings, I would say maximum twice a month.

Ms. Tomkins: — I would be guessing, based on experience, but I would suggest that ombudsman staff would use the boardroom probably six times a month, in addition to the time that Dr. Parker-Loewen has put forward. You were including all of staff in your joint staff?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm sorry. it's possibly a bit more than that. I'm just thinking of our . . . I'm trying to figure out now the meetings we've been holding off-site, putting them back on-site; at least six possibly as many as eight.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well you're looking at about . . . I'd have to get my calculator out here to figure out how much per square foot you're paying — or per square metre, I still work in English system. But, you know, I think the four to six meetings per annum for the one organization and the three times per annum for the other, it's going to be much more cost effective to rent something someplace else.

The weekly or every three or four days now is another matter because there you're starting to utilize your office space roughly three days a week, you know; and there I think that the cost would start to get prohibitive if you're going outside of the building.

But you'd have to be able to calculate quickly, and I don't have my calculator with me, what you're cost per square foot or per square metre is to determine what you're actually spending for a boardroom that's going to accommodate 25 people. You're probably looking at 40 to 50 square metres of space.

Ms. Tomkins: — The difficulty with going out — and we know a little about this from going out for the last year or so — is, for example, if we are having case meetings or case discussions and you're off-site and then a discussion will come up, well, remember we had something like that two years ago. When you're in the office, you go get the file; when you're off-site, you have another meeting a week later, or you don't get to it, or it gets deferred.

A lot of discussions . . . When we're meeting with government

officials, again for example, the people that we need are there. And when I'm meeting or Murray's meeting with somebody — I'm going to use Regina as an example because I've got Murray here — but when he's meeting with somebody and questions come up, he can turn down the hall and ask the investigator involved, which you can't do when you're off-site.

I think that certainly dollars are an important factor in this, but I also think convenience and efficiency are a factor. And off-site is certainly more time consuming by the time you pack up and take your stuff and drive to wherever or walk to wherever. It also, there's a real inconvenience in not being able to meet in your own office, and we've learned this first-hand from not being able to do it for the better part of the year.

But I don't dispute that there may, you know, that they're both factors to be considered. But I think that we have to consider both, not just cost.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The additional office space for a boardroom would probably run you in the neighbourhood of \$6,000 a year. Just real quick calculations. About \$200 a square metre is what you're paying. And so, I guess you have to determine whether or not . . . or we have to determine whether or not 10 meetings a year for your additional groups, the value there, and how much space you actually need in the office space to accommodate the staff meetings. And whether there is perhaps some other way of doing it that would work as efficiently and less costly. That's something I think you would need to discuss with SPMC.

The Chair: — Did you . . . were you finished?

Mr. D'Autremont: — I have more questions.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think something's gone off the rails here because we certainly use the boardroom far more than six times a year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Pardon.

Ms. Tompkins: — I think we're creating the wrong impression here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — No, no. Staff meetings you hold two to three a week, but your additional groups are about 10 meetings a year.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Those are meetings that . . . where we would have community people on a regular committee or advisory group to our office. We do have other community meetings internal to our office where government officials or members of the public would attend, in addition to those 10 meetings a year, of those two groups that we sponsor.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You hadn't indicated those were there, so I was going with the 10 meetings a year that you indicated from outside.

The Chair: — Any more questions, Mr. D'Autremont?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Not on the rent but in other areas. So if somebody had some rent questions that's fine.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Well if Mr. D'Autremont has more questions, we . . . let him go and I'll . . . I can, I can jump in.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I wanted to ask questions on tenant improvements. Is that where you're going?

Ms. Jones: — How about a five-minute break, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — Pardon me.

Ms. Jones: — Five minutes?

The Chair: — Would the board agree to a five-minute break?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, we'd take five.

The Chair: — Five minute recess.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — We'll continue on consideration of the budget for the Ombudsman's office. Any further questions or discussions please?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I realize there has been some interesting discussion. I want to, first of all, recognize the work of the Provincial Ombudsman, the work that you and your office have done over the years. And it's quite clear that there is a demand for your services based on the caseload that you outlined and the history of the casework that you've done.

I also would like to recognize our desire to have you do your work in an independent fashion, which is how your office and how your agency has been structured; and we too want to protect that.

I want to just say a couple of words in terms of the overall budgets of government as we've been working through the different departments, in terms of trying to put together another balanced budget, understanding the growth rate of our economy, knowing the pressures that seem to on an annualized basis face us whether it's agriculture or whether it's other areas that are in need of some assistance in our whole budget process, it really does put some very serious pressures on us.

And I think we've questioned all members, some areas of what you've presented to us, and I think I've made as well some comments in terms of, first of all, recognizing the independence of your office and the ability for you to do your work in an appropriate fashion. The requests that you've made — you've made for all of them I think some very good and some forceful arguments.

There would appear to me to be some grey areas though. I think there's an outstanding issue as you've indicated with respect to the salary allocation. And the provisions for the Ombudsman, I think you indicate there that there are some discussions with the Department of Justice and the matter is yet resolved, but it's possible that the full amount requested may not be required.

And I think some other areas that you've indicated, pressures and furniture, and Mr. D'Autremont has questioned in regards

to the allocation that you're requesting for your office and your office situation in Saskatoon, and as well the pressures on staffing in Regina.

But I think overall, the increase, although all of it I do believe to have good reason for a request, I think . . . I would like to ask that in terms of the overall global that . . . And you as you administer your operations internally, I don't think I would want to identify specific areas where there might be a reduction in expenditures, and I guess I would ask you to use your discretion.

But overall to the requests and the pressures, I would like to move that the annualized budget request of 1,458,749, and the total budget requested at 1,551,992, and if we could have the amount, budget request in annual one-time funding, if we could ask you to work for this year with an amount of the 1,551,922 less 75,000.

And if . . . that would be then my motion:

That we would accept the budget request of 1,551,922 less an amount of 75,000.

And I so move.

The Chair: — Seconder? Mr. Kowalsky. Any discussion? Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I wonder if Mr. Lautermilch could explain where he came up with the 75,000 figure for a reduction?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think there are some areas that I think I questioned on the expenditures. And I think what I would like to do is leave it to the Provincial Ombudsman for her discretion to manage her budget within the amount that I've specified, less the 75,000.

I'm just looking at roughly a figure of increase which is substantially over — even with this decrease — the growth in the provincial economy. And by my calculations through . . . and listening to the discussion and the questioning, that we would ask this arm of government, as we do and have asked all arms of government, to do a little bit to assist us in terms of our budgetary pressures.

I can describe it for you in more detail if you would like later. But I think it would suffice to say that if we could achieve that, that type of reduction from the request.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'm just still, I'm looking to see . . . That would be 1,475. You're looking still at an increase of about 150,000, roughly 10 per cent, a little better than 10 per cent over last year's.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm sorry. I got sidetracked here a little bit.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, well that's still an increase of a little better than 10 per cent over the previous year's budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But I think much of it is one-time

annualized, based on moving expenses and the request for office equipment, ergonomic office equipment, the reclassifications. There are a lot of one-time expenditures I think in here that . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'd like a bit of an explanation, if I can, on the reclassifications. What brought about the reclassifications? Was it controlled within your area or was it an external force that brought about that reclassification?

Ms. Tomkins: — The reclassifications are done by the Public Service Commission. It was noted that among . . . Maybe you can do the in-scope ones. Can I defer to Murray who does this stuff and will explain it better than I will?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I think the main point though is that you had no control over what they were reclassified to. That was not your doing, nor anyone in your office. It's completely external to your office. I think that's Mr. D'Autremont's question.

Mr. Knoll: — Yes, the Public Service Commission does the reclassification review and then where all of our employees, everyone except the Ombudsman, is subject to The Public Service Act, 1998 so whatever the Public Service Commission decides the classification level is, the salary is automatically determined in accordance with public service regulations.

I should point out that the items listed on page 8 there, the out-of-scope reclassifications, those are not one-time, those are ongoing.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, the cost is ongoing, yes.

Mr. Knoll: — The cost is ongoing.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think that with those ones, they were reclassified last year and again this year so I think it's extremely unlikely that they'll be reclassified again. I don't know if they'll be happy to hear that but I think it's not likely. But given what I put in front of you, I'm not going to commit to anything. But I'm certainly not anticipating them to be reclassified.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Were there any changes in the salary structures that was within the purview of your structure?

Ms. Tomkins: — We don't control the salaries of our staff. Their job descriptions are submitted to PSC (Public Service Commission) who then say, based on this work, this is where you classify this as your salary range. Given you're reclassified, this is the minimum increase that this person must be given and so on.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you have no impact then on the in-range movement of out-of-scope staff at all?

Mr. Knoll: — On the in-range movement, there is a slight amount of flexibility in the sense that we're allowed to allocate an average of 4 per cent for those employees who are not yet at range maximum, depending on the rating that they're given for their performance. So if they're given a quality rating, which is generally seen as satisfactory, they're to get a raise of between 3 and 5 per cent.

So we have the flexibility to not give them the full four, but to only give three. Or if someone's performing exceptionally well, to give them the five if they're not already at the range maximum. So within the three to four, I mean if you've rated them as a satisfactory performer, you're obliged to give them three at a minimum if they're eligible.

So out of that total of 14,000 there, that represents the eligibility of all of our staff in the coming year. So there might be, you know, a very slight flexibility in there but it's minimal.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's a very interesting process. You're allocated 4 per cent of the salaries to award to the individual employees based on merit. So that if you determine that one person is a superior performer for example, in which case they must be given 6 to 8 per cent, then you must coincidentally rate and award a merit increase lower so that the net balances out at 4 per cent of the total of out-of-scope salaries. You play one off the other.

Mr. D'Autremont: — With the changes in the reclassifications then, the amount that these people would be entitled to would have increased also, would it not?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes.

Mr. Knoll: — Previously many employees were at the maximum so that they were not eligible for any in-range . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — So with reclassification though, then that allowed some room for growth in that area?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes, some of them are now sitting in the middle of their range and so they're eligible for in-range movement till they reach the top, which may be a number of years.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think that covered my questions on the Ombudsman.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just had a couple of questions with respect to tenant improvements. You're estimating that the cost of improvements are 184,400. What assumptions underlie that? Does that . . . are you assuming that you're getting space and putting up all of the partitions and so on in it? Or taking a space — existing space and gutting it and putting in new partitions? Just what are your assumptions or . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — It's difficult for me to say what the assumptions are because that's an estimate that's given to us by SPMC and I would assume that it's based on an average of their experiences, but I don't know that. Do you know . . .

Ms. Rodier: — They give us the worst-case scenario, so basically if they had to go into a space and completely put up all the walls and everything.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So that could be the worst-case scenario. The best-case scenario could be that you could find an office that has all kinds of nice little cubicles in it, and you'd have a little leeway with this budget.

Ms. Rodier: — Right.

Mr. Knoll: — Which is exactly what happened six years ago when we moved into our Regina space as we found a place that required minimum modification, and in fact was the reason that location was selected versus actually where the Public Service Commission now is which was completely empty. It would have cost way more to get that empty space ready for us than to take the space we're in.

So what happened on that occasion is the funds that were allocated for tenant improvements were allocated as frozen funds, capital cost funds, frozen. And they were only released once the tender had in fact been awarded and there was some assurance of what the actual costs were going to be.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So what would happen if the cost actually only came out to say 20,000 or 50,000 in total?

Ms. Tomkins: — It depends on how the money is allocated. I understand — and I'm not an expert on this — but I understand though for this kind of a request, the money is set aside in effect as capital cost as opposed to being included in our . . . the cheque, for want of a better expression, that we get at the beginning of the year. It's set aside and as we use it, that bank account is used to write the cheques to pay for the renovations. And if it's not used for that purpose, we never see it.

But if it's not administered in that way, I will give you my undertaking that any money that's not used reasonably for tenant improvements will be returned. I won't use it for something else.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any more questions or discussion? Before I call for the members' vote on the motion that was put before the board, I'd just like to remind the board and read into the record that the fact that:

The board is responsible for the management of the Legislative Assembly, budget and operations. However, the board has a different level of responsibility for the budgets of the officers of the House. The independent officers of the legislature have the statutory authority to manage their own offices and operations. The board's responsibility for House officers is to examine the budget request and to approve the overall appropriation, and the independent officer then is responsible for managing within that total allocation.

I wanted that just on the record, just for clarification, and I believe it has been alluded to by some of the questions and comments from the board members. But I wanted to just ensure that we were aware of that.

Thank you for your patience in listening to me. Now the motion moved by Mr. Lautermilch and seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 2000-2001 estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,477,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

That's dated February 22, 2000, signed by Mr. Eldon Lautermilch.

All those in favour of the motion please indicate by raising your hand. All those opposed, none. Carried, unanimously.

I want to also at this time express my appreciation to the Ombudsman and Mr. Knoll for their presentation here, and your diligence in presenting the documents and answering the questions for the board members, and the efforts on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan that you people put forward and your efforts. Thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — I appreciate your comments and I also appreciate the interest and the questions from the board members. I think this has been a difficult conversation for you, it's certainly been a difficult afternoon for me, and I do appreciate that you've given this your thought. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I think we appreciate you're up against budget pressures you didn't create.

Ms. Tomkins: — Pardon me.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — We all realize that you're up against budget pressures you didn't create.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you. I would like to have created some but they foreclosed me from doing so.

The Chair: — If we can move on then to the next item, decision item, is the review of the budget for the Children's Advocate. And, Ms. Deborah Parker-Loewen, I'll ask you to make your presentation please.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. As Ms. Tomkins, the Ombudsman, has eloquently described some of the pressures that she is experiencing in her office, as I'm sure you can see from our budget submission we are similarly impacted. However, I have requested some additional enhancements to the office which I'm prepared to describe and discuss with you and welcome your comments to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . sorry, sorry . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You need to speak up a little bit.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Need to speak up, okay, now I'm a little nervous too.

Before I go into the specifics of my budget, I thought I would just take this opportunity today to go over a little bit why there's a Children's Advocate in the province and what are some of the things that this office does.

Primarily because I think there are some new members here, and I think too that some of the budget requests that I'm making are still reflective of the relative newness of this kind of work and this kind of office in Saskatchewan and in Canada, and I just want to set that into a context so that it could be considered in the discussion.

Saskatchewan is one of seven provinces that now have Children's Advocates. Three of us are independent officers of Legislative Assemblies — that's British Columbia; Manitoba, as of last year; and Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to have a Children's Advocate who reported to a Legislative Assembly such as this one.

The others there are a . . . there is a commissioner for children's rights in Quebec, a children's ombudsman in Nova Scotia, and Ontario and Alberta have Children's Advocates who report to the equivalent of the Minister of Social Services.

All of us work to promote the interests and well-being of children, particularly those children who are receiving services from the province — children in foster care; children who are housed in young offender facilities; children receiving health services from the provincial government.

So, our mandate is to primarily be an advocate for children who are receiving some kind of services from the province.

For most children in our province, their parents are their advocate or their family member is their advocate. That is and should be, in my view, the primary advocate for all children. The unfortunate reality is that some children don't have parents or families that are in a position to support or protect them when they are particularly vulnerable. When they are in the care of government, for example.

So for some children an independent advocate, appointed such as I am, adds an additional safeguard to ensure that these children, who may not have other advocates like parents or other community members, are treated fairly by government.

The history of this office comes from a review that was done in the early 1990s looking at deaths of children in foster care or as a result of child abuse and neglect, allegations of abuse or mistreatment of children in residential facilities such as those that are funded through government in some way.

And so the impetus for an office like this all across Canada is to promote and protect the interests of children where they receive services from government either through Social Services, Education, Health, Justice — such as that.

Saskatchewan is still the only province where the Children's Advocate has jurisdiction to review complaints or review concerns of children across all government departments or agencies. All of the other provinces have some restrictions, and they're almost always related to Social Services or Justice matters.

How do we help safeguard children is an interesting question. And my office has undertaken a number of activities in the last three or four years. One is that we do look at individual complaints that come from citizens. Last year we opened just under 1,000 files in our office. Most of the time we are able to assist people to resolve the issues that come to us. We almost never actually formally investigate a complaint. The purpose of our office — and it's in the legislation — is to assist citizens to resolve matters where appropriate, particularly when they have concerns about government service.

Over half of the calls that come to our office come from parents whose children are receiving some kind of service from government where the parent is concerned about how government has delivered, operated, or provided services to their child or to their family. And again most of those issues are resolved through the work of the advocates in our office.

I'm now reviewing the deaths of children who were, for example, in a foster home or in a young offender facility, or if they died while they were receiving some kind of government support through the Department of Social Services. We have over a hundred of those files in our office right now. We're in the process of concluding about 60 of them which were pre-1999 files. And in the upcoming year our intention is to have a more inclusive multi-disciplinary review which would include police, health professionals, etc. in the review of those child deaths. But this is a significant activity in our office.

The goal of that work from an advocate's perspective, the safeguarding aspect of our work, is to make recommendations to government which we anticipate, we expect, will work towards preventing children from dying in similar circumstances. So that's the purpose of the review. What we offer to government through that is an independent look at administrative decisions that were made with regards to the care children received from government.

Another aspect of the work we're doing and which was one-time funding we received last year and some funding the previous year, was we're conducting a major review of the needs of children who live in foster care. There are about 2,500 children in foster care in our province and what we have just done is met with members of . . . people in 92 different communities in the province, and we've accepted written submissions and had an expert panel of over 30 stakeholders assist us in this review. And I'm about to finalize that review and it will be public in the early weeks of April. So that's been a major activity in our office which, although we did receive one-time funding for this, we've also had to utilize our annualized budget in order to complete that project.

The important pieces that are in this budget, some of them relate to the work that has come out of that review. Sixty per cent of the children in foster care are First Nations children. That does not include Metis or non-status children. Forty per cent of the children in our province live in the North or far North, and those children are in particularly vulnerable circumstances.

I'm also investigating a number of issues regarding the treatment of young people in young offender facilities, and my responsibility in legislation is to investigate those matters and to make recommendations to government that will improve conditions for children who live in government-operated services or government-operated programs.

I was appointed to act as a voice for children, and to do this we also engage in public education to promote the interests and well-being of children. This is a shall clause in our legislation; it's a direction that I have legislatively and it's a direction I've taken quite seriously in addition to the other aspects of our work.

I do believe and I publicly promote that children's well-being and children's rights are best protected by promoting strong parents, strong families, and strong communities. And it's by supporting community-based advocates that we can really protect how we serve our children into the future.

Sometimes there are differing points of view about what is in a child's best interest and I know that. I've certainly had lots of opportunity to discuss that with people who have a variety of differing opinions about what is in a child's best interests and how we can as parents and as community members best support our children to become strong citizens.

I think that debate is welcome and I think it's important to continue to put children at a priority. And how we can safeguard our children's needs to come from a number of different perspectives so that we can all help our children become responsible citizens.

The budget that you have before you is about a million dollar request, and I know that. And as Ms. Tomkins pointed out, we're also very aware of the Saskatchewan economic situation. A million dollars is about \$1 per Saskatchewan resident. And I realize that while we're in a time of difficult decisions economically, and I respect that you have a number of competing priorities that you need to balance, I believe that I'm presenting to you this budget that's in a spirit of responsibility and, while I understand it continues, it's an office that's continued to grow. We still have not achieved the budget that was recommended when the office was first offered to the Legislative Assembly as an opportunity for you to find an independent officer to do this work.

So we're still growing to the number . . . or to the budget that was initially projected for this office. That growth has been somewhat gradual over the past five years and this budget is somewhat reflective of that as well.

I'm not sure how much detail you want to take this afternoon, to go over the specifics of this budget. I'll just quickly walk through it if that's fine with you.

We do . . . just in light of the questions that you asked Ms. Tomkins, we do have a copy of an annualized comparison from 1996 that was actually in our last year's budget submission but we didn't include it this year because we didn't understand that that was a format that you wished to see it in. But if you want, we could certainly circulate that. It depends on what you would like to have, but maybe I'll just walk through this request. And if you think you'd like to see the comparisons, we do have them.

As with the Ombudsman, we had several salary adjustments introduced in this year as a result of the Public Service Commission requirements and negotiated settlements. These were retroactive pay, employment equity adjustments, some reclassification and some annualized increases totalling \$30,000.

As a result of the Provincial Court Commission's increases to the judge's salaries, my salary has also been increased. My salary, unlike the Ombudsman, is not fixed in legislation. It is fixed by the Executive Council. And at this time, it's fixed by

an order in council as 85 per cent of the Provincial Court judge's salary. So it's not fixed in legislation in the same manner. And from an independence point of view that's something that's interesting to reflect on.

In terms of our office administration, we've had some discussion already about the rent and the lease so, with your patience, I think I'll just move on past that. And if you want to have further discussion about that, I would be pleased to do that.

I have included a request for some additional administrative costs to our office. One of the things that's happened in our office is that there's been a lot of public interest in what we do. And we get . . . we've had a lot of requests for mailings, for information. We have a lot of telephone conversations. There's been a fairly substantial increase in our general operating costs. And that's what this request for \$6,000 reflects.

The advocacy services request for an advocate assistant that I've included in here, what we've come to realize is that the advocate assistant in our office, who does all of our intake, receives all of the initial contacts to our office and who, for the most part, resolves about 80 per cent of the calls at her desk needs to be there 100 per cent of the time. And so when she's away for any reason, we're required to replace her. Because without her there, we're not able to provide the public with a prompt response.

And many of the calls that we get, people need something that day or the next day or the day after that. They don't want it a week or two weeks or a month down the road. And so we make every effort to respond to people within a day or two of when they first call us. And that's really the impact of the intake advocate assistant in our office — is that she really does provide prompt responses to the people that contact us.

We have used funds from a vacancy during this year to offset those days. And so my request here is for funds to cover her off when she's not in the office for her leave entitlements.

In addition to that, that individual in our office has taken on the responsibility of being an adult support person to the youth activities that we have in the office. And what we've realized is that there's a significant amount of mentoring that happens with the youth that come into our office, and we need someone who is designated to be available to those young people and to help mentor them through the kinds of activities that they're pressing us to involve . . . that they're desiring to be involved in.

And so if we want to proceed with the youth participation aspect of our work, we need to have a staff person who is dedicated to spending time with these young people and helping them understand how systems work and how they can present themselves and help them organize some of the activities that they're engaging in. So we've requested \$18,000 in total for those two aspects of the increased pressures that the advocate assistant is experiencing.

The travel pressure that I've presented to you comes from the . . . again two areas. One is the travel for my staff who . . . we've made a commitment to meet on a personal basis with every young person that contacts us who wishes to have a

personal contact. These young people live all over the province. They live in rural areas. They are in the North. They don't all live in Saskatoon or Regina.

And in order for us to travel to Estevan or to Esterhazy or to Swift Current or to La Loche, our staff have to go. And again we try to go within a reasonable period of time. We've had a 10 per cent increase in the number of young people who have called our office, which has had a resulting increase in the amount of travel that my staff are doing.

In addition, to ensure that the youth delegates come from all over the province, we are estimating that the increased costs for the youth delegation travel are about \$4,000 as well. And those young people . . . For example, I was in Pinehouse Lake in January. We have a couple of young folks who would be very interested in joining our delegation from there. Those young people would need to travel from Pinehouse with an adult to accompany them. And if they want to participate in something like this, it just costs us money to bring them in and to support their adult support people while they're there.

The two areas that I'm requesting that are new and are probably, could be . . . well, are enhancements to the office: one is some . . . I've requested funding to conduct or contract for research. The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act has a section 12.6.3 that provides that the Children's Advocate may conduct or contract for research.

In the past we have done some research in some ways utilizing either one-time project funding such as the child and youth and care review that we're currently conducting, or other funds that we have used from other sources. The pressure on our office to make a response that is well reviewed, well-researched, detailed is significant. And I think . . . I'm requesting at this time consideration that this aspect of our legislative mandate be given some financial consideration as well.

In order for us to do quality work and to do it in a detailed way, I feel that we really need to be able to rely on some researchers, either in our office or on some kind of contracted per question basis. So the request that I've made for \$25,000 is for a half-time researcher for this work.

And the second activity that we want to add to the office which would again be new is advocacy in the North. My proposal here is a request for travel funds. My intention is that one of the current advocates in our office and myself would be the ones who would be doing the work in the North so I'm not asking you for additional staff dollars. What I'm asking for is funding for the travel.

We've now . . . in this past year, I had an opportunity funded through the child and youth and care review to travel to several northern communities, and I will say that I was personally profoundly impacted by how our northern children are living and the kinds of substantial needs that they have.

The feedback I've had from northern residents is that our office could be of assistance in advocating for the kind of things that they'd like to see for their children. And we need to have a better understanding of that.

So, my request here is for travel only. I'm not asking for additional staffing in order to do this work. What we will do is re-prioritize the advocacy work that we have and make this a significant part of the work of our office because it's a significant number of children in our province.

And lastly, we are also requesting funds for a web site. While the same amount of funding is being requested, we vision our web site slightly differently because we are getting a lot of pressure from various young people to create a child and youth friendly web site that would be interactive for them, to help them understand what an advocate is, how that could be useful.

We have several young people volunteering to work with us to create the web site, and they see it as an exciting project. And in fact, the youth delegation group is very keen to have a web site operating that would describe a number of aspects of services for children in our province and issues that impact children on a day-to-day basis. So our web site request is based on a similar, similar projection to what the Ombudsman has previously presented.

So our total request for this year is a total budget allocation which is outlined for you on page 20 and again detailed on page 21. And I didn't mention the transfer of funds but Ms. Tompkins also discussed that. And if you have any further questions about either the lease or the transfer of funds, I'd be pleased to answer those too.

So thank you for listening and thank you for the opportunity. And I welcome your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Parker-Loewen, for that presentation. Board members, questions?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I thank you for your presentation. I guess I would be one who would be interested in seeing the breakdown over the past years as to where your funds have been allocated.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you for your question. And what we'll do is give you the summary of the budget request that was presented in our 1999-2000 budget. And then a page from that budget which gives a breakdown from 1996-97 through to '99, so the '99-2000 and the 2000-2001 are on the page but they're not in a nice table.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I guess I have a question actually dealing with last year's budget . . . or not on dollars but just on a clarification. Did you say you visited 92 different communities on your review project?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We had 92 community meetings. Some of those would have occurred in the same community. For example, we had more than one meeting in Saskatoon. I think we had three meetings in Melfort, two or three meetings in Yorkton. So we had 92 community meetings.

We're just finalizing . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Maybe we have a different use of the term community. I'm thinking of community as being Regina or Estevan or La Loche, and perhaps you're using a different

term, are you? Are you thinking of it differently?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — You want to know how many actual towns or sites we visited?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well that's what I . . . I was interpreting the word community to mean . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Oh, okay.

Mr. D'Autremont: — . . . a geographic location.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I don't have that figure here and I don't want to guess, but we had 92 meetings in lots of communities. How does that sound?

Mr. D'Autremont: — But that could very well relate to like the Cathedral area here in Regina, and Hillsdale, and . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, no. That wasn't how the meetings are conducted. We had maybe a meeting in Regina of people who were primarily foster parents, and another meeting in Regina of people who were primarily social workers.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, okay. So your term for community and my term were different.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right. And we travelled into every region of the province and met in every major centre and in lots of smaller centres.

Mr. D'Autremont: — If you were going into one of these other communities, would you have been carrying . . . or I shouldn't say smaller communities but a community outside of where your office is, you would be holding more than one of these meetings per trip?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Oh yes, we packed in a day as much as we could.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, okay. Perhaps correct me if I'm wrong on this, and I may have misunderstood what you said. You seemed to indicate that 40 per cent of the children live in northern Saskatchewan and that these children were in a vulnerable position. Is that what you said?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, I . . . Well I may have said that, but if I did, that wasn't my intention. Of the people living in northern Saskatchewan, 40 per cent of them are children, and many of those children live in vulnerable circumstances.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, but you weren't indicating that all of the children living in northern Saskatchewan were living in vulnerable conditions?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No. If I said that, I stand corrected.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. That interpretation I thought could have been applied to what you said. That's why I wanted it clarified.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. You commented that your budget amounts to \$1 per resident but it also amounts to about \$3 per taxpayer, so there's a difference in there.

When you're advocating for children in the North, that you said you were placing more of an emphasis on advocating, just whom would you be doing that advocating to? Would it be the provincial government, the federal government, or some other agency?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — What I'm proposing to do is spend more time in northern Saskatchewan initially listening to community members. So for example in January, as I mentioned earlier, I was in Pinehouse Lake. I spent two days there. I met with a variety of different groups. I met with four or five classrooms of students, explaining what the Children's Advocate office does, listening to some of the concerns those community members have for children, and how they think our office might be of assistance to them in trying to improve conditions for children in northern Saskatchewan.

At this point I don't know what the end of that's going to look like because we're just at the beginning of that. So my interest is in meeting with as many people as possible, helping them understand our office initially, and then hearing from them how an advocate's office such as this one, that reports to you as the Legislative Assembly, can be of assistance to the children in the North.

So you know it's a process and I don't see a complete . . . I don't see how the end is going to look. And that's really the direction that I've understood northern residents are wanting is that they don't want folks like myself to come in and assume we know what a solution would look like. They want us to participate with them in developing some solutions. The New North report that's been publicly released is very clear in that area and a high priority in the report that was done is on child welfare.

Mr. D'Autremont: — When you're . . . Perhaps again you may have a difference of opinion on what the term advocate means. When you're dealing with people across Saskatchewan, the North or any place else, and they approach you with a problem and ask you to help them seek a solution, do you, are you, your office directed mainly to providing that, seeking that solution with the provincial government. Or do you work in the case perhaps more of the North, with the federal government or do you work with any agency that that problem has arisen with?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — If the problem or issue that comes to us is specific to a particular child or group of children, The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act provides that I can receive, review, and investigate those issues that relate to provincial government departments or agencies. So if a person brings a concern to our office, and it is about a provincial government department or agency, we would work with the — it's usually a family, because it's often a child in the context of a family — and that government department or agency to try to seek a resolution that's fair and reasonable to both.

If the matter has to do with, for example, a First Nation government or the federal government those would be ones that . . . or the school board, those would be matters that we don't at

this time have jurisdiction to formally investigate. What our office does is provide information to the caller about where they can go, how they can be their own best advocate, and what are some ways that they can look at seeking a resolution on their own.

So we provide, I suppose, at one level some advocacy assistance in that we provide information, strategies, ideas. Our goal in the office is to not turn citizens away because often, by the time they call us, they're very frustrated and they feel like they've been sort of bounced around a bit from one place to another. So our goal is whenever possible to try to find a way to give them the information they need so that they can get to some place where there's a resolution. We're not always successful but we work very hard at that, because by the time they call us they're pretty tired of calling around.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I understand the feeling of not being successful all the time. As MLAs we get a lot of phone calls that we have to deal with that we're not successful with.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes, and sometimes MLAs refer citizens over to us and we may have some different strategies or some different options.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You said that you supported community-based advocates. I wonder again if you could explain what you meant by that, what your thoughts are on that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — When I do presentations in the public, often I'm asked to speak about a particular topic or a particular issue or idea. Or I meet with an already established community advocacy group. An example might be a home and school association or of parents or it might be a big brothers organization — some kind of a community-based advocacy group or a group of general public individuals.

What I do is speak with them about ways that they, as community members, can promote the interests of the children in their community, offering them some ideas about how to be advocates for themselves, ensuring that your own organization has fairness for all of the people in it including children, up to lobbying your MLAs to introduce legislative or policy changes that will affect children.

So I offer them ideas about how they as community members can be advocates for their own children. In almost every setting there's disagreement about what is best interest and that's a part of our complex and interesting society that we live in.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Democratic.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right. Democratic.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Now perhaps some questions dealing more with funding rather than policy or direction.

Your research funding that you're looking for, exactly what do you see this research money being spent on? Or what do you hope to learn from it?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I see a couple of things that are potential. One is . . . maybe I'll just reflect on some of the past

kinds of research requests we've had.

There was a request for us to make comment on school policies regarding sex-offending students in schools and how could schools be protective of both the young person who is the offender as well as the other students in the school and ensure their right to an education. And so the request came from a committee of government and community that were reviewing that for the Children's Advocate to make comment on that process because they were looking to develop policy and perhaps change the legislation. So the invitation was for the Children's Advocate to comment on that.

That kind of work requires significant reading, review of the literature, contemplation, research. It's not experimental research, it's not research in the sense of designing something and going ahead and then testing something. I'm looking at the research assistant doing that kind of background work. Maybe in government this would be like a senior policy analyst or a . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — We have researchers too.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — You have researchers too, so the question comes in and someone needs to find out the answers. At the end of the day as Children's Advocate I need to make some decisions about what we're going to present in those kinds of invitations. We get invitations like that fairly regularly. And so what I'm asking for is some resources to respond to those because right now to a large extent I've been doing them personally. And it's a huge task to do well.

Other kinds of research might be more proactive. Two summers ago we had a practicum social work student working with us for four months, and what he did was a client satisfaction survey looking at how satisfied were people with the work of the Children's Advocate office and what were some recommendations that people who had contacted us could make to improve the kinds of services that the Children's Advocate office does.

We'd like to look at evaluating our service in a broader context. It's not just the children and the families that we'd like to ask questions like that of, it would be government. So in order to do that kind of research again you need resources.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think that's all the questions I have.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I think we all understand the importance of what your office does, but I'm looking back to '96-97 and looking at your annualized budget of \$342,000 and within two years it's, actually your budget has doubled. And if you go to this year now, which is another two years, it's actually tripled from that point.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I guess my question would be: will this be an ongoing thing at that rate that, you know, is this going to level out at some point or would your office keep expanding in your plans?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well that's a really good question, and it was asked of me last year too. This year I'm much more optimistic that I can give you a better answer. We had only a 7 per cent increase in the individual calls to our office so it appears — I'm hopeful, I'm optimistic — that we're going to stabilize in terms of the kinds of individual contacts we have.

The other kinds of requests, such as the tenant improvements, I feel like those are things that we are going to have to deal with and I can't anticipate, you know, 10 years down the road what that might look like.

I am still, as the first Children's Advocate in Saskatchewan, wanting to invite you to fund the full legislative mandate of the office. And so I do see that we're coming towards the end of that by me asking for the research funding this year which provides for one aspect of our legislation that we haven't been funded for.

In answer to your question, I think that I would say, yes, we're coming to an end of what I see as kind of this first five years of growth. And I would dearly love to see some stabilizing in our office.

We have changed every year. We've grown. We've added. The kinds of pressures we've received in our office each year have expanded, and I'm putting a lot of pressure on my staff to respond to the workload that we have in front of us and they're putting a lot of pressure on me to stabilize.

So if that's an answer, I don't know, unless . . . Two years ago we were derailed by the death of a child in a foster home and we reallocated two of our staff full-time to investigate that child's death. And I can't say whether something like . . . if something like that occurred again, we may be back at this table.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Do you have a comparison from, say — you said I think, if I understood you right — you said seven provinces have a child advocate office.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Do you have comparisons about what the budgets in those provinces are depending on maybe — population I understand would naturally change that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We've looked at that and we have a comparison document that is . . . I think it might be two years out of date now. But Alberta, the Alberta advocate has undertaken to do that this year again, and so I do have that document. I don't have it here but I would be happy to share that.

If you'd like my off-the-cuff sort of response, per capita, the best funded province is probably Alberta, then British Columbia, Quebec, and then sort of down from there. We are certainly not in the upper end of the funding but we're not at the lower end either. I think Manitoba's probably the least funded advocate's office right now in Canada per capita.

But I think I'd just like to note that our office does have the broadest mandate of any office in Canada, so the expectations

on us are significantly different than the expectations on any of the other offices.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Bjornerud. Do you have your hand up Mr. Lautermilch? Okay, sorry. Mr. Kowalsky?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay, thank you. Have you got any . . . regarding web siting. Have you got any information or advice with respect to the efficacy of web sites versus other types of information seeking methods that we now use?

For example, I have to make these kind of decisions in my own office. How much do I put on a web site, how much do I take it from my . . . do I take it from my pamphlet here, or radio ads, because it is all designed to do the same thing. And I haven't been able to get, other than watching the stock market, good advice on the value of web sites and I'm not sure if I trust the stock market on it right now. Have you been able to get any kind of . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well the short answer is no. And I'm not a real web site user myself so I don't know. The other answer though, is that we serve children and we do get children asking us, what's your web site? We want to look it up. And I do . . . my intuitive senses that younger people, younger than me, are pretty keen on the web site and that as a Children's Advocate office, we do need to get a web site that's child friendly in some way.

How it would be used, whether it would be used, those are good questions. And we . . . I don't think either the Ombudsman or I have done any kind of marketing survey in that regard.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes. I look at, you know, that particular aspect of it as something that maybe we should be going to advice for, say from the Department of Education, or somebody that's done some work on it. Because you can really get wound up on that stuff and actually get addicted to it. And it can go further than you might have anticipated or that I might have anticipated.

So it just brings to my mind that somehow we have to work out a way of defining roles. You know, who can do what. Because I know that in your work, when I look at what you do, it is non-ending. And it's a bit like the Ombudsman, you can always take on more. Or it's a bit like Legal Aid, you can always take on more and more and more. And if you are into the job, you want to take on more and more, rather than do less and less, and cut yourself off at a certain position. So I understand, you know, you're interest and desire to want to respond to the demands that are placed on you.

I want to ask the question then, sort of in the same vein, about research. You are in a position . . . I would believe that you're in a position where you can identify where there are certain kinds of research that need to be done. Is that . . . Would that be correct?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — With regards to children, yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — With regards to children. And yet your . . . I

mean, even though it's in your, in your description, in your overall mandate, the research . . . to establish a research capability, you know, takes quite a lot. You won't be able to do very much with \$25,000. You can maybe sort of set up one person, and they might be able to set up some parameters, and then maybe, hopefully, get into contact with the university or an academic institution.

And that, that . . . And I'm wondering here again whether we shouldn't be looking at the mandate a little bit, and saying, well . . . and not placing that burden on you because there are probably other places that can do research, or have been doing research, and can conduct the research which maybe you can identify.

And kind of . . . because I can see the, the research if you get started on it, I mean you can kind of . . . there can be some very good ideas come out of it. And we will end up in a position where we can't fund it.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I, I haven't asked for research funding until this year. And that is part of the dilemma to me is that I'm not convinced that a Children's Advocate office should be conducting core research in that way. And I do think there are other organizations that are much better placed to do that kind of research.

And what an advocate's office may be able to do with a small amount of funding is exactly what you said — identify some areas where research needs to be done, respond to some specific questions where people are seeking an independent opinion from an advocate who's, who's there for children. But I don't see us having a role in doing . . . conducting direct research as it relates to children.

One of the projects — and I've mentioned this in my annual report — that we've been pressing government to look at is an indicator's report, sort of an indicator of child well-being in Saskatchewan report with some kind of every two or three years update. And, you know, that kind of information needs to come from government somewhat like the education indicators report that Saskatchewan Education has been producing the last two years.

We don't have access to that data, and so the interest I would have is having that report done and us assisting government in producing it, in reviewing the materials and helping them with questions that they might have. There's a . . . there's a public interest in that kind of report not just coming from government because there's a question that all of the information may not have been presented as openly as some people in the public might like to see.

So the involvement of the advocate in that kind of research activity could be advantageous in terms of . . . in terms of that work. But I don't see us doing direct research. My background is a developmental psychologist and a researcher and I'm very interested in research, and I'm not, I'm not convinced that this is the place for it to happen.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And I also want to ask a question about your request for funding for an advocacy assistant. Judging from what you're saying about that position is that this is a lower

level job than most of your staff are in.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That person's classified at a lower level, yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And judging also by what you're saying is that this person serves a very, very valuable role in your operation. It's because this is your front line person, and this person's able to screen out a lot of the . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's right. She's the hub.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Have you considered, you know, reorganizing within your department? Within your staff? Reorganizing so that you make provision for a position like this rather than adding to.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have, we have that position. We have four advocates — one person dedicated full-time to doing child death reviews which are piling up on us, and I'm not sure how we're going to deal with them. But we are now . . . part of some of our other advocates are already doing child death review work. And in order for us to travel and be out of the office and meet with young people, that kind of reorganization would be very stressful for us to accommodate.

We have looked at it, and I don't, I don't see how we could manage that and continue to go and see the children that need to be seen and do the child death work. It's . . . what we need is someone dedicated to stay in the office, and we need people who are prepared to travel into the rural areas and the North and all of the other places in the province where children are.

It's a balancing piece that we do every single day.

Mr. Kowalsky: — With respect to the travel, particularly the travel to the North, is this . . . what age group of children are you usually working with?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — When we're working with children themselves, they're older, probably older than 10, and our legislation goes to age 18 right now. A lot of the advocacy work I do is with parents and with other community people who have younger children, children who are vulnerable in some other way or disabled, who are in care, who are . . . have some other kind of need. So our mandate is to work with children under the age of 18.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And when you're working with . . . (inaudible) . . . case, do you have a system where you eventually say: all right, you're finished with us, now you should go to this institution or to this body. How do you draw the line or do you, are you able to do that as to where somebody graduates from your . . . which I think is highly intensive work to sort of maintenance with Social Services or something like that. Or am I mistaken in your role here?

Because I think people would have a tendency, once they've had some success and they feel comfortable with you, that they want to continue.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — They want to come back.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And come back and say, hey, help us with this and help us with this. And it will go on.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — There are a few people that do have that tendency. What we do as . . . Part of our advocacy goal is to help people become their own self-advocates. And so we . . . when it's a young person, what we're doing is mentoring them to learn how to be their own advocate.

You or I need to deal with problems regularly where we have to advocate for a resolution to something or other. Lots of these young people don't understand how government works, what sort of the structure is, and where you can go to get a complaint resolved, and so we do a lot of teaching around that.

And we close almost as many files every year as we open. We're a little bit behind, but for the most part we're closing as many as we open. And we're quite pleased with that number.

Occasionally, particularly young people who are incarcerated contact us on a more frequent basis because one month there might be a particular issue and then that issue's resolved, but a month or two down the road something else might occur and they have had contact with us and feel that that was positive so they'll call us again. So particularly with young people in conflict with the law, we might have more of that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much. That's a discussion I'd like to continue for a couple of hours, but I think this is not the time to do it.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'd be pleased to talk to you any time.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well this is actually carrying on from that. You mentioned that a lot of your time is spent with children in care.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Now I assume that means that there already is a judicial hearing, there already is a lawyer on the case, there is already a social worker. Is that all correct?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. Well unless it's a voluntary agreement. There would be . . . Yes, those would all be there.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — And I know, because I fall into it myself, being an MLA and a lawyer, people come to me for a free second opinion. And I'm wondering to what extent . . . You know, they've already got a judge's opinion and they didn't like it. And that's your job is to be the court of appeal against the judge.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — It's not?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — In fact The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act . . .

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Because that's my role. My role is I'm above the judge, and they've already got the judgment and they didn't like it and they . . . and so now I'm supposed to reverse

what their wife is getting from the settlement etc. You're not finding that?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we get some of those calls because people don't understand our role, and that's part of our public education goal is to educate people about that.

We do not, and the legislation is very clear, where the matter has been determined by the court, our office does not have the authority to review that. We look at administrative decisions. So for example a child in foster care, the judge doesn't determine whether they live in foster care A or foster care B, or whether they go and stay with their aunt. Those are administrative decisions and that's what we look at.

Again in my annual report I have pressed government to look at some kind of an appeal process for child welfare so that those kinds of administrative decisions don't need to come to a Children's Advocate for an appeal but that they would go to an appeal panel such as the social assistance appeal boards.

But in child welfare in Saskatchewan we do not have such a panel. Almost every other province has a child welfare services review panel. The legislation in Saskatchewan has provision for it and it's never been enacted. And that would reduce my workload significantly.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — No, I think I'm following you there . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And my budget. That would be an interesting question. I'd transfer my budget over there if you'd implement the review board.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Seriously you might be more dragged in where . . . while the family accepts the child is going into care for a period of time but they don't like the particular placement that's been made.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's true.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Okay, and you think that there may be a simpler, easier, cheaper mechanism for dealing with those sorts of situations.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — You know, that's a complex question because those panels are often community-based panels, and are they simpler, easier, cheaper than what we would do? I don't know. They would involve community in a different way. I haven't done a cost analysis of that. The Department of Social Services might have though.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I guess I'm just curious to know to what extent you are filling a void for the children who are falling through the cracks and have been forgotten and been ignored. And to what extent . . . you know, there's a lawyer, a judge, a social worker, and you know and now we've added one more onto an ever-expanding list.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — What we add, that none of those people add, is we are there as an advocate for the child. We stand with the child in those matters; not with the parent necessarily, not with the social worker. Our role is to ensure that the child's point of view gets on the table and considered

when the administrative decision is being made, and there isn't anyone else doing that right now.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — But as you say, oftentimes, or perhaps all the time the only way you can really help a child is through the parents and . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Sure, especially if the child is young or vulnerable by some other circumstance.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So getting the parents into a better understanding of what's in the child's benefit is a lot of the work then?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right. That's the public education aspect of this mandate.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — As opposed to the parents thinking they have "lost" to Social Services or the courts. Because I think parents usually do view it as a winning/losing situation as opposed to what's going on in the child's life.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. Our Act directs us to try to resolve matters through non-adversarial means, so one of the things we would do is try to bring the parties together to sort it out and to try to do that in a timely way so that situation doesn't get more complex.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — But if somebody comes to you because they're mad because the judge has committed a child to the care of the minister, you say, I'm sorry, you're talking to the wrong person?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Exactly.

The Chair: — Any other questions from the board?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I just have one — and I'm just not able to put the numbers together because I don't think they're here for me — but I'm wondering if you have travel, both in-province and out-of travel, just aggregate numbers from last fiscal year and what your request is for this fiscal year. Would you have those numbers?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — So you're wanting this year's travel money compared to last year's travel money?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What was in your budget request for last year and what you are requesting for allocation for this year?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Okay. In 1999-2000 our in-province budget request was for . . . well what we put into our line was about \$31,000. What we spent and what we're projecting to the end of 2000 is \$45,500. So we've spent \$15,000 more than what we had put into that line. We found that \$15,000 because we had a vacancy in one of our positions. So we've not asked for a special warrant to cover that over-expenditure; we've just managed it within our office.

And this year we're requesting \$44,000 to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right, right. So we're asking for \$44,000 this year and that vacancy will be filled so we won't have that

flexibility this year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And that vacancy, was that a clerical type? Was it an advocate?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, one of our advocates, one of the professional level 6.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So how many advocates, how many advocates do you employ this year, and how many would you have if all of this budget request was filled, how many would you have this year, last year, and perhaps the year before in terms of front-line people working?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Staff?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — This year, not including myself, there are 10 of us.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — These are all advocates or is there some clerical in there too?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, no. That's including our clerical staff as well.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And our administrative staff.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have four permanent advocate positions. One was added into last year's budget and that was the request to have a person allocated to do the child death work. So we now have four. But really there are three who are doing the kind of advocacy work that I've just been describing because the fourth person does the reviews of the child deaths.

And we have one advocate assistant position. And there is a position for a Deputy Children's Advocate and she does do some individual advocacy work as well as she works on a number of the systemic kinds of files that we have and does investigations.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments from the board? If . . . okay, I'm sorry.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I, I guess, just would be willing to move a motion, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the budget of the Children's Advocate. And I want to say much along the same lines that my comments were to the Ombudsman.

The Chair: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I just want to say that we really do appreciate the support that you give the children of our province. I think you've got the kind of job that'll never end, and unfortunately there will never be enough to do all the things that I guess we as society know, or should know, needs to be

done out there. And I want you to know that government certainly does support you and we have . . . and I think your budget allocations over the years will reflect our support for the work that you and your staff do on behalf of children in our province.

You know, would that we wouldn't have to have your office; it would be . . . it would make us all much, much happier I'm sure. And I'm not going to go through the pressures that we have budget-wise because you're familiar with them and I think you're probably tired of hearing that. It almost becomes a mantra. But the problem is, it's still the reality, and our economy sometimes seems to be not growing as fast as we can grow our need for enhancing funds for programs.

And so, you know, the independence and the work that you do is important to all of us. And I want to move a motion with respect to allocation and . . . but I want you, when moving my motion that we very much support the work that you're doing. And I — we've asked, I think, every department and agency that certainly that I've dealt with through the budgetary process, my department is one as well — we've asked for some support in trying to keep managing what is a pretty fragile economy and a pretty fragile economic circumstance.

And so I'm going to move a motion, after hearing some of the comments from members and the questions from members, I would like to move a motion that:

The year 2000-2001 estimates of Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,082,190 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

If I have a seconder of that, that would be my motion.

The Chair: — You have a seconder? Seconded by Mr. Kowalsky. Any further discussion? I'll read the motion once again.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Excuse me, I just want to understand how this . . . I just want to understand how the \$30,000 transfer is accounted for, and is there some need to do anything further than what we've already presented?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Actually that was the question I was going to ask of the Provincial Auditor. I'm certainly not familiar with . . . I've never see that kind of a transaction before . . . and I guess we're doing two budgets out of the same book and two agencies housed together and I think we should probably . . . we'll have to ask for some clarification as to how that works. I mean I know in terms of how, in my mind, I have no problem . . . to me it's just . . . it's a pencil figure.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I don't know, but I think it might be wise if we were to seek some clarification.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Miss Tomkins thinks it's there and because we're one vote, two sub-votes, we can probably manage it.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think it's there because our total budget allocation or at least our total budget request was reduced by \$30,000 and the advocate's budget request was increased.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Tomkins: — Theoretically that money got moved by your decision.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, as I understand it, was that not the request?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes, and I'm just wanting to understand whether there was any further need to do anything else, so . . . sorry.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think what we might both do is seek some clarification. I guess if you look at it and I don't know what the reaction of the auditor is . . . the department would be, but I . . . we might want to seek some clarification. Maybe if you could do that. The appropriations . . . would be in the blue book.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But we might want to seek some clarification. Would you be willing to pursue that? Well I think we'll check as well.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And we'll do it with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Sure, okay.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — And I think your suggestion of an internal appeal procedure through Social Services where a family is unhappy with a foster placement, I think that suggestion is worthy of being noted.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. If there are no more comments I would read the motion as moved by Mr. Lautermilch, and seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 2000-2001 estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,082,190, and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

All those in favour please signify by raising your hand. Opposed. None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Well I want to thank you people once again for being so specific in your presentation and the work that you've gone through and it is recognized by the board. Your work is very, very important to the people of this province and you're to be commended, and I thank you very much.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Why don't we invite them to break bread with us while they're here?

The Chair: — As a matter of fact that's the first thing I was going to do, and with all due respect to the very nice people from the Provincial Auditor's office that have been patiently waiting for supper with us, it would be great if you would dine with us and the Chair . . . breaking bread with us as Mr. Hillson suggested. You're welcome to.

We'd like to take about a 20-minute break to do that so we don't hold you people up any longer than we have to. Thank you. 7 o'clock we'll resume.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being so prompt in returning. And our next item on the agenda is a decision item review of the 2000-2001 budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

And I'm pleased to welcome Mr. Wayne Strelieff, the Provincial Auditor, and the people, his very capable assistants that he was with him: Fred Wendel — Fred, who is the assistant Provincial Auditor; Angèle Borys, principal, support services; Sandra Walker, who is manager of administration; and Heather Tomlin, the assistant to the manager of administration. Welcome to you all.

And, Mr. Strelieff, would you please make your presentation?

Mr. Strelieff: — Okay. Well, thank you very much. And thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this evening.

We have provided you our next year's business plan. It's the blue document. We have extra copies if you need, and we also have extra copies of our '98-99 annual report on operations, which was published and provided to you last June. Each year we try to improve the contents of our reports and our plans as we expect others to do the same.

Our business and financial plan has four main components. The first component begins on page five in which we describe what we do and why, as well as our financial proposal for this year, next year, and the three previous years.

The second component of our plan, which is in appendix 1, beginning on page 33, in this appendix we provide more detailed financial information. We include a five-year summary of spending, the report of our auditor who audits our office as well as more detailed information about our work plans.

The third component is in . . . set out in appendix 2, beginning on page 61. In this appendix we provide answers to questions previously posed, previously posed by members of this board, and by members of the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The fourth component is set out in appendix 3, beginning on page 83. In this appendix, at your request, we suggested processes your board could use to help you assess our, our request for resources.

So moving to page 5, we state in that . . . on that page that we

request an appropriation of \$4.698 million for the year 2000 to 2001. This request is \$256,000 or about 6 per cent more than last year. The increase is a result of increased salaries and more work we . . . we'll do next year caused by new government agencies the government created, the quality of the government systems and practices, and making our work more timely.

In total we face cost pressures of about \$420,000. And we plan to absorb about \$165,000 of those cost pressure . . . cost pressures. Our plan shows that once again we will be reducing the number of people who work in our office.

In our business plan we explain the many factors that impact our request for resources. On page 37 of our business plan, we provide you the report of the auditor who audits our office, and who has provided assurance on our financial forecast. And by the way, our auditor is appointed by cabinet.

We also provide advice to you as requested on how you can obtain independent advice.

So moving to page 9, I'm going to just go over the main elements of this plan to try to get your minds into it. I know it's been a long day, and it's difficult to just get one's mind around new topics.

On page 9, in the first part of our plan, we set out several mechanisms by which you can assess our office. We then describe our role and our legal status.

In exhibit 1, on page 11, we provide an overview of what we do and the impact of our work in terms of inputs, outputs, intermediate outcomes, and final outcomes. The exhibit shows our inputs are the knowledge, skills, and abilities of our employees. One of the key issues we need to manage carefully is insuring we have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities. We have recruiting and training and performance development strategies to help us insure we do. Creating and maintaining an environment that encourages and rewards ongoing learning is certainly crucial to our success.

The exhibit shows that we have three key outputs, or products. We provide assurances to you as legislators, to government officials, and also the public on the reliability of financial information, on compliance with legislative authorities, and on the adequacy of the government's management systems and practices. We provide advice, mainly through our recommendations, to legislators and government officials. And we help develop trained professionals for public service.

The exhibit shows that our ultimate goal is to ensure better program performance, better parliamentary control, and thus improve public confidence in our institutions of government.

On page 12, we explain what we do in terms of the nature of our examinations, our reports to the government and to the Assembly, the expected outcome of our work — the outcome of our work and reports — and the knowledge and abilities we bring to the table. We do provide wide range of examinations and advice during any particular year.

On page 15, we describe our organization. We have a staff of about, well, the proposal on this one is 59 people organized into

five groups. At any time, we have about 15 to 20 articling students working for their professional accounting designations. And about 30 to 35 professional accountants.

I note that our average age is about 35 and just over 50 per cent of our people are women. Each year we plan for about six or seven people to leave our office. They seek opportunities elsewhere and, of course, significant increases in pay elsewhere.

We recruit new people and provide opportunities to recent university graduates to train and become professional accountants. Angèle Borys is our . . . is in charge of our recruitment and training programs and has been very successful at that over the last quite a few years. At the end of this past November, four of our six candidates writing the final examination for chartered accountants passed, and this pass rate is equal to the national average. And that's one of our key performance indicators as we look to . . . in terms of making sure that we manage our business well.

On page 17, we set out what we plan to do in terms of our goals, objectives, strategies, and performance indicators. On page . . . just a glance on page 54 to 59, we provide that information in more specific detail where we set out for each of our objectives our strategies to manage the key risks that might prevent us from being successful in terms of achieving our goals and objectives. We set out the action plans that we have and the performance indicators we use to measure our success.

In our annual report on operations that we provide you, we set out how we performed according to our performance indicators and the targets that we do set.

On page 17, we also set out our values, which of course we try to hold onto regardless of what challenges and criticisms and issues that we face from day to day. Also on page 17 to 18, we describe several factors that affect our work plan including the amount of government revenues and spending and assets and liabilities, the number of government organizations — I think it's now around 239 different organizations that we come in contact with every year — the quality of the government's management systems, the use of appointed auditors, our profession's work standards, and the co-operation we receive from government officials.

On page 19, we also describe several forces and trends that we think affect legislators and government officials and thus the work of our office. On page 19, we also set out several areas we plan to focus on. Those areas include: encouraging the government to implement a sound government-wide accountability framework that embraces performance management; encouraging the government to improve the quality of information provided to you on its plans and performance, including the plans and performance of Crown Corporations; and encouraging the government to identify, explain, and manage its key risks well.

On page 20, we set out the risks our office has to manage well in carrying out our responsibilities and working toward our goals and objectives.

On page 22 to 24, we explain the systems and practices we put in place to ensure we manage our risks well so that we are more

likely to be successful in achieving our goals and objectives.

Page 25, we set out and describe the cost of our work plan. In table 1, on page 27, we report that the costs of one year of auditing for our office is \$4.798 million. We also explain changes in our proposed funding in more detail on page 27 and 28. On page 29 and page 30 we set out our spending trends and how we finance our spending for a five-year period.

We also maintain net financial assets equal to about one month of our costs; that's our target. This way we can respond without requesting . . . we can respond without requesting special warrants, respond to such things as issues of the day or audits that take a life of their own and require a lot more resources and plans; to new organizations being created during the year that we didn't anticipate when we set out our plan. Requests for work and other assistance from government officials and from legislators. Unanticipated pressures to change our timelines which of course come almost relentlessly — relentlessly.

Changes in management systems and practices, and the usual one that's happening now, usually relates to new information systems that many government organizations are putting in place. And unanticipated benefit and salary increases related to market pressures or to economic adjustments provided by the government to its employees that we didn't anticipate. Also we maintain net financial assets to make sure that we have a efficient operation.

The page 35 — or 31, sorry — describes how we would adjust our work if sufficient funding is not available to our office. I'm pleased to note that for four years now — four years in a row — your board has supported our funding proposals.

Now the appendices. Appendix 1 which provides more detailed information. Page 37 is the report of our auditor who audits our office. The report from our auditor is on our financial forecast and it's the type of report we would work to provide if, if, for example, you asked our office to audit the government's budget. It talks about the future financial requests or estimates of organizations.

We also include a — on page 39 — a five-year, more specific summary of our spending. And then a whole series of backup and supportive information that that talks about how we plan to use our resources. The types of . . . the actual audits that we plan and some trend analyses as to the cost of those audits; the explanations of variances where they exceed particular amounts, the listing of the . . . a listing of the government organizations created and a list of government organizations wound up, that we know about as of the date of this report; more specific information about our staffing and average salary levels, and what we do with our time. I mean, everything we do we cost out including attending committee meetings, so cost out in terms of hours. And we have budgets for four audits that we say, well here's what our planned audit time is going to be. We cost it out and then we monitor it. And we adjust. And we assess performance of people within our organization, in part based on the ability to get the work done in the planned time frames. So quite a bit of more specific information — our training costs.

And then on page 54 to 59, we set out our goals and objectives

and how we, how we plan to work towards achieving our goals and objectives, including our action plans and the performance indicators that we monitor, that we track, and that we report each year in our annual reports on operations.

So the three, the three goals and the strategies and action plans and objectives within those goals.

In appendix 2, we provide answers to a series of questions that this board and the Standing Committee of Estimates have asked us in the past. And there's a whole series of questions. They're all good questions that we think should be asked, and should be asked of all organizations, to help you assess what organizations are doing, what they're trying to achieve, and how they're managing their operations.

We also set out the costs of our detailed work plans for prior years to give you a sense of trends and degree of difficulty of one organization compared to another organization, the billings that we've issued in the past.

In appendix 3, at your request we discuss, we set out our suggestions on how you can obtain advice of an independent nature to help you assess our request for resources.

The audit assurance, provided by our auditor on page 37, is one type of advice we suggest that you receive. You receive out of our office, but also you consider receiving out of other types of organizations that you come in contact with.

As you know, we encourage accountability as part of what we do. We try to be a role model. In appendix 3 we discuss what we think is an effective accountability relationship — a relationship that requires an agreed upon plan that is clear to responsibilities, expected performance, and the resources needed, a reliable report on actual performance, and of course, a reasonable review of performance.

To assess the resources, resource requests for any agency or any organization, we think you need a reliable business and financial plan and a reliable annual performance report setting out actual results achieved. And we think there should also be a review by a legislative committee.

Business and financial plans should set out what results an agency plans to achieve with the money requested which in our terms are goals and objectives. How the agency plans to achieve its goals and objectives — the strategies, the action plans put in place. How will the agency know if it achieved its goals and objectives which leads you to performance indicators and targets and costing it out.

I know I'm really encouraged that the government has announced a government-wide performance accountability initiative — very important initiative that I hope each of you embraces and supports. Because I think if the initiative is supported and worked through — and it's going to take time — but it will serve you well in your difficult resource-allocation decisions. So I was really pleased to know that the government is moving to a more performance-based accountability framework.

Our business and financial plan sets out the information we

think is needed to help establish an effective accountability relationship. We advise you on our . . . we revised . . . our responsibilities are set out by law. We've set out our expected performance in terms of our goals, objectives, strategies, action plans, performance indicators, our targets, and our key risks. Also we set out the resources we need to deliver on our expected performance.

Chair, this ends my opening comments and certainly I'm here to answer any questions you or your colleagues have. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Strelieff. That's a detailed document that you presented. I looked and I didn't see you document the answers to the questions that you would be anticipating being asked.

Mr. Strelieff: — Well, in appendix 2, those are the questions asked in prior periods so there's some guessing there.

The Chair: — Thank you again. I'll open the floor up to the board members for questions.

Ms. Jones: — I note in your request that out of the 256,000, 236,000 is basically salaries and that's a very significant amount. I'm wondering what process does the auditor's office propose for determining the increases in salary? Is it something that's set or how did you come to that figure . . . and a global 4,000 per . . .

Mr. Strelieff: — The page 5 . . . on page 5 there's a summary of what we go through in terms of the salary pressures that we face. The first pressure that we normally respond to is when the government announces a government-wide salary increase, it's usually a COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) cost of living increase of . . . I think in July 1, 2000, there's announcement that there'll be a 2 per cent cost-of-living adjustment. Well we normally provide that to our own staff. So there's something that's always, always there.

And then, let's see, page 5 . . . into it. Then we have to recruit and retain people so we respond to market pressures. We're never a leader on the market pressure; we're always following. But to retain people, to make sure that they stay with our office, we try to raise their salary so that they are comparable to the market. We're not quite the same as . . . we note this past year the government responded with a special increase to the salaries of professional auditors. Well we didn't go that far, but we have to respond to market pressures.

Ms. Jones: — Following that line then, how do the proposed rates of pay compare to auditors in other sectors?

Mr. Strelieff: — There's, I think at page 49 . . . Let's go to page 49.

Ms. Jones: — You're so well organized.

Mr. Strelieff: — Oh, that sets out the trend line over the last 10 years. So the starting point has been to keep track of the government increments. On the bottom of that page where it goes 4 per cent, 4 per cent, 4 per cent, those are those government-wide increments that we tried to track and to provide our own staff the same kind of increases.

Ms. Jones: — But in terms of dollar value, do you know how our rates compare to auditors in other sectors?

Mr. Strelieff: — Well there's a couple elements in here. Fred, can I . . . Do you know where it is? We note that . . .

Mr. Wendel: — Just in that paragraph with the little one there, like the sub . . . what do you call? The bullet number one. We talk about . . .

Ms. Jones: — The same page, sir? Page 49?

Mr. Wendel: — Yes. Taken from page 49.

Ms. Jones: — So this would be the one beside 52,377.

Mr. Wendel: — That's right. Right.

Ms. Jones: — Okay.

Mr. Wendel: — And we're explaining there what's happened to our average salaries and what the government is paying to other professional accountants if they have a chartered accountancy or a certified management accountancy degree. And we're saying in there, they've not only provided these 4's and 4's and 2's and 1 per cents that are listed below, they've also provided a special adjustments to professional auditors' salaries of 5 to 12 per cent this past year. Okay. So there's that impact.

Then later on we talk about this again on page 71. And in there we're talking about what the government's pay scale is for a business auditor that's hired through the Public Service Commission. Okay. And if they were to hire an auditor that's not a chartered accountant — through the Public Service Commission — as a business auditor, that starting salary would be at \$34,600 as a trainee, and they would move on up to \$45,000 in a pay range that they have in the Public Service Commission.

Our starting salary for trainees I think — correct me if I'm wrong — I think it's 26,500. That's what we start our people at. And then we progress them through as they pass their . . . they take different courses to qualify as chartered accountants or certified management accountants. And as they pass classes and as they perform in their job, we increase their salaries very quickly — and you'll see the large raises on the opposite page — trying to get them up to market quickly.

Now we're under pressure on our starting salaries because I guess we compete with the private sector firms, like, for articling students to come and work for our office.

So we have to keep that in mind for our starting salaries. We say our starting salaries start there, and then their market then becomes the government or crown corporations, or whatever you want it, to be once they're with us; then they can move on into the government. So then we have to respond to the market pressure internally once we've recruited them.

I don't know if that helps to answer some of your questions.

Ms. Jones: — So you're, basically what you are saying then is

that the starting rate for us — for the government — is 26,500 and if it was in the . . .

Mr. Wendel: — That's for us.

Ms. Jones: — Oh, well the government — you.

Mr. Wendel: — Well, we think of the . . .

Ms. Jones: — The private . . .

A Member: — Public sector.

Ms. Jones: — Public sector — okay, there we go, pardon me — is 26,500 and in the . . .

Mr. Strelloff: — In the government it's . . .

A Member: — 34,000.

Mr. Strelloff: — 34.

Mr. Wendel: — Like we don't . . .

Ms. Jones: — So the PSC pays 34?

Mr. Wendel: — That's right.

Ms. Jones: — Any idea what the private sector would pay?

Mr. Wendel: — Twenty-six five is what we pay. This year when we went out to recruit students . . . we were just out recruiting a few months ago. We meet with the firms, we discuss what starting salaries are, and we make offers. Now, we're probably be in the middle. We don't want to be at the top, we don't want to be at the bottom, and at 26,500 that's about where we are for the new students that are getting jobs as articling students.

Ms. Jones: — Okay, I would not think of us — you — as the private sector, but . . .

Mr. Wendel: — No, no, but we have to take that into account when we're out recruiting at the universities because they also pressure us. They talk to us about . . .

Ms. Jones: — So we're somewhere in the middle then between the Public Service Commission . . .

Mr. Wendel: — No.

Ms. Jones: — No?

Mr. Wendel: — No, we're somewhere in the middle of what the private sector is paying. The public sector starts at \$34,000. We don't get that high.

Ms. Jones: — No. Okay.

Mr. Wendel: — We're paying 26,500. Now there are some CA (Chartered Accountant) firms that are paying more than that and there are some that are paying less than that, okay?

Ms. Jones: — So we're paying in the middle.

Mr. Wendel: — In the middle of those, yes.

Ms. Jones: — Okay. So the \$4,000 that's an average figure per employee times 59, how do you decide where to allocate that? Is it your intention that it would, you know, is it going on the bottom, or is it evened out across the scale, or at the top of the range or what do you plan to do with that 4,000 per?

Mr. Wendel: — This year, in January, we'd had to respond to that market pressure at the starting salary range. Like when we're out recruiting — as I said, we've just been out recruiting — we had to increase our starting salaries. That of course impacted, I think, around 15 other people that already work in the office as articling students. Well we had to bring their salaries up, because we can't bring these new people on paying them more than the people that have been there for a while. So we had to provide that all across the piece.

So that's already impacted us.

Ms. Jones: — Okay, so you need this to pay for what you've already done?

Mr. Wendel: — Yes. It's factored into our budget request when we say this is what we need to finance operation.

Ms. Jones: — And so it's pretty much an across the board increase, say each step will go up incrementally — some on the bottom, some on the top, and the rest in the middle.

Mr. Wendel: — The biggest pressure came immediately; like we've already responded to that pressure. Now the rest of it would be responding to these COLA increases that we set out as in our assumptions. We say that the government's announced a 2 per cent salary increase to public servants. Well we plan to provide that to our employees in July, this coming July. Okay. That's built into our budget.

Mr. Strelloff: — Most of the salary pressure is on the more junior people in the office. That's where the increase in salaries are really dramatic, particularly after they get their professional accounting designation. They become so marketable and so valuable that it's that range of people that we've had to adjust to the market place for. Otherwise we would . . .

Ms. Jones: — So in order to keep them here, we need to pay them more.

So if the board approves the 6 per cent increase for this year, and acknowledging that a whole lot of it is in the salary area, what do you think we can expect for next year's budget?

Mr. Strelloff: — Well the targets that we have are to . . . what we've been trying to do is absorb inflation increases except for the economic adjustments that are granted by the government — so the 2 per cent, like that. And apparently there's another one and a quarter per cent out there that we weren't aware of back in October that was provided to government employees on the pension side. So we're trying to hold to the 2 per cent.

The other thing that we respond to depends on what the

government itself does in terms of, do they create new government organizations? Well if they do . . . And we don't . . . we can't control that. So that would increase our costs.

If there are problems in the audits that we know we're going to be sharing out, either we just know based on our plans that the organization is having trouble in getting its information together or it's introducing a new information system or there's an issue coming down the pipeline that we have to examine because of its importance, that would be factored into our budget.

But in terms of . . . well we've been trying to absorb the inflationary costs, other than the darn economic adjustments. So as we said in page 5, the total cost pressures that we have are about 420,000. We're going to absorb 165,000, but on the two fifty-six which primarily relates to the 2 per cent adjustment, new organizations created, and a series of key issues that have emerged that we need to examine.

Ms. Jones: — So we hope that you won't need to come back in at six but you might. Is that kind of what you're saying?

Mr. Strelieff: — Well it depends.

Ms. Jones: — You don't know because you don't know what else . . .

Mr. Strelieff: — If you can tell me what the economic adjustments will be over the next — so this is we're talking now 2001 to 2002 — that's important information. If I knew that, that would help me. If I knew what new organizations are going to be created or organizations wound down. And then also just issues tend to explode during . . . or surface or explode during the year that tend to take us on a different track than we planned.

Ms. Jones: — And a lot of that track is person hours, that's what you're saying?

Mr. Strelieff: — Our whole resource is people and we do . . . that's why, as I said earlier, we have budgets for all our planned audits and we cost them out and we track plan versus actual. We make sure that if that's not coming on target, we know why. And we also provide that information in our public reports as well.

Ms. Jones: — Okay. That's all that I have at this point, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Jones. Mr. Hillson.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you were actually here this afternoon to hear the other agencies we had before us. I think there's sort of two discussions going on here.

In the line departments we're very much aware that we've got about two and a half per cent a year to work on, that's the amount the economy is growing. So any increase above two and a half per cent — of course it's simply not sustainable. You know, it has to come out of deficits, taxes, or somebody else's program. But two and a half per cent is approximately, depending on the gross economy, is all we've got.

Do you agree with me so far? That that's all you've got to play with in a year, in terms of the public purse?

Mr. Strelieff: — That's a decision that you have to make.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — No, no, no. It's not a decision we have to make, that's a given.

Mr. Strelieff: — Two per cent growth in gross domestic product.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, about two and a half per cent is what the Saskatchewan economy is growing. So we've got a two and a half per cent increase sort of to work with. Anything more than that is money that has to be, you know, say pulled in from tax increase or deficit or somebody else's program because I'm not talking about government decision. I'm talking about something imposed on us, namely, the economy is growing at approximately two and a half per cent. Do you follow me so far?

Mr. Strelieff: — With your assumption that the economy is growing two and a half per cent? I understand that.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — You're following me so far.

Mr. Strelieff: — I understand that assumption, yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — But it's not an assumption. It's a fact that the economy is presently growing at about two and a half per cent. I mean that's what StatsCanada is reporting. Right? And seeing as it's growing at two and a half per cent, do you follow me that that's all the increased resources that the public purse has to deal with in any given year, is that two and a half per cent. Do you follow what I'm saying there?

Mr. Strelieff: — I understand what you're saying, yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Does it make sense?

Mr. Strelieff: — But that's . . . I mean that's your decision. I mean, that's the . . .

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — No, no, it's not my decision. I'm saying two and a half per cent is all the increase is that's out there. I mean the point is it's not something I invented or the legislature invented, it's something the economy has imposed on us, that we have an additional two and a half per cent in the Saskatchewan economy this year. We don't have any more than that. Is that correct?

That's according to StatsCanada. That's what StatsCanada tells us.

Mr. Strelieff: — That StatsCanada says that the economy grew two and a half per cent, okay.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Right. So that's all the increase there is to play with. There is no bigger increase than that. Do you follow that? Or am I wrong in that?

Mr. Strelieff: — When you say, that's all we have to play with, I'm not sure what you mean by that. The economic . . .

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well the increased wealth to, to spend.

Mr. Strelieff: — The increased wealth, as measured by the gross domestic product, is tracking 2, 2 and a half per cent.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So we're on the same track?

Mr. Strelieff: — I think so.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So in the line departments, we're very much aware that, as I say, any increase in spending above 2 and a half per cent simply comes out, as I say, of either taxes, deficits, or some other government program. Only 2 and a half per cent can come out of the expanding economy. That's the discipline under which the line departments operate. Do you follow what I'm saying there?

Mr. Strelieff: — I follow what you're saying, yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Now, I think I'd say earlier in the afternoon we were sort of having two discussions in that with the programs that were before us . . . The program may be laudable; I think all of us around this table would agree they were. The goals may be very necessary, the program essential to the province, the increases merited, but whenever we go above that 2 and a half per cent, we have a problem. Do you follow that?

Mr. Strelieff: — One of the reasons I'm having trouble following it is I know how you budget in a general way.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes. You know about the 95 per cent then?

Mr. Strelieff: — But also I know what's included in the budget and what's not included in the budget. And the 2 and a half per cent . . . it's just not as, it's not as . . . not as straightforward as, as saying there's a 2 and a half per cent increase in the economy; therefore, the, the particular budget of the year should increase or decrease to that per cent. It's just not that straightforward.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, it, okay, I . . . It won't be in lockstep but if we're talking about, you know, the long range, if government goes beyond the increase in the GDP, I say, it has to be cut out of somewhere else. It . . . only the increase in the GDP, it represents the increased wealth that the public sector has to spend.

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So, we have this discipline built into the line departments, but for the independent, for the independent agencies, do you have any suggestions for us as to how we can build in some of that, that same discipline. I mean as I said, we had wonderful programs before us today and I'm sure, you know, everyone around this table on all sides agrees but when we see increases of doubling or tripling, I mean, that clearly can't go on. It's not sustainable in the long term. Somewhere along the line it has to come down to some relationship similar to that GDP (gross domestic product), doesn't it?

Mr. Strelieff: — One of my suggestions I made in my opening

comments was to really encourage the government to move on that performance management . . . government-wide performance management initiative because that will provide you better information on deciding how best to allocate resources to all the different places that you have. Knowing that it's just a new type of initiative in particularly the line departments, what we do is encourage you to move that into the government because it'll give you a better sense of what you're getting for the resources that you're allocating — information that I know that you don't get right now.

So it gives you a better . . . That I think is one important initiative that I certainly strongly support.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, I mean with all due respect . . . I mean I totally agree with you, but with all due respect it's still not really the issue in that while I agree with you, cost-benefit analysis is terribly important in government as elsewhere.

If I can use the example of the Children's Advocate. Even if we all agree it's a marvellous program and even if we agree that we could double their budget and the money would still be all very, very well spent, that doesn't answer the fact that we can't double a program every year. You know what I'm saying?

So it's a different question than, you know, is this a good program? Well of course it's a good program. And of course it could be a much larger program and provide a very valuable service to the people of Saskatchewan but we still can't — as a legislature — allow programs to grow at that rate no matter how well spent the money may be. And I don't think anyone here was arguing that the money wasn't well spent. Do you follow what I'm saying?

Mr. Strelieff: — The response of it, my understanding of what you said, the responsibilities of the legislator are really hard and difficult.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Do you have any advice to give us though, in that regard?

Mr. Strelieff: — Well, again I go back to trying to encourage the government as a whole to provide better performance information to you — both as in your responsibilities as MLAs as well as your responsibilities as cabinet ministers and representing the people.

There certainly is a lack of good performance information right across the system to help you make those kind of difficult decisions. And that's why the initiative that is taking place, being led by the Department of Finance, is a really important initiative to help you wrestle with those decisions. Decisions are still not going to be easy because there's always more demands on resources than there are resources.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Right. Well I guess that's what I'm thinking because I head a department that is under the performance audit. And you know, I agree with you that this is important.

But I say even — I'll just try one last time — even if you pass muster of being good value for money, the taxpayers are absolutely getting good value for their money, that still doesn't

answer the additional question that resources are finite. And resources are growing at approximately in the level of 2.5 a year.

Mr. Strelieff: — Well one of the . . . I guess you asked me for some advice. What I would do in your responsibilities as MLAs and maybe even cabinet ministers is to encourage . . . to fund more of the organizations that provide you the information, that you can assess whether they are providing good value for money, that have their performance indicators set out, that they have their targets, that they are monitoring them, they are making sure that they are being successful. At least then you know whether you agree with how they're judging their performance and can decide to support or not support. But still at the end of the day as legislators, as people who are responsible for raising revenues and allocating resources, you have difficult decisions regardless.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Okay, thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Just a couple of questions, Mr. Strelieff. I'm just checking. You're asking for 6 per cent and the reasons for it. You talked about the 2 per cent in the COLA, the cost of living.

You also talked . . . or one of you talked about competing with the public and the private sector. And I think if I got my numbers right, the public sector actually is one of our bigger problems because they are asking you to compete at a much higher rate for starting people. Am I following that right?

You said 34-something in the public sector, and you have to naturally compete with that, but at the same time you're competing with the private sector which was around 26,000.

Mr. Strelieff: — Competing with the public sector; we do have a key competitive advantage and that is that we provide an opportunity to train, to work for people who are recent university grads, to go through our system and obtain their professional accounting designations. And as a result we, as well as public accounting firms, can pay less wages because of that.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Because of the training.

Mr. Strelieff: — And then as they get more experience, they get more valuable and our salaries increase accordingly.

Mr. Bjornerud: — One of the other things, if I understood what you said right too, is that your load of . . . your workload is actually expanding because of government creating more entities that you're asked to audit and check.

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes. That's one of the things that affects what we do is the number of organizations created and also the number of organizations that are wound up. And there's . . . on one of the pages we list the organizations that have been created during the past year and also the organizations that have been wound up. But that certainly affects what we do.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Yes. So I guess in a degree that answers one of the questions Mr. Hillson was asking is, why? Well here's part of the reason why. It's because the government itself

is actually creating a larger workload.

Mr. Strelieff: — And also there's a trend now very much to implementing new information systems. And that, that complicates our work because we audit the information coming out of the new information systems and it just takes time to make sure that the systems that are being introduced are being introduced in a sound way.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. Did I also hear you say that you would be having one less staff this year than you had last year? Or did I . . .

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes. Over the last few years we've been reducing our staff. I think in '97 or '96 we had 63, and now we're proposing resources for 59. We change our work methods, trying to put more pressure on some of our staff, which . . . I looked over there because Angèle Borys is responsible for our recruitment and also training and keeping track of the corporate culture and morale. And that's always a . . . well, you push people, and you can only push them so long.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Strelieff.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you. Anybody else? Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. And welcome to this evening's proceedings. I think that the Provincial Auditor's office has been doing a very good job over the last year. It's very important work.

As members of the Legislative Assembly, it's important that we know and be able to follow where the government is spending its money, and that that money is being spent properly. That the money that we spend, we receive value for that service that we're paying for. And I think it's extremely important that we carry on with that kind of a function in tracking the dollars that we spend.

In the 1999-2000 budget, were you adequately funded to provide the necessary services to safeguard the taxpayers' dollars?

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Good. You're not asking, as I can see in the budget, much different than you were asking for last year in that area to audit the individual different accounts such as Department of Agriculture and Food, Health, and those kind of things.

Are there any major differences in any of the line departments or other areas that you audit that need to be pinpointed for us?

Mr. Strelieff: — On pages 5 and 6, we highlighted a few areas that we're going to focus on because of, of our assessment of the risks that face legislators and therefore the work that we need to do. Our work towards 2000 or project '98 or the Plains hospital move has caused us to consider how we examine how the government manages our infrastructures — infrastructures of buildings and highways. And we decided to focus more this next year or two or three on how the government manages the

infrastructure. We're going to begin at the Department of Health again to check to see how they manage their infrastructures across the system, and that's a key new kind of issue or risk that has caused us more worry in terms of our work.

On top of page 6 we know that the Assembly is . . . or the government is considering proposing to the Assembly a new way of setting rates on Crown corporations. And one of those proposals or the discussions that we hear that might be moved forward soon may mean that the Assembly, the government itself, is no longer accountable for rate increases. That could be one of the models that you choose.

And if that's the case, the group or board that is given that responsibility, there needs to be some careful consideration as to what accountabilities that group or board has to you to make sure that you can assess whether those . . . the rate increases proposed by that board are appropriate, and there's other kinds of mechanisms that can be put in place to decide what utility rate increases or changes are appropriate.

We also, in third point there on page 6, we've had discussions with officials within the Department of Finance who are proposing that we finish the audit of the government's financial statements a month earlier than last year. Last year we were ready to sign off on the summary of financial statements of the government on about July 20, and this year the proposal is that we sign off on June 20, or be ready to sign off on June 20.

We think that's a very good move. I mean that's better timely information that will come to you. That also when organizations can put together their financial information in a more timely way, we know that they're on top of things better so we're certainly encouraging this step and that will change our work because a month . . . The year-end is March 31, so moving it from July 20 to June 20 is a significant adjustment in our work along with all sorts of deadlines for individual organizations.

Those three areas as certainly ones that have affected this work plan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. When I look on your pages 75 and 76, the note at the bottom of the page says these audits were not fully completed on September 30, 1999. To fully complete these would require 9,899 hours and \$828,327. Was this work completed and was that money available to you to complete those?

Mr. Streliaff: — Yes. This report is a status report of our work as of September 30 or October 30, October 31 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . September 30. So at that time we say, well here's where we are in our actual work. I mean we've continued to work on these audits and are getting them done. So the answer to that question that you had earlier, have we sufficient resources to complete this work plan? Yes we have.

Fred's the person in the office that is our quality control person and rides herd on the planning and the budgets and making sure that what we say we're going to do actually gets done, and that's why I keep on just going to him and say okay.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well when I look over your funding

requests for increases, most of these are increases that are really outside of your avenue of control. The salary increases that took place were mandated because government made changes within their salary structures that impacted on you.

The creation of new agencies, where you're asking for an increase of \$42,000, was not your creation to create these but yet they need to be audited. Under The Provincial Auditor Act, you're mandated to provide an audit for them. So again that's a cost that was imposed on you by government and not one of your choice.

And most of the costs that I see here are basically those kinds of examples. You do have one — the Toward 2000 project — where you estimated an increase cost of 73,000. That is one that I would view as you making the choice that there is better ways to do the auditing in that area and it does cost a change of increased spending.

The same with the debate on the Crown corporations' rate increases. This is a change that is being made by government. Again it's your role to audit these activities and therefore you have an increase in cost. It's not you that's mandating that the function of Crown corporation rate increases change, but you have to deal with it.

So I see that the costs that you are . . . increased needs of your department are related really to the changing needs in government and not to some change that you wish to mandate within your own department. The fact is, I note that you're absorbing either 170,000 or 165,000.

Mr. Streliaff: — 165,000 — there's a typo there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, I wasn't sure which one. Within your own department and I think that's commendable. I think you're doing a good job.

Mr. Streliaff: — Thank you.

Mr. Kowalsky: — First of all, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wondered if you would comment on the statements just made. Are you in agreement with the statements just made by Mr. D'Autremont?

A Member: — That he's doing a good job?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Not that you're doing a good job — we all know that. I'm talking about the preface that he had prior to that.

Mr. Streliaff: — My understanding of the preface is that a lot of our cost increases are driven by external forces like the 2 per cent and the one and a quarter per cent that was in October 31, '99 that we didn't factor into this, the new organizations, the market, the salary market pressures. I mean that's me trying to respond to making sure that we have a strong, healthy organization. I could not respond and not be able to serve you well, I mean, but I don't propose or choose to do that.

The audit of the Plains health board thing, it raised an issue as to how we provide you assurance on how well the government manages its infrastructure. And we found that through our

experience at the Plains that we needed to . . . we were missing, we needed to do a better job there, and so we're going to make that a priority over the next few years.

And the . . . but you asked for just a straight, is everything that we do somebody else's responsibility? No. I mean we have to manage our organization as well as possible but we do respond to actions that the government takes or doesn't take and that certainly affects how we are able to serve the Assembly and its role of trying to hold the government of the day accountable.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I have questions in two more areas. I notice that your budget for the Department of Health has steadily been . . . or no, the last three years has been decreasing. How did that come about? Are things being done better in the department that you don't feel you have to put the same resources into it, or have to increase them, or is it that the health boards are doing more? Because we want to find the answer to that secret, as to how to manage health with just a little less money.

Mr. Strelieff: — One of the audit approaches that we initiated about two or three years ago in the district health boards area was to examine district health boards on a more cyclical basis. So that we, in any one year, I think now we are there at, I think, 10 different district health boards, and we select them based on size and also variety.

For example, each year we're at Saskatoon and Regina because there's so much resources going there. But then there's a middle sector that we move around a bit and then on the smaller ones we move around — in terms of each year, we're not there at every organization — and then the two northern ones we are there because they're in growing pains.

We've thought that a more cyclical approach . . . most of the issues are kind of similar based on their size almost.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So you've learned quite a bit from the experience as well as what you're saying . . . able to do it in a more efficient manner.

Mr. Strelieff: — And so that has reduced our costs in the district area. On the other hand, we're finding increasingly problems at the department. And it just has, has, I guess, disappointed me but also has required us to have more focus at the Department of Health. And that certainly is reflected in the discussion earlier on that infrastructure, but also on how they allocate resources. I think if you remember in our fall report, this past fall report we did what I think is a really interesting, valuable piece of work on how the department allocates resources. And we just . . . there, there needs to be a lot of work there . . . (inaudible) . . . that we backed away from the districts and that's why the costs.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now I'm very interested in your planned audit of the rate review system. Just trying to envision what you're planning to do here.

Mr. Strelieff: — Okay, well let's see.

Mr. Kowalsky: — We don't know what kind of a system is going to be in place.

Mr. Strelieff: — So, what we're going to . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — We're going to have some kind of agency.

Mr. Strelieff: — So what we're going to try to do is provide you as legislators information on what, what are the alternatives that you should be considering in assessing what type of rate decision-making structure you need to put in place. And what performance information or accountability information would you need when you're . . . depending on which method or which mechanism you do put in place.

For example, the one that I've been sort of hearing being discussed is to establish an independent rate review board. Well if it's independent, that means cabinet is no longer responsible for rate decisions. Okay. Pretty significant, pretty significant issue that legislators have to understand and assess.

And there will be a proposal coming from . . . I think someone at CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) is putting together a proposal on, on what are the alternatives.

And then, once you . . . you're going to need help on that decision. And we're going to try to provide you information on what are the alternatives that you should, that you should consider — some of the pros and cons. And also when you do select a particular course of action, okay, here's how you might want to consider getting good performance information from whoever's going to be responsible for setting rates.

It's such a huge initiative in terms of who's responsible for decisions. So we're going to provide a report on the different models as well as some the accounting implications.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Will you be able to provide information prior to this being put into place? Is that what you're saying? Or are you saying that you will be evaluating what has been put into place.

Mr. Strelieff: — The first stage is to — when we're working on it right now — is to . . . there are a number of different models of regulation across the country, and to make sure that the models are known and that we know the models because it's part of our knowledge of business. And then there's also different ways of how the Assembly can hold the decision-maker accountable for rate increases.

For example, should . . . if there is an independent rate review panel or board set up, should that panel or board come into the Crown Corporations Committee or the Public Accounts Committee to explain its actions.

Mr. Kowalsky: — When can we expect your first report?

Mr. Strelieff: — Fall, according to this plan. Fred is just mentioning to me that the plan is to provide some information in our spring report, coming out in April/May, and then further information about it in the fall.

Because it is a . . . Just think that as legislators normally you hold the government accountable for rate decisions, but one of the alternatives that is being proposed is to have an independent rate-setting board make that decision. Well then, how does the

Assembly interact with that board to make sure that it's getting the best information possible to decide whether they agree with the decisions made by the new structure? If, I mean, if that's the course of action that is followed.

And there's some accounting issues in there too. Remember on all that rate-regulated accounting stuff that we went through a few years ago. Well when you begin to establish a rate-setting board, the accounting also becomes an issue. And that's a part of what we're trying to keep a close track of. I met with the interim Chair or the Chair of the interim review panel to begin the dialogue of just what kind of help does he think a board would need and to make sure that we continue to build our knowledge of what's going on so that we can help legislators.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I just have a couple of questions as I reviewed your plan. And by the way, I want to say a very comprehensive and detailed and very helpful business and financial plan. I found it improves, it seems, each year and I want to compliment you and your staff for the work that you do because it's a very effective and helpful document for us.

Mr. Strelloff: — Thank you very much. That's led by Fred and Angèle and Sandra and Heather.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well to all of you, thanks.

And as I read through your plan, I just have a couple of questions on sort of a . . . on a general note. One is with respect to the provincial government's decision to use private auditors, and in terms of the amount of work that the private auditors are doing. And you've indicated it has some impact on your cost of doing business.

I'd like to know just your opinion — if you'd share that with us — on is there room for private auditors? Clearly what we're trying to do is enhance the employment opportunities and training opportunities within the private sector, and some of it's a bit regional, although most of the larger accounting firms do the independent . . . or the audits, the private audits for government.

But do you feel that there's room for the private sector to be participating as we have, you know, sort of working I guess in a parallel and in conjunction with the work you do?

Mr. Strelloff: — In some ways it makes our job more complex, but we do get a lot of leverage out of public accounting firms. I mean, just think of all the district health boards that we come in contact with. There's always almost in . . . in almost all cases there's a public accounting firm there, and we work with them and, and get a lot of field work done through public accounting firms. And that does . . .

The one worry that we always have is losing track of the knowledge of business. But we do have, have systems and practices in place to make sure we don't lose track of the knowledge of the business when there's a public accounting firm in the middle — between us and the government. We also benefit from seeing how their practices change, and we can compare one firm to another firm to another firm and, and we change our own practices accordingly. And then that's . . . and

then we can also affect how they practice as well by, by . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Sure.

Mr. Strelloff: — So there's, there's quite a bit of synergy in, in . . . taking place. I do wish though that when a government, when the government does create a new organization, that for the first three or five years, we're there. And then after that, then we can talk about contracting it or, or moving, moving the work to a public accounting firm.

But the first three to five years of a new organization, like there's some discipline that has to be put in place that, that we bring to the table. Also there's some . . . to make sure that the organizations that are created remember that the Legislative Assembly is, is the boss. They quite often lose track of that. That that's where the responsibility lies for the performance of all these organizations.

I think there is a, a role for public accounting firms. We had a lot of troubles in the late '80s and early '90s in terms of sorting out the protocols. There was disagreements as to who does what and, and why. And over time we went through a, a task force, brought together all the people that, that were kind of leading the charge on the issue and worked out a protocol system that certainly makes sure that everybody is able to get their jobs done — management, public accounting firms, our office — in a more sensible way; and that we were still able to say to you that we've got our job done. We think we have the resources to get it done and we're willing to stand behind it.

So in that long sort of thinking aloud, I did say that I think there's synergies in working with public accounting firms and we monitor the extent to which firms are there compared to our office having direct knowledge. And every once in a while we will step in and say well, no, we have to do this work directly. And so we do that. We don't do it that often and there's usually an important reason for it.

And then for the new organizations, I still think it sure would be a lot easier on getting our job done if we were the auditors for the first three to five years of all of the new organizations that you create. Things like the Land Titles thing and a few years ago the First Nation's fund. I mean if we were appointed the auditor right at the beginning rather than having to work through, there would have been a lot less problems that have emerged because of it. But I do think there are synergies working with public accounting firms.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I appreciate your comments. I have one more, I guess, question of you, and it deals with a request that the board made with respect to processes that the Board of Internal Economy functions under. And one of your comments on page 86 and onto page 87 was with respect to independent advice for assessing the Provincial Auditor's request for resources.

And one of the entities that you suggest — and you and I may differ on this but I'd like your response — is that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be used because they're . . . and I guess, or you're suggesting, that they're sort of a . . . could act as an independent group of advisors.

I think the only comment I'd like to make to you — and I've read this a number of times in a number of your submissions to the legislature and in documents that you produce — I think it could be argued that probably the Public Accounts Committee is one of the most partisan committees that . . . And take no offence. I mean you've been a member of the board. I was a member of the board at one time too or the committee, so I have . . .

A Member: — Mr. Speaker, let the record show . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I have an understanding of its function. So I just, I'd like you to respond to that. I view it as being very totally partisan, and I'm not sure that it would ever offer any unbiased, impartial, and/or independent advice to any board. And I don't say that as a criticism — it's just the way the committee works — but I'd like your response to that.

Mr. Strelloff: — Well one response is that you give organizations responsibilities, they . . . if you give organizations responsibilities they tend to rise to the occasion. The Public Accounts Committee is far more familiar with our work than this board because our reports are referred to them and we work with them so often.

And also our office examines how you as a cabinet minister carry out your responsibilities. And then, and then sometimes we have to agree to disagree. And then the next day I come back to you and say, well can I do that some more? And that, no matter almost whatever you say, it's . . . I mean it's tricky to deal with that. And so the structure of the Public Accounts Committee doesn't have that, doesn't have that as . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I want to argue that that's not the case.

Mr. Strelloff: — Well that's caucus and caucus, yes. But it's not as . . .

A Member: — It's not as direct.

Mr. Strelloff: — I mean it's . . . I mean we used to go to Treasury Board for our requests, so here's . . . we used to come into the organization that we audit and report about to the Assembly and public one day, and then we come back to them and say, well can we, can we do it again. And it was done in private.

Well I mean that is not a very good system of . . . I mean we work for the Assembly and the Assembly is trying to figure out what the government of the day is doing. And that's . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Strelloff, that . . . you see this is sort of part of the conundrum that both this board, government members of this board, and you are in. And it would be the same with respect to Public Accounts. And I only say this as an observation because I've been part of it for a while, in that for you to maintain your independence which is critical in terms of you to be a functioning arm of the legislature. To function properly, you have to do it with independence from political interference.

Just the simple fact of us sitting here debating or discussing

your budget puts us as government members in a very difficult spot. And I think you and I will both understand that, based on, I think, a simple question that I raised personally a couple years ago that ended up with media furor. Now if I'm to do my job, I should be able to ask those kinds of questions but very difficult. I want you to maintain your independence, but on the other hand I need to be able to do my job as someone who is part of a body that is to do, and question, and to do a critique of your budget in some way.

So I just . . . all I want to point out is the difficulty . . . you maintaining your independence and us on the other side, attempting to do our job, which is why I think you'll see reflected in your budget allocations increases year after year. And when the members of the opposition ask if you have the funds to enable you to do your job, your answer was very simple and very direct — it was yes. And we need, as government members, to have you be able to deliver that kind of response when you're asked that kind of a question.

On the other hand, we're relying on your good judgment and your understanding of the fiscal fragility of this province to do your job in the most efficient and effective way that you can, and your report and your financial report and business plan give me some confidence that that is happening. And I'll end my remarks there.

But this is a little discussion that I've wanted to have with you for quite some time but we hadn't had an opportunity. So I just thought in the evening before we adjourn, I'd take the opportunity to sort of share some of our thoughts as government members . . . if not government members all, mine personally. Being a coalition I should not be speaking on behalf of our partners.

Anyway, I thank you for your time and your presentation today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Now if the government members have a concern about a possible conflict of interest in this kind of a discussion, they could abstain themselves and let the opposition deal with it.

The Chair: — Any more questions or comments from board members? If not, okay . . .

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Move concurrence.

The Chair: — Then we're prepared to move a motion. There being no further discussion or questions, I have a motion here that's moved by Mr. Hillson and seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the 2000-2001 estimates of \$4,698,000 of the Office of the Provincial Auditor be approved in the amount of \$4,698,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

And that's . . . with a slight amendment to the motion by your approval, Mr. Hillson, "be approved as submitted." Would you just add that in the amount of . . . "approved as submitted in the amount of" . . .

I'll read it very quickly as amended:

That the 2000-2001 estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor be approved as submitted in the amount of \$4,698,000, and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Signed by Mr. Jack Hillson, February 22, 2000. And the seconder is Mr. Lautermilch.

Question before the board. All in favour? Please raise your hands. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Mr. Strelieff, to you and your staff, again a sincere thank you for the presentation. Very succinct, precise, and as the board members mentioned, very much appreciated. Thank you.

Mr. Strelieff: — Well thank you very much, And this is the fifth year in a row that your board has approved our proposal and thank you very much. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — It looks like everybody's . . . It's 8:30 now. I would, and I anticipate that probably there's some rest needed before we continue on with other items on the agenda. So would someone move the adjournment?

Ms. Jones: — Moved.

The Chair: — Moved by Ms. Jones. We will adjourn until 10:30 tomorrow morning, Wednesday. Thank you very kindly.

The board adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

The board met at 10:51 a.m.

The Chair: — Call the meeting of the Board of Internal Economy to order this morning. And if I might just at the outset, for anyone that's going to be making some presentations, please ensure that your microphone is in position so that our *Hansard* people can hear you clearly. Appreciate that, just a reminder.

We got down to decision item no. 11, and that was review of the 2000-2001 budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And I'm going to ask our director of financial services, Marilyn Borowski to give us a briefing.

Ms. Borowski: — This is the position that has just been filled in yesterday's meeting. The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the office of the members' Conflict of Interest Commissioner are both . . . the commissioner is the same person.

The way these offices have worked, and will continue to work, is that the commissioner maintains his office in the law firm that he has. His expenses essentially are a portion of the expenses of that office, so we pay a management company and they provide him with the space, secretarial services, the basic operating things he would need for his office. This has increased this year because there is a change to the salary that will be paid to the conflict or sorry, the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The commissioner is appointed by order in council . . . The amount for the commissioner is appointed by order in council; it is not done in legislation; it's not done by the board.

The contractual services have gone up and some of the other expenses have gone up because the new commissioner, one travelled . . . There are conferences that are conducted nationally for the Information and Privacy Commissioner and he expects to be attending those conferences, so our travel is a little higher there.

Again, because it is a new commissioner he's not quite sure what this budget is . . . you know kind of based on the experience of the previous one, but the new commissioner believes he may be doing more travelling than that the previous commissioner did.

The contractual services again, for that reason is higher, in that this is a different office so there's going to be different costs for rental and providing the secretarial services and the, you know, the other basic operating costs.

The Chair: — Any questions?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I do have some questions. First question is a clarification of the process here. It was just indicated to us that this person is hired by the cabinet. Does that mean that this budget is set by cabinet or through OC (order in council)?

Ms. Borowski: — No. Perhaps I'm going to get the Clerk to help me with this one. The commissioner is appointed by order

in council. The actual . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — I would ask this question. Is the commissioner — when he's appointed by Executive Council — is there a salary and an expense allowance that is voted at that time or is it up to us to . . . is it up to this board to set the salary or are we simply authorizing the funding for it?

Ms. Borowski: — You're authorizing the funding for the office — the operations of the office. So that amount is set already. But the budget is a budget that is approved by the Board of Internal Economy.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay. Could you clarify how this salary . . . you're saying that the salary of \$45,000 is set? I don't understand that.

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Chair, if I might speak to the board. The salary is negotiated with each new incumbent, and I understand that an acting appointment has been made. And that process, for the Freedom of Information Commissioner, is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council makes the acting appointment, and then the House makes the formal appointment when the House is sitting.

At this point, the amount of \$45,000 has been given to us as the amount to put in the budget for the salary for this next fiscal year. So I assume that's what's been agreed with the incumbent, the new appointment.

Mr. Kowalsky: — All right. Let's assume then that there has been agreement as part of the coming on stream here for the salary portion. Now could you . . . could we get an explanation with respect to the contractual services then?

Is this also in agreement or is this something that we . . . prior agreement . . . or is this something that we should be checking out? Is it our responsibility to check that out?

Ms. Ronyk: — The budget here reflects sort of the similar arrangement to the past which Derril McLeod had agreed to, and that is that there would be a payment made on a contractual basis for space and staff. And they would operate out of their existing office space but we would just pay then for space and staff to support the office.

We're not paying the staff directly. We're paying . . . Because it's not full-time for the staff person in the sense that they need to be there full-time to handle the phone and inquiries, but it's not full-time work. So we're paying an amount for space and clerical support, furniture, and equipment. And this amount has now been agreed, again, with the new proposed incumbent.

It is an awful lot cheaper than establishing and paying for a separate office and separate staff. I think that's why it's been done this way.

Now this may be subject to review after the new person has been in place for some time. They may decide that this isn't adequate and they need a separate office to establish a street profile, or whatever. But for now it is going to continue in this manner.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well could we have an explanation of what the purpose is of — under contractual services — of the legal services. Is the person we're hiring, is this not a lawyer? Is he not a lawyer?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, the individual is a lawyer and has been lawyer. The Act does allow for the Freedom of Information Commissioner, or actually it's Information and Privacy Commissioner, I should use the proper title, to seek to do research and seek legal advice on points that that require special expertise or more in-depth time commitments. And this was one of the items that was requested by the new incumbent and agreed to by the Department of Justice and the incumbent — the new person.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Judging from the, from the requested amount for 2000-2001 this is a considerable increase. I would expect that with that that there would be a . . . it must be reflected in greater expectations of a person in the job; also that we're expecting or projecting that there are going to be legal services that were not required prior to this. Do you have any information that you can give us about the job and how it's changed, or different requirements?

Ms. Ronyk: — I don't think the requirements have changed because the Act lays down the requirements for the office. But with any new incumbent coming in . . . And it is a very new job; it's only been in place for six years, seven years perhaps now, and it's only been one person in that position until this point. And with a new person coming in, it seems wise for them to do a review of the operations of the office, and it could indeed I guess take a little different approach, or there may be a backlog of issues that require to be dealt with. It would be possible for the board to pursue this with the new appointment if the board would wish to do that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, what would be the consequences if the board did not approve the requested amount but approved an amount less than the requested amount? Would we be in effect breaking a contract? I'm not quite clear on this. I don't . . . this is quite different than what we've ever been up against before.

Ms. Ronyk: — There is, of course, no written commitment that I'm aware of. Certainly the individual who has agreed to take on the role has agreed on this basis and would perhaps reconsider his position if it was reduced. I can't speak for him, however.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I guess the point that I'm trying to make is that I've got all confidence in the individual that's been hired because I've got confidence in the people who hired him.

What I am not clear on is whether we're expecting . . . is the amount of work and the work that we're expecting this person to do. I have no reason to believe that the work has changed in any manner or that the amount needed to do the job has changed in any manner. And so it's not very clear to me why these rather substantial increases come in . . . are being recommended.

I would expect that what should be happening is that the . . . there should be an ordinarily inflationary amount added to the

figure and our expectations of the job should remain as what they were, which would imply probably, you know, the standard two and a half per cent or so of the amount for the job. And perhaps I can see it might be advantageous to, to add a little to the travel in terms of going to national conferences. But I'm a little reticent in, in making that recommendation until I have it, have it cleared as to exactly the processes and any understandings. And so I'm wondering if there's a way of clarifying that?

Ms. Ronyk: — I think, I think there is and perhaps we should call . . . I think the public announcement is to be made today. And I think the board members are aware that it is Mr. Gerald Gerrand who is being appointed as the Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner. Mr. Gerrand is around and he's available today. Perhaps we should arrange for him to come and explain why he feels that there is need for some increase in the resources.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well I think that would be advisable then. I would . . . If we could do that? Perhaps we could just defer discussion on this item until he is . . . and ask him to appear.

The Chair: — If that's the wish of the board, we'll certainly arrange to. Mr. Lautermilch?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I would just ask Ms. Ronyk if . . . Do you know what time the announcement is to be made?

Ms. Ronyk: — I know that the OC has been signed this morning.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Ronyk: — And we've arranged for Mr. Speaker to swear him in this afternoon at 4:30 and the press release is likely to go out sometime this afternoon. Margaret, do you know any timing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We could hold that, because I think he would need the opportunity to . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. I think let's defer then till after lunch and . . .

The Chair: — Is that what the, what the board's wishes are? Yes, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would the acting — well, I guess he's acting currently, will be officially appointed this afternoon — have enough awareness of the needs to be able to answer the questions? Did he establish this budget?

Ms. Ronyk: — He had input. But I don't know how . . . I don't think he has . . . He has had no opportunity to look at the file. So he . . . because he's not . . . it wasn't proper for him to do so until he was appointed. So he won't have any sort of concrete idea of it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'm just wondering just how prepared he would be to answer those kind of questions at this time. If he isn't prepared and since the announcement isn't till 4:30, and we're only scheduled to go till 4, perhaps he could come back at a later date.

We're going to have the Sergeant-at-Arms do a presentation this afternoon that won't be conclusive, and we'll have to come back for another presentation. Perhaps he could come at that time. I'm not sure how pressing the budget is that it be dealt with today. I guess that would be my question.

The Chair: — I understand there is some urgency to have the budget go forward to the Minister of Finance. But the points that are being raised and discussed here are certainly very valid, Mr. D'Autremont. And I agree that there may be a need to have a discussion with the commissioner.

Mr. D'Autremont: — After he's had a chance to find out . . .

The Chair: — Yes. If that's the wishes of the board then — to delay this further process until we've had a chance to discuss it with the commissioner and have him appear at a later time?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I would agree.

The Chair: — And if possible, this afternoon.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Probably not this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We may want to come back to this budget later in the afternoon, irrespective of whether Mr. Gerrand is available or not.

The Chair: — All right.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But can we defer this for now if the board will agree? And we'll move on to another issue if that's okay, and then we'll come back to these.

The Chair: — Excellent, thank you very much board members. At this time then I would call on item no. 13 and it's . . . I'm just going to backtrack for one moment and that obviously goes for the budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner as well as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, being one and the same. So we defer those two items until this afternoon.

Okay, we'll go on now to the next item which is the review, the budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer for the year 2000-2001. And I'm pleased to see Ms. Jan Baker, our Chief Electoral Officer who is here before the board.

There is fine, Jan, thank you. The microphone, just make sure you have it near you for the benefit of our *Hansard* people. I welcome you here to the board to discuss your budget proposal for the coming year and would ask that you present to the board your budget documents, please, for discussion.

Ms. Baker: — Mr. Chair, members of the board, I'm pleased to be here today on behalf of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. As you are familiar, the office provides for the administration of provincial elections, by-elections, enumerations other than during an election, and provincial election finances under The Election Act, 1996.

The office is also charged with the conduct of referendum and plebiscites under The Referendum and Plebiscite Act and time votes under The Time Act.

The mandate of the office is to provide impartial administrative and financial practices to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process for the Saskatchewan electorate.

As you will note, from being in receipt of the office's budget, budgetary estimates for base year and non-base year expenditures have been prepared for fiscal 2000-2001. I propose to walk briefly through the major expenditures from the base year for 2000-2001 and would be pleased to answer any specific questions regarding other related expenditures under the non-base year estimates.

For ease of reference I will commence my review on page 4. As you are aware, the province has undergone major reform of its electoral law. The proclamation of the new legislation has resulted in new electoral processes and procedures, heightened financial disclosure of political contributions and recording of election expenditures, and the establishment of the office operations under Legislative Assembly.

Efforts have and will continue to focus on the identification of operational restructuring to complete transition under the Legislative Assembly including human resource requirements ensuring administrative effectiveness. I have proposed salaries for a full staff complement of five additional staff members. Applicable to all staff, a performance and cost of living adjustment has been identified.

With respect to my position, terms of employment identify performance increases varying between 4 and 8 per cent. Requested is an 8 per cent performance increase and a cost of living adjustment.

In the ordinary course of events, the office maintains a state of election readiness pending forthcoming elections. Accordingly, provision has been made for three provisional personnel for administrative requirements and for warehousing inventory of materials.

In addition, particular attention has been given on preparation of documentation and materials to ensure election preparedness is ongoing in the traditional manner. Also included . . . introduced in my previous budget, are office new initiatives. They are all, at this point, conceptual. I have budgeted for web page development for purposes of electorate access, a communications program for purposes of tapping into existing services as a way of educating youth on the democratic process. I have identified a federal/provincial data-sharing initiative specific to establishing a provincial voter data base in support of a permanent voter registry.

And last, a provincial electoral advisory committee, which would focus on development discussions regarding establishment of a committee. Discussions might include enhancement of the electoral processes, electronic endeavours, cost effectiveness. The office would like to work with political parties in meeting their objectives both financial and electoral. In the past the relationship was more confrontational than need be.

At this point, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have regarding the operational side of the budgetary

estimates.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Baker. And I open it up to members of the board for questions, comments, any aspect.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'd like to ask some questions with respect to your new initiatives. You alluded here to federal-provincial data sharing initiatives, and also the provincial electoral advisor, advisory committee. Are these . . . this is something that of course we haven't done before at all to my understanding.

Ms. Baker: — No, it's not. As I said, they are, at this point, conceptual. I would have at least liked to have introduced the provincial electoral advisory committee last year. However, given the heavy agenda the office has experienced, I wasn't given the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Kowalsky: — What is your objective in doing this?

Ms. Baker: — I believe that, as I said, that I believe that working with the political parties we could potentially look at amendments to the electoral law which would result in enhancement of the electoral processes. And electronic endeavours undertaken by my office may be shared and compatible with the political parties which will inevitably result in being cost effective.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Do you have the mandate now to establish electronic . . . Well I guess it is your responsibility to establish a voter list. But . . . It is your responsibility to establish a voters' list. Do you have the mandate to do it in the most cost-efficient or most efficient way possible? Can you, could you, do you have the authority to move from the written voters' list according to the way we've done it in the past to an electronic or some other, using some other data base for your list?

Ms. Baker: — Yes. The current legislation makes provision for continued hard enumerations with one exception. They have enumeration outside of the writ period. It also makes provision for sharing, gathering voter information electronically, which is new under The Election Act, 1996.

Mr. Kowalsky: — What role do you envisage for the advisory committee?

Ms. Baker: — As I had indicated, a potential amendment to the electoral law to make it more effective. And certainly working and sharing with the political parties electronic endeavours which could be cost . . . much more cost effective.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So what you're saying is you would be seeking advice from your advisory committee on how to do these things?

Ms. Baker: — Working with them, yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And this advisory committee would be named by yourself?

Ms. Baker: — I don't believe so. I think that I would approach the political parties and request that two representatives from

each political party participate.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now I ask . . . I'd like to ask some questions about the base year. We have nothing here to compare this with. Are there, is it, is there a previous base year that can be used as a basis of comparison?

Ms. Baker: — Unfortunately, at this point, the first budget approved December 9 of last year, I do not have actuals particular to the fiscal year '99-2000, so I am unable to provide actuals on the operational side on this occasion. However on an ongoing basis and forthcoming budgets, I will be able to commence actuals. But the electoral office, given the timing of the assembly of the board, we will always be two years behind with actuals.

I have . . . I would just like to mention that I have where possible, provided you with actuals which could be tallied inclusive in the aggregate in the year '99-2000 and I have identified the cost of three provincial by-elections which occurred June 28, 1999.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'll pass it on to somebody else at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'd like to welcome you here today. I wonder if you could indicate to me and you may have mentioned this already, what your budget was last year? Not the actuals but the budget you requested and received last year.

Ms. Baker: — I'm sorry I didn't bring those figures with me. I believe it was approximately 580,000 on the operational side, however . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — For the base year?

Ms. Baker: — For the base year? However as I mentioned, the effort of the . . . the mandate of the electoral office is to be election ready and the 300,000 plus enhancement would be due primarily to preparation of communication materials, documentation materials, in preparation of a provincial general election.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well have you looked into the completeness and the usefulness that the federal database would have for our electoral purposes — their voters' lists?

Ms. Baker: — I certainly support the notion of establishing a provincial voter registry as it facilitates parties' needs while ensuring that the Saskatchewan electorate is empowered to voice their democratic rights. However, I do believe there are advantages associated with establishing that. It eliminates gathering information already available in other databases. It establishes the foundation for harmonizing similar processes at the level — provincial and federal.

It could be used for health and school board elections. It also could be manipulated to address redistribution efforts and polling division realignment at all levels of elections, and it could be shared federally to complement maintenance of the federal registry of electors.

Enumeration costs and computerized lists could be cost

effective increasingly over time because they streamline the electoral process, it heightens voter participation, and it facilitates party and candidate activity. It also restricts electoral information for the primary use for electoral purposes.

However, prior to consideration of adoption of a permanent voter registry, sharing federally, provincially, I believe that we need to assess the . . . we need to assess from a Saskatchewan perspective. We certainly have preliminary legislative concerns. Our voter data collected using postal code versus land base, so we have conflict federally. For example, where you collect your mail is not necessarily your ordinary residence.

Our criteria provincially differs from establishing the constituencies under redistribution. One of my concerns is, harmonizing with federal requirements, we risk the loss of our provincial identity, which I believe is extremely important here. And I think the biggest impact or drawback we have at this point is our voter requirements differ federally, provincially. In Saskatchewan we have a six-month residential requirement which is not identified federally.

The other problem we have with sharing federal voter data is that maintenance schedules may not knit with election events and so the age of the list may be of concern. And I don't believe, and I'm not naïve enough to believe, that a permanent voter registry would ever be cost effective.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would ever be which?

Ms. Baker: — Cost effective.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I have to wonder how cost effective it would be though to implement a complete voter registration on a provincial basis when we have access to the federal data. I would think it would be worthwhile to utilize that federal data and then make the necessary other adjustments or investigations that would be required, such as the six-month residency, such as the land location rather than postal code.

Certainly even on federal ridings though, if you're living near the boundary of the riding, postal code doesn't serve you. So I'm not sure how they . . . They must have some mechanism with which to deal with that. What do they have in place that would deal with that?

Ms. Baker: — That's one of the weaknesses of the federal registry. And certainly I do know that there's a continuous list in the province of British Columbia. Their efforts were adopted using postal code. Their 911 efforts undertaken by the province adopted postal code and they are now in the process of completely redeveloping the process to use civic address land location. They found that it certainly did not serve its purposes. I think that that's one of my major concerns that we have traditionally used civic address land location. We also collect . . . We could certainly compare and share information because we indeed collect, not only the residential location, we also collect the postal location. So we have . . . We are currently one step up from the federal registry.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's on our paper registry. We don't have . . . we don't use an electronic registry at the present time, do we?

Ms. Baker: — No we do not.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Wouldn't it be possible to marry the federal electronic registry with our current information to produce a workable electronic service for Saskatchewan?

Ms. Baker: — I think certainly the current legislation indicates that we continue with hard enumerations, that it provides for collection of the data electronically and sharing initiatives that we might undertake. But at the present time for the purposes, for electoral purposes, I don't believe the intent is to share it . . . for sharing initiatives to establish a permanent voter registry. I believe the notion is there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — My concern is that if the approval was given to go to an electronic registry, that would mean that you would — you and your office — would go out and collect an entire new database just as you would do at election time for enumeration, when that information in part is available to us already through the federal registry. I think it would be more efficient to take that federal registry and make the alterations to it that would be necessary to suit our purposes. Which may mean cross-referencing the federal database electronically with the paper database that we currently use.

Ms. Baker: — Currently as I said that it would require a legislative amendment. I believe that we should potentially have a pilot project and give consideration to doing a portion of the province. And as you are well aware, having just come through a provincial general election, the office did not have time to go into major electronic endeavour.

An application was developed for automation of the voters' list to be distributed to the candidates during the provincial general election and now an effort is being undertaken by a corporation to establish a common to limited file of voter information province-wide. Once that is established, this office would certainly be pleased to give consideration to establishing and conducting a pilot to identify potential advantage/disadvantages.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if approvals are given and you're looking for an area to volunteer, we'll volunteer because I think an electronic database would be most useful. I'm just concerned of how we arrive there. And you mentioned a common to limited database, the type of database is also very important for common access.

Ms. Baker: — Yes. I think another thing that you might want to consider in addition to the federal registry is we currently have databases in Saskatchewan which are of high calibre. Saskatchewan Geomatics, for example, because of the 911 effort has individuals, has the populace identified by land location, civic address. I have had preliminary discussions with them that we may take a portion of the province and ID (identify) the number of voters collected during the provincial general election.

Department of Health, motor vehicles — there are databases in Saskatchewan that potentially could enhance a hard enumeration taken during an election period.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. The motor vehicle database may

not though be appropriate because certainly not every voter has a motor vehicle registered to their name. Therefore that would be an incomplete database.

A question on another area, the advisory committee that you were talking about, you were suggesting two representatives from each political party. Would that be two representatives from each registered political party or some other criteria?

Ms. Baker: — Registered political party.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So any political party that would be registered would be entitled to have two representatives on this advisory committee?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Back to the database, what kind of costs are you looking at for the development and implementation of an electronic database.

Ms. Baker: — My recommendation, and if you move into the non-base estimates, I've identified an enumeration outside of a writ period which would establish the collection of voter data electronically. And I have identified that that enumeration would be approximately 2,772,118.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's a fairly substantial number. What does it cost for enumeration under an electoral period?

Ms. Baker: — For enumerators, \$791,000 under code 173. Duplication of voters' lists would also be an associated cost — my apologies, I just can't identify . . . it's code 318, so it's approximately another \$80,000 for duplication of voters' list, whether it be electronically on disk or hard copy.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you're looking less than 800,000?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you're looking at 800,000 on an election year to develop the voters' list. You're projecting just shy of 2.8 million to develop it in a non-election year to the electronic database.

Two million dollars to develop the electronic database seems to be rather steep. I don't know. It just seems like a lot of money when it costs 800,000 to actually develop the database. The hard information, when you collect it, to transfer that to electronic form for \$2 million, seems to be rather exorbitant.

Ms. Baker: — No, I'm not denying that. I have a potential again — and it's conceptual — a three-stage process that we might potentially establish a registry outside of the writ period . . . that I do not in any way refute that it potentially would be costly. My concerns particular to an enumeration outside of the writ is that it would be gathered on hand-held organizers and the error ratio would be minimal.

One of the difficulties we have in the province of Saskatchewan is that we have maximum 34-day writ; minimum 28-day writ. The first 10 days of a writ period is enumeration. We have approximately 632,000 elector-voter data collected, preliminary

lists prepared, secondary lists prepared and distributed to the candidates within 14 days of the writ.

It is hurried. Certainly my office . . . It is my preference that my office have an opportunity to look at it and enhance the level of accuracy and give consideration to an enumeration outside of the writ period if we indeed are going to establish a permanent voter registry.

But as I said, currently the electoral law identifies continued hard enumerations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. When you suggested that they would have a hand-held organizer when they were going out and doing the enumeration, so each enumerator would have a hand-held organizer that would go out and do the enumeration in their particular poll and make the changes necessary to the database. Is that how you envision it happening?

Ms. Baker: — We would do a door-to-door canvass with data entered on either a computer readable card, much like a standardized educational entrance exam, or directly to a hand-held electronic data organizer. Either method enhances accuracy, ensures privacy and confidentiality of electoral information, and facilitates centralized data processing.

In addition, current revision would be replaced with a new method and the information would be collected electronically by individuals and uploaded to a mainframe computer. The level of accuracy would be minimal.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I have a hand-held organizer and I'm fairly fluent with computers, and standing outside in the rain like we had in September in this election, I don't think would be a very efficient use.

I think you would be much better off using a hard . . . most people are more familiar and comfortable with a hard piece of paper, putting the information on that hard piece of paper, going back to your office wherever that might be, and doing your data entry there with proper lighting and without the snow running down the back of your neck.

I think we would have a greater error rate doing it on the doorstep with hand-held data input implements than we would by doing it in an office. Having collected the hard-paper copy and going back into the office and doing the data entry, I think would at the end of the day be more productive and less costly.

Because you don't have to have those hand-held devices. You would have your computer set up in . . . either in the returning office or in some other location where your enumerators would go back to and do that inputting. I think you would run into problems doing it on the doorsteps.

Ms. Baker: — As I said, it was conceptual. Stage one of this process is, as I said, the collection of the electoral data. What I had envisioned was that the information be collected by post-secondary students drawn from the various universities, technical schools, Bible colleges, and other educational facilities located throughout the province.

Employed for two months, this creates a potential summer work

program for 300 students drawn from across the province. Having completed the door to door, the individuals . . . the province would be regionalized and it would minimize the number of returning officers.

As I said, Elections Saskatchewan would have a much better control if it were electronically gathered. The information could be consolidated particular . . . more particular to the individual resident's location, civic addresses, postal addresses, constituency, and polling divisions.

The other advantage of information being collected electronically is that other information that would not be produced on hard copy could be collected to facilitate political party candidate needs during elections.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Don't get me wrong. I'm not against the idea of electronic . . . of having the electronic database. I believe that's a good idea. How we get there is another story . . . my concern and that cost seems to me to be on the high side.

Ms. Baker: — Yes I believe it would be extremely high and we would look at a good percentage of the cost would be under code 145 which is the personal service contracts of the individuals hired to collect the data.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well looking at the last enumeration, I know that there a number of difficulties and if we can avoid those I think we'll all be better off.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, just a couple of supplementary questions here. You talked about the confidentiality and privacy in your comments earlier. Are you talking about the confidentially held in privacy of the voters' list or I'm not sure what the implication is here. I thought that the voters' list was public.

Ms. Baker: — It is public. I'm telling you that I had made mention that the data could go beyond the categories that is reproduced on hard copy, and that the voter might be more comfortable providing additional information — for example, telephone numbers, you know sex — which we don't at the present time produce in hard copy.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Next question. Do you have now at your disposal the authority to search out other means of getting a database, like going to SaskPower for example or going to SaskTel or to an independent telephone company or a municipality or going to the health card system or anything like that? Do you have that authority?

Ms. Baker: — No, the current law identifies continuation of hard enumerations. It makes provision for sharing or for collecting the data electronically, and it makes provision for sharing initiatives at this point. So, I believe, that the office could undertake a project where we could approach Department of Health, SaskGeomatics . Motor vehicles has identified to me maybe a weaker database to evaluate data collection during the provincial general election.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Now putting aside all aspects of

confidentiality and privacy, do you think that there are other ways of establishing a list? That is, if those problems could be overcome, if there are other bases that would be cheaper and more efficient and more reliable that you would like to look into?

Ms. Baker: — No, I believe that commencement or a given consideration than notion of a permanent voter registry needs to be commenced with a high enumeration provincially.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay. And my last question is with respect to your budgeted amount for printed forms. I notice in operational you've got \$250,000 for printed forms on page 5. And then when we go to an election year, they've got under item 319 printing, publishing expenses, \$155,000. I would have expected it to be the opposite way around.

Ms. Baker: — 319 under election, \$155,000, is that — I'm sorry did I hear you correctly?

Mr. Kowalsky: — That's right, on page 7.

Ms. Baker: — The returning officers, as you're well aware, 58 returning officers are appointed to conduct the individual elections in each of the 58 ridings. The returning officer is required to print ballots, proclamations, etc. The \$155,000 makes provision for that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And what would you need the \$250,000 for in a non-election year?

Ms. Baker: — In the non-election year? All of the forms and materials to administer elections. There are 222 documents, forms, guidelines. For example, a candidate's election expenses returns made provision and provided to candidates, political parties, and to the administration to conduct the election. The \$250,000 facilitates that.

For example, in that \$250,000, preparation of ballot paper alone for a million ballot papers — which during a provincial general election we use close to 800,000 of those papers — is about a \$48,000 endeavour.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And that's done on a non-election year?

Ms. Baker: — The mandate of the office . . . yes, that would come under operations, right. The material is printed, packaged, inventoried, packaged, distributed in the event of an election call. So it is over and above the cost of a provincial election.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm not sure if maybe I'm going over things that Mr. D'Autremont has already asked but I need clarification. Your base — your request for 2000-2001 is 892,959?

Ms. Baker: — I'm sorry.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Your base — your request for 2000-2001 is 892,959 and you were saying that a base year, a previous base year, a non-election base year, would be what amount?

Ms. Baker: — I believe, I'm sorry I don't have the figures from my last year's budget with me. I believe it was approximately \$580,000 on the operational side.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just in, you know, in general terms that appears to be a fairly substantial increase in terms of your request on base budget and format that we're working with. And I know you've indicated that you intend to bring this forward in a different format. Giving actuals and budget requests from previous base years would be really helpful because it's very, very difficult to understand the rationale.

And I'll just give you some examples of the things that are, I guess, maybe unclear to me, and you might be able to explain this for me. On page 5, item 501, printed forms are \$250,000 and you've indicated that to Mr. Kowalsky that these are amounts that are expended to prepare the many documents that elections create . . . to prepare for an election year.

I guess my question would be then, would you be requesting . . . historically budgets . . . elections are on a four-year cycle, your budgets will come in annually and your budget requests will come in annually. If I add 250, 250, 250, and 250, I get a million dollars over a four-year period. Now would this be a requirement this year only, or would this be a requirement to put all of those documents together at a quarter of really of what it's going to cost to put them together which is a million dollars?

Ms. Baker: — Normally in a five-year election cycle, the third year results in the expense for preparation of forms and communication materials. In this circumstance, with the result of the past provincial general election, the office sees it necessary to ensure that materials are available on short notice.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could I then assume in next year's budget — given you've allocated the 250,000 this year — that this would be a budget item that wouldn't appear?

Ms. Baker: — Absolutely.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So then, I guess that's helping me then understand the differential between 580 . . . was it?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — To 892 because that accounts for . . . so then we could expect in next year's budget a decrease of the request of some 250,000 based on — or roughly — based on no need for this particular item?

Ms. Baker: — Absolutely. And last year, December 9, was the first budget that the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer presented, all of the materials particular to preparation of provincial general election had been expensed and warehoused. So it wasn't identified in that particular budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, I just have a couple of other questions. And as I said, I'm really having some difficulty and I see on items 400, 410 . . . and yes well I guess 400, 410 and sort of throughout this, employee meal costs under different headings and then employee mileage and employee transportation costs, and I'm not certain why the two items with

respect to employee meals costs — 400 and 410.

Ms. Baker: — There certainly, there is an annual conference of Chief Electoral Officers. This particular year it's going to be held in the province of Manitoba. And all of the distribution, collection, or retrieval of election materials is done by electoral office staff. Certainly codes 400 to 403 are for in-province travel, particular to those instances where we are required to distribute; 410 to 413 is potential out-of-province travel for attendance at the annual conference, and a financial workshop which is normally organized by the offices of the Chief Electoral Officers in other jurisdictions.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I think an explanation of those would be very helpful in next year's presentation, and would probably eliminate the need for a lot of questions that we will raise.

There's one item, 433, with respect to banquet costs and maybe we could have an explanation of that.

Ms. Baker: — Yes, particular to the previous year and on an ongoing basis, in a potential effort to be election ready, the office undertakes returning officer workshops and training sessions. The office found it much more economical — rather than providing the lunch stipend to each returning officer and have them go out and buy their individual lunches — to have lunch brought in. That happens to be the code Department of Finance uses which if, in fact, we incurred an expense as such, where it would be . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think, and I appreciate your explanation, that seems to be reasonable. I know that the returning officers have a difficult job, as you will know. And I think we all understand that in terms of recruiting qualified or knowledgeable people in the 58 constituencies, it's not an easy job that you have. And frankly, they work for very little in terms of retainer and it is very time-consuming, and a lot of these folks have to take time away from work. So, I do understand some of those pressures. I know in our respective areas, all of us will recognize that it's a lot of work for very little remuneration.

Okay, I don't think I have any further questions other than I want to thank you and your staff for the work that you have done over the year. This has been a, sort of I guess, an irregular year in terms of your duties, and hopefully the stability that we've experienced over many decades in Saskatchewan will face us again. That will be a good challenge to have a kind of stability. By-elections and controverts are always difficult things, not only for people who run in elections, but I think for your office and for the people who seek to elect a representative it becomes frustrating sometimes.

But I want to really thank you very much for your work, and if you would pass on to your staff our thanks and appreciation that would be very much appreciated.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Do you have a question, Ms. Jones?

Ms. Jones: — I do, after that flowery speech from Mr.

Lautermilch, I hate to ask him. This is the first time I've seen a budget such as this one, and I am new to the Board of Internal Economy as well so . . . you're asking for your total budget estimate is 892,959?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — Okay. And then all of these other things that you have provided estimates for are just in case this happens, this is what it may cost?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Ms. Jones: — Okay. So by approving . . . I'm sorry.

Ms. Baker: — I'm sorry, they are expenditure estimates in the event of an election call, a by-election call, a direction for an enumeration outside of a writ period, order of a referendum or plebiscite — they are the approximate costs. If for example a by-election were called, that particular estimate then would be incorporated into the operating budget.

Ms. Jones: — But approving your budget, in whatever form it gets approved, in no way means that we would be authorizing you to proceed with a non-writ enumeration?

Ms. Baker: — What you are approving here today is the operational budget.

Ms. Jones: — In the base year.

Ms. Baker: — The office has provided the expenditure estimates of all the potential office functions.

Ms. Jones: — Well that gives me a greater level of comfort knowing that 2 million is not necessarily something that I'm approving. Thank you.

The Chair: — If there are no further questions before I call on a motion, what I'd like to do is table for the board . . . with the board a letter received yesterday from the Chief Electoral Officer with a request for consideration of re-classification and the . . . What I would propose to the board is that you have the letter for review, the Chair is prepared to review a proposal to bring back to the board with respect to the process and a recommendation to the board, if that meets with your approval.

It is quite silent. The process and proposal for the process will be brought forward to the board for consideration, if that meets with your approval. Any questions, Mr. D'Autremont, is that . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — What is the current level of classification? Currently it's level 11, is it?

The Chair: — Management level 11.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And how does that differ from a deputy minister level 3?

The Chair: — I don't have that at my fingertips, the differentiation between the level 11 and deputy minister level 3. Perhaps Ms. Kaminski, who's here from our personnel

department, might be able to address that.

Ms. Kaminski: — There are some overlaps within the management end professional class plan. Management level 11 and 12 overlaps with the deputy minister senior executive levels 1 through 3. I don't have that information in front of me today but there are overlaps between those two classification systems.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And how does this compare with other heads of other legislative branches, such as the Provincial Auditor and others of similar appointees, the Ombudsman, the child advocate?

Ms. Kaminski: — Ombudsman and Children's Advocate — their salaries are tied to the salary of provincial court judges, so those ones are completely separate and have a different tie. In terms of the Provincial Auditor, I'm sorry I'm not aware. His is separate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . is the average of the deputy ministers for the Provincial Auditor. And then we have our Clerk who is tied in the senior executive classifications as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What was the decision process that arrived at the management level 11? Why was it felt appropriate at that time that it be set at that level?

Ms. Kaminski: — It was a recommendation from PSC (Public Service Commission) to the selection committee for the Chief Electoral Officer. So it was simply a recommendation at that time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Was the recommendation that this simply be a temporary establishment or that it was viewed as a permanent establishment?

Ms. Kaminski: — It's my understanding from Jan that indeed, as part of the selection committee's role, that that was the impression that they had left with Jan, that indeed it was a temporary classification level established at that time and that there would be potential for review down the road is my understanding.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And the review that was to be potentially done down the road, what was the criteria that would be in place to judge whether or not that was appropriate, that the management level 11 was appropriate or was inappropriate?

Ms. Kaminski: — The review to be held down the road? Is that what you're asking, Mr. D'Autremont?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes.

Ms. Kaminski: — At the time of the selection, those details weren't itemized. Just simply a classification needed to be established as part of the selection process and that was the extent of the discussions. But certainly they did not put into place any future plans as to what sort of review mechanism will be required to make changes to the classification.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But the feeling at the time then was that management level 11 was the appropriate classification level for this position obviously, because that's the one they selected.

Ms. Kaminski: — I'm not sure how extensive the review was. All I know is that in consultation with the Public Service Commission, the recommendation from the Public Service Commission to the selection committee was that the classification be established at that level.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well perhaps I . . . I'm not sure if I should ask Ms. Baker the question since it's her position. I'm just wondering, has there been a change in the role from what it was estimated to be at the establishment to what it has turned out to be in practice?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, perhaps that is what the review would look at. And I think it would be appropriate . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — The question here is to establish a review, not to establish an agreement today now. Okay. I thought we were being asked to either agree or disagree. That's why I was asking the questions.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think it might be appropriate to have the Speaker have a look at the request. That is an appropriate, I think, approach to this and he can bring a recommendation to the board. And at that time, the board could . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I agree — could deal with the recommendation.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you very much, gentlemen. And thank you, Linda . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, by all means, Jan.

Ms. Baker: — Certainly this request for reclassification or consideration for reclassification was intended for subsequent fiscal years. And that I certainly, because I am in close contact with other jurisdictions, etc., and my office certainly has not undertaken a formal review or done a comparison of other jurisdictions, that I would be pleased to make contact with and to assist your office in any information that you may be attempting to acquire.

The Chair: — That's very much appreciated. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Public Service Commission is involved in this process or if they should be or shouldn't be, but I'm sure that you will take the appropriate action and bring a recommendation based on the best information that you can gather.

The Chair: — Yes, thank you. We'll do that. Thank you. If there are no more questions, no further questions.

Ms. Jones: — May I just ask one more question? Sorry Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if . . . I heard what you said but I'm not sure what it meant.

The budget, the proposed budget that you've presented to us does not include any reclassification for your position. So, is it . . . if there were a reclassification approved, did I hear you say it wouldn't take effect until the next fiscal year?

Ms. Baker: — It would pertain to subsequent fiscal years.

Ms. Jones: — Subsequent fiscal years. Okay, I needed that. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. If there are no further questions or any further discussion with respect to the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer, I would take that there is agreement on the budget and would ask for someone to so move.

Thank you Mr. D'Autremont. For the clarification then of all the members and the Chair, I would recommend then the following motion:

That the 2000-2001 estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of \$892,959 statutory be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Do I have a seconder for that motion? Mr. Bjornerud. Any discussion? All those in favour, please? Thank you. Opposed? None. Thank you very much. Passed unanimously.

Ms. Baker, if I may, I want to thank you on behalf of the board once again and add to Mr. Lautermilch's comments our appreciation for the efforts on behalf of your office and your staff.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

The Chair: — If it meets with the board's approval — and I would defer to the ladies and gentlemen who are good enough to be here, that marvellous-looking group that's joined us here in the room — we would like to take a 30-minute break, a 30-minute break for a quick lunch, and we'll resume at 12:35. If you would bear with us until that time please. Thank you.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Ladies and gentlemen, I would just like to call this meeting to order and at this point I've been asked if the board would hold a brief in camera meeting on a couple of issues and I would beg your indulgence to allow us to be alone in the room while we discuss a couple of matters and we'll let you know when we're ready to have you come back. Sorry for the inconvenience.

The board continued in camera.

The Chair: — I'd like to call the meeting back to order and we'll go back right now to items no. 11 and 12. Item no. 11, for the board's information, is the review of the budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. You've heard the presentation earlier from Ms. Borowski on the budget. Is someone prepared to move a motion with respect to the budget? Mr. Lautermilch, seconder, Ms. Jones.

The motion reads:

That the 2000-2001 estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$105,000; that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

All those in favour? Opposed? None, thank you. Carried unanimously.

Item no. 12, the estimates for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. If there's no further discussion I'm prepared to entertain a motion. Mr. D'Autremont. May I recommend that the motion reads as follows:

That the 2000-2001 estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$122,000, and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Do I have a seconder please? Mr. Lautermilch. All those in favour? Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Okay, that moves us right along to the next budget item and that is a review of the 2000-2001 budget for the Office of the Legislative Assembly. Now I'm pleased to introduce that item because it also gives me at this time, members of the board, pleasure to introduce the leaders and staff of the Legislative Assembly offices and I'm pleased to do that this afternoon.

Marilyn Borowski, who you heard from earlier this morning, director of finance and member payments; Judy Brennan, who is the director of *Hansard*; Lorraine deMontigny, director of visitor services; Shannon Ferguson, supervisor, administrative services; Linda Kaminski. Where is Linda . . . oh there she is, sitting behind — director of human resources and administrative services; Margaret Kleisinger, who is assistant to the Speaker and secretary to the board; Jeremy Phillips, systems analyst; Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian; Greg Putz, Deputy Clerk; Ken Ring, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk; Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk of the Assembly; Patrick Shaw — Patrick stepped out I believe but he will be back and if any of you here don't know him, he's that big boy — Sergeant-at-Arms; Gary Ward, director of broadcast services; and Margaret who is Meta — did she come back, she's not here yet, she's at a committee meeting — and that's the hard working people in the Legislative Assembly services and offices.

Lady and gentlemen of the board and what I'd like to do at this point in time is, very briefly if you'll bear with me, I would like to explain to you that this year it's a new attempt, we hope, at a more useful budget format for members of the board.

Instead of page after page of line-by-line budget numbers in each subvote or branch, we have attempted to highlight the changes, provide more analysis on what the numbers represent, while still providing comparative numbers from last year, and percentage increases, and also providing information on the mandates of each support branch and their objectives for the new year.

The Clerk's management team received budget formats from several other legislatures and then developed this particular type of format. This format actually is a work in progress. We would appreciate feedback on whether this format was helpful to you and how we could perhaps in the future make it more useful, and that's part of the process I'm sure everyone here would like to have happen.

By using this new format, I propose this year to follow a somewhat similar process to that used by the board with the other House officer budgets. I will ask Gwenn, our Clerk, to give an overview of the budget and some briefings on the overall estimate process, given that so many board members are new to the board.

The Clerk will take us through the front part or highlights of the budget and then call upon our branch heads to deal with the certain areas as and when required. Then they'll be pleased and happy to deal with all of your questions, your comments.

Just very quickly now to finalize my part of the presentation here, the new budget document is organized into three basic parts. First of all if you will refer to the table of contents, you will note that sections 1.0 to 7.0 constitute the first part of the budget and contain the introductory information, the highlights, and the analysis of the budget changes.

Secondly, section 8 is the second part of the document and it contains the breakdown by subvote, and identifies the significant changes in each of those subvotes.

The third part of the budget document is the appendices which contain program overviews for each branch of the Legislative Assembly administration, including goals and objectives for the new fiscal year. And I do believe that this is important in the looking forward exercises and projects that are very necessary and ongoing events that occur within the Legislative Assembly operations. So with that, I will ask Gwenn to carry on with the next part of our presentation. Thank you.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm really pleased and excited to be able to come before you with a new budget format. It's long past time that we were able to do that. It did take a lot of work from the staff to convert from our old format and even to convert our own thinking to this format that we hope will be more useful and more informative.

And we also wanted to create a document that would help us, as the Assembly support services, to focus on the results that we want to achieve rather than primarily on our own activities and process.

And I do want to thank the management team for their help in revising the budget format, in particular Marilyn Borowski, who did the main work of rewriting and formatting the document.

Just to set our new fiscal year activities in context, I want to brief board members a little bit on what we're doing here and how it fits into the overall process. And I want to note some of our accomplishments in the last fiscal year.

I mean, you members know that election years are very busy for members and candidates. You've heard from the Chief Electoral Officer; you know how busy it is for her office. But it's also very time consuming and a lot of extra and additional work for Legislative Assembly staff. That is of course why we're here but it isn't something we staff for. It's something that's just on top of our regular work.

Including in our preparations for the election were preparation of dissolution guidelines and processes; determining how we would handle the dissolution period status for members and their staff; transition of new members, retiring members, and defeated members; administration orientation for the new members; terminating and hiring all of the constituency staff; House and procedural orientation which we haven't really completed yet for our new members; and of course the election and the briefing of a new Speaker and new presiding officers.

The second major area of extra work, in addition to our regular, normal, day-to-day work, in this year was our conversion of our personnel to a new classification system incorporating pay equity and including a review of all of our positions that are aligned to in-scope positions in government. And we developed a process for an outside objective review of classification requests.

The other major area of additional focus in this current fiscal year is now coping with the creation of three special committees that occurred in December. It's a large . . . it creates a large volume of very important and extra work in the Clerk's office and the Legislative Library primarily.

And also I want to note we've continued to expand our legislative broadcasts and Gary may have more information for you later if you wish. We have concluded adding an additional 23 sites to our legislative broadcast area bringing us to a total of 111 sites now and that basically covers all of the communities of any size. Well I won't say any size but a size that has enough viewers to make it sort of economically viable. Those are things that we're pleased to accomplish.

And in our appendix at the back, you will see all of the other branches have outlined the activities that they've been involved in and will be doing in the next year as well.

Another thing that occurred this last year that I'm really pleased to see is that we have now achieved a new *Estimates* book format for the House. This is the *Estimates* book as presented to the session this last year, and it now includes a section that identifies the estimates for the executive branch of government and then it has a section that identifies the estimates for the legislative branch in government.

Instead of us just being lumped with all the other departments, we are defined as the legislative branch of government, and that includes the estimates for the Assembly and all the officers of the House — all those budgets that you have reviewed in the last two days.

The process then that we're in the midst of is that the board reviews and approves the budget from the House officers and from the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office). The Speaker then, as Chair of the board, will send these to the Minister of Finance for inclusion in the overall government estimates, but these are not subject to Treasury Board review. They go to the minister and then he includes them in the budget . . . or the estimate document that gets tabled in the House on budget day.

The government estimates then are referred to the Committee of Finance for review, which is a Committee of the Whole House, but the Legislative Assembly and the Assembly officer budgets

are referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. That's a standing committee, a small committee, where it is then possible for the Speaker to appear with officials from all the offices and to defend them. The Speaker is not permitted to defend estimates on the floor of the House. The estimates then from the standing committee are reported back to the House and are included in the next Appropriation Bill which gives us then the authority to spend. And that's just the overall context within which we're working here.

Now we'll turn to the actual *Estimate* book. What I'm proposing is as the Speaker said, I'll just walk through the front part of the budget proposal. Go through the highlights and the changes, and then we will leave it up to you to ask which areas you wish to have any further information or detail on.

The very beginning of our proposal gives some background on the general overview of the legislative branch and how our estimates are handled in the House. And that's just what I've explained to you.

The page that I'd like to turn your attention to is page 3 where we talk about the legislative service. And what we are trying to do here is give ourselves some guidance so that when we go about doing our work in the Legislative Assembly administration, we know why we are doing it and what we are hoping to achieve.

And what the Assembly administration exists to do is to assist elected members to carry out your work. And we understand the work of the member is multi-faceted. It includes members' responsibilities in the Chamber, includes your work in legislative committees, your work in your caucuses, and your responsibilities in your constituency.

Now these are . . . can be identified really as the members' lines of business. And that's what we're here to support. We're here to support you to carry out those four lines of business that you are responsible for.

Now, in addition to those defined areas in which you work, I think members do share a commitment to preserve and enhance the parliamentary system and the institution itself of the legislature for the benefit of the people of the province.

The key element of the legislative organization is that it serves members with impartiality, with confidentiality, and it provides organizational continuity from one legislature to the next. And that is the exercise we just went through this last summer through the election period and establishing new members and getting them able to get up and operating.

The next listing of things on the middle of page 3 goes through the results that we have identified that we would like to commit to the board that we are here to do, to perform, and to achieve and those are supporting the members in their four lines of business as you can see: the work in the House and in committees, in constituencies and caucus.

What you need to do that, you need procedural, legal, financial advice. You need access to accurate and timely information. You need the resources and facilities on a equitable basis, an impartial basis, and you need to . . . we need to ensure that the

public have access to you as members, to the proceedings of the House, to the committees, and to the information about the work of members and the House.

Our work also is there to support professional development opportunities for members and to do all those things that sustain the institution of the legislature, preserving its historical records, and hopefully assisting members in adapting parliamentary tradition to modern demands and that will be reflected in the upcoming Rules Committee, Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

The next few pages then are just a little more background, especially for the members new to the House. Page 5 gives the legislative administrative organization chart just in case you don't have an understanding where, what all the branches are and where they fit — that's laid out for you there.

On pages 6 and 7 we outline the structure of the estimates. Even though we're attempting to come forward with a new budget format, we still are bound by the subvote structure. We still have to report and we have to allocate our resources by subvote and the appropriation control occurs on the subvote basis.

The basic thing to point out here is that part of our budget is budgetary expenditures. Those are the annual appropriations that must be voted on by the House each year. The other part of the budget is statutory, and those are expenditures that have been authorized by legislation and therefore don't need to be voted each year but the amounts have to be displayed in the *Estimates*. And you'll note that our breakdown between statutory and budgetary is approximately 64 statutory to 36 budgetary.

And generally speaking the statutory subvotes are those which involve the direct payments to members, caucuses, salaries, and allowances and things that are direct payments to members. The budgetary subvotes for the most part are the support services, the staff and the resources that are required to provide the support services to members and the Assembly. With the exception that on the budgetary side we also have the directive 24 funding which really is a payment to members, but it is a budgetary item.

And then we'll go right into the next pages, 8 and 9 are the highlights of our 2000-2001 estimates. We give the highlights, we give the basis for the *Estimates*, what are the basic assumptions underlining — underlying our proposal and then the summary of what's up, what's down, and why the change.

In the basic information that you need is the amount that's requested there, is the \$15,960,000. That includes both budgetary and statutory and the amounts are there, and it amounts to a percentage increase over last year overall of 3.27 per cent.

And what I thought you might find interesting is a chart that shows the . . . sort of the progress, I guess if you like, of our budget over the last five years. It shows . . . this chart that I've given you shows our budget changes. It reflects both the budgetary, the statutory, and the combined amount. And it really reflects that the budget has been pretty stable over that time period. There's no huge increases; there's no great trend of

growth there. The last five years have shown they are a reasonably stable comparison in our budget requests over the years.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . graphs agree with the previous graphs.

Ms. Ronyk: — Maybe that's where we got the idea. The estimate basis this year is pretty much the same as every year. We have budgeted assuming that we'll have a 76 sitting days in the fiscal year. Now at the very back of the budget document — right before the revenue estimates actually but close to the back — there's another nice chart that shows you the average number of sitting days in the last 10 years. And what it shows is that the average in the last 10 years is 75; so our 76 is still reasonable. The last five years have been somewhat lower than that but Dan tells me that it's going to be up.

The other bases for the budget are of course, you know, the salary provision. Our budget is 62 per cent personnel on the budgetary side, so any changes in personnel policy and in cost of living and so would have a fairly substantial impact for us. So what our budget basis is . . . of course that we budget on the same basis that the government budgets for personnel policy changes during the year. We only budget where a known cost-of-living increase is . . . a cost-of-living increase is known.

Also our budget, our estimates this year, reflect a conversion to the government's new in-scope classification plan and the implementation of the pay equity adjustments that were done in government in 1998 but were done in the Assembly in 1999. And that maintains parity between legislative and executive public servants.

The other main basis for the budget is in the statutory side. The indexed cost-of-living adjustment is 1.7 per cent. It never seems as high as the cost of living at the pumps or in the grocery store, does it?

Now the estimate summary on the next page shows that our estimates are . . . The major increase on the budgetary side is primarily due to three areas: personnel, personal services, information technology expenses, and committee activity. And those are the three areas within the next few pages. We'll go into a little more detail on why those areas are the areas of change.

Some of the increases have been offset by decreases in other fixed assets. For example, the card access and some library equipment that was purchased last year was one-time funding that is no longer required. And there is a reduction in the estimates for directive #24 which we'll explain a little later as well.

On the statutory side, the small increase there is primarily the result of the cost-of-living adjustments and the increase in committee activity. The members' expenses for committees are on the statutory side. And there has been a decrease there as well due to the change in status of parties after the September general election.

Now on pages 10 and the following pages is where we get into a little more detail on those three areas of change that require

some explanation and some analysis. What is here in these pages is the summary of those three areas, and then the actual decisions, where required, are in separate decision items. Those are the 14(b) and (c), (d), (e), and (f) items that will . . . where you will actually consider and make your decision as to what the number for that particular area is going to be in the budget.

The first area then to briefly describe then is the increase in personal services. And I said, these expenses comprise 62 per cent of our total expenditures. So changes there have a broad impact.

The main areas are two. One is more what I describe as the non-discretionary part, where our estimates reflect the normal cost-of-living increments that employees are entitled to where they still have room in their ranges. The normal reclassification processes that occur. The negotiated cost-of-living increases that government has awarded to in-scope and out-of-scope employees within government, and the results of our conversion to the new in-scope classification plan, including the pay equity adjustments.

Those are I feel sort of necessary things that we do as an employer to keep legislative employees on par or in a parallel or in parity to executive employees.

The second area of increase is the more discretionary and this is our request for some new positions. I'll be explaining . . . and you'll have to stop me because I'll go on forever in explaining why we need them but for now I will say that those are new position requests.

The board's role with respect to new positions request is twofold: first of all in approving the budget dollars for it, but also the board has the responsibility to create new permanent positions where they see fit to do so.

The next pages then go through the first part of the personnel policy issues, how we are aligned with in-scope and out-of-scope public servants, and the implementation of the new in-scope classification plan that included the principles of equal pay for work of equal value and pay equity.

Page 12. The first paragraph you will note that within the public service, when they implemented the new plan, approximately 80 per cent of employees were positively affected.

Now when we look at the middle of that page where we talk about the conversion of our positions to the new plan, we will see that 93 per cent of Assembly positions were positively affected. This is a slightly higher rate than in the public service but it is because the majority of positions in the legislative service are female dominated. And pay equity usually results in pay wage increases for the female-dominated occupation. And therefore the Assembly was sort of significantly affected by the pay equity component of the new class plan.

The other major issue within the personnel side is on the top of page 13 where we described our use of classification consultants. The Public Service Commission does not provide us with classification of personnel services. Because we're the legislative branch and not within the public service proper, we're not subject to The Public Service Act, 1998. They have

always been very good at helping us with specific questions because we need their interpretation of what their own rules and what the collective agreement means and so on because we do apply those to our staff. And they have been good but they will not provide us with the major resources that we would need for the classification review that we did this year to convert all our positions from the old class plan to the new one.

In order to achieve fairness and equity within our staff, it is important that the classification of positions is handled by an outside and objective third party. To that end we then hired classification consultants to complete the task of converting the Assembly positions to the new plan. And we'll talk about this a little further in one of the later items on the classification process. We will continue to use these outside classification people in the future.

Now the more discretionary areas I talked about is our new position requests. Presently the staff of the Legislative Assembly is composed of 56 permanent employees and 23 person-years of temporary or sessional employees. That's 23 full years' worth; there are many individuals that work small parts of the year because they're sessional; they work only when the House is sitting. So we do have a fairly high component of non-permanent employees.

There is a chart on page 16 that shows you the distribution of those employees and how those numbers have changed in the last . . . from what we're proposing to what they were this last year.

We're requesting three new permanent positions, two of them in the Office of the Clerk and the third as that of a director of information systems. The first two will require new funding; the third one does not. The director of information systems is really converting funding that we had for an IT (information technology) consultant to a permanent position. And Greg will explain all of that a little later.

The two positions in the Office of the Clerk are for a Clerk Assistant, a fourth Table officer, who will both do Table duties and have primarily committee responsibilities; and the second is for another clerical administrative support position in the Clerk's office.

The Office of the Clerk proper will be the first . . . this will be the first addition to the Table staff in 20 years. It was 1980 when the House first moved from two Clerks to three. The need for a fourth Table officer has been evident for many years to us. It is now becoming essential as the three Clerks cannot really continue to carry out all the necessary functions and do them as well as they ought to be done, and we have depleted our ability to delegate functions to other parts of the organization.

That is what has happened over the 20 years is that many things have been delegated to other branches and those services have been expanded. But we're down to the core in the Clerk's office, and our main support to the House and committees and the senior managerial and administrative responsibilities just don't allow us any more room to manoeuvre.

The need for clerical and administrative support in the office is also . . . is desperate. We have only two staff to provide all of

the support resources that the three Clerks need and they also do many program things themselves and support . . . We'll get into a little more detail if need be on these when we get to the decision items where you actually are being asked to approve and create a position, these positions.

The request is that we would ask for some preliminary approval for these positions and the funding and then we will need to proceed to actually create job descriptions and classify them, in order to finalize the salaries and the classifications for those positions.

What I would propose is that the third position, the director of information services — that I'll have Greg describe when he gives you a little more briefing on the information technology part which is next. Before I ask Greg to come forward and present the IT proposals which are a major part of the change in our budget, I thought I'd just have you flip to page 24 and I'll complete the other main areas of change, and then we'll come back to the IT.

On page 24, I want to explain why the directive 24 funding is down. There's a decrease there, 42,000, and primarily that's because . . . as a result of the election. We now have had new members in place for five, six months in this current fiscal year and they've had to get their offices up and running. They've accessed a fairly large part of their directive 24 funding and so we expect that the expenditure in the next fiscal year will then be somewhat reduced.

The other — on page 25 — the other area where we see a small increase is in the parliamentary exchanges, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association grants. There we have . . . we're seeing some increase in the requirements for parliamentary exchanges and our responsibilities within the inter-parliamentary community are growing as they are across the rest of the country. And we are asking for an additional 10,000 in that area.

The other sections that follow here are those that have been of perennial interest to members of the board, including on page 26, travel. While there is little change here, we do want to pull together all of the funding that is in the travel codes and explain those to you in one place. And you will note that our subvotes that collect all of our travel information — there has been an increase of 28,000 across the estimates.

Fourteen thousand of that however, half of that is because of the two new committees that will be holding hearings throughout the province and there'll be requirement for staff to travel to support those hearings. Of the remaining 14,000 there's an increase in the estimates for the Leader of the Opposition's vehicle because the Leader of the Opposition is a little more distant from the Assembly than the previous one.

Travel policy for branches within the Assembly has not changed, and this is travel that relates to professional conferences and seminars. We've always argued that these conferences are very important professional development opportunities for branch heads and for professional staff because they provide the forum for employees to meet with their counterparts in other jurisdictions and learn the unique and specialized tasks and work in the sort of unique atmosphere of

parliaments.

There's been no change really in our policy there, and we do travel on the cheapest fares that we are able to get.

There's been an \$8,000 increase in the codes for conference travel, but \$6,000 of that is to put the Clerks' conference back in the annual . . . Clerks' conference or professional development seminar back into the budget. In this 1999-2000 year, Saskatchewan hosted this conference and so, the travel portion was nil. But our next conference is in the Northwest Territories this summer, and we've put back funding to send two Clerks to that, to that meeting as is our normal practice.

The next section then, section 7, is again the explanation of the changes on the statutory side — which I did briefly mention earlier — primarily the cost of living, the increase in legislative committees, and it's a very small amount overall on the statutory side.

Now if I could ask Greg to come forward and make the presentation on the other major section of change — the information technology expenses.

The Chair: — Before Greg gets . . . makes his presentation, by your leave, I just wanted to comment on the . . . using the Saskatchewan legislature as the forefront of using some leading-edge technology to make this legislature one of the most accessible throughout the 21st century. Maintaining the history and the tradition and using technology of today to share the history of this great legislature with not only our fellow people in the province and the country but throughout the world.

And I know we talk about the changing technology that's ongoing, and I believe this is an area that needs to really be considered if we are to maintain the type of connections if you wish, outreach, availability of information services, not only for the workings of the Legislative Assembly and all its staff and all its members, but also the accessibility by the public throughout the countryside and throughout the world, to have access to our traditions and our historical standing in the country.

So I hope you'll allow me to just add that, Greg.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Thank you. Maybe I don't have to say anything else.

Before beginning, maybe I should just explain why I'm sitting here explaining this and put that into a bit of context. At the Legislative Assembly a number of years ago we decided that we would kind of administer and manage our information technology systems by a management committee. We didn't have a branch; that's something that's being proposed here through asking for the approval of a permanent position. I'll get into that in a moment.

But we've had a management committee made up of . . . represented from some of the branches that are the major users in the Assembly. And that is how we administered our budget, that's how we engaged our consultants, that's how we gave direction through that consultant to Jeremy Phillips. And in that

capacity the Deputy Clerk serves as Chair of that committee.

So that's why I'm here today explaining this. And if the position is approved, then in our scheme of our . . . the framework for . . . (inaudible) . . . will be administered in the future. That branch and those two positions will report to the Clerk through the Deputy Clerk.

The estimate analysis and the budgetary expenditures in your budget book, which is on page 17 as Gwenn mentioned, gives an overview of the information technology expenses and issues. So what I want to do is just briefly highlight some of those expenses and issues.

First of all I think I should point out that the IT systems have become an integral part of, perhaps the most important part of, how the Legislative Assembly functions and how it provides services to this institution, both internally and externally. Its impact on what we do, how we do it, I can't overstate that. We rely on our computer technologies to do our jobs in the Assembly and to do them efficiently and effectively. And I think there's little done by the LAO that isn't based on our computer systems.

This budget and what is accepted by the board therefore will have a big impact on each and every one of the staff of the Legislative Assembly. It also has a big impact on what services we offer to the public through our Internet web site. And it will also have a big impact on how we serve members through our central services. It also has a big impact on how we'll continue to serve and improve those services.

The computer budget actually boils down to two main areas of initiative or reaction as the case might be. It includes the support costs for maintenance in the operation of our existing computer network hardware and software. It also includes the line costs and servicing arrangements for our network connections such as the connections for our financial services branch, the personnel and administration payment system, the library on-line cataloguing system, and of course our Internet connections.

These costs comprise about 34 per cent of our budget. And many of these costs are dictated to us by our service providers and by the level of utilization, especially on the Internet web site side of things.

The second category is the replacement of obsolescent hardware, hardware that is no longer functional and hardware that is not cost-effective to repair, and for the replacement of software. And along with software comes all of the costs associated with licensing new software that is replacing obsolete software.

These costs comprise about 66 per cent of our budget. But that's partly because what we're trying to do this year is make up a bit on our maintenance and replacement schedule which was postponed by decisions made by this board last year.

As you're aware from our budget document, LAO has a five-year rolling plan that incorporates a regular maintenance and replacement schedule for our hardware and software. It also includes web site maintenance and development such as more

public access to the Assembly through real time audio, which we experimented with during the Standing Committee on Agriculture hearings in the House, which we had positive response and feedback to, and eventually video streaming.

It's our planning in anticipation of the introduction of more e-business services that will be carried out between LAO and the members. Network services for caucuses, computer access services for members in the Chamber, including network connections, the purchase of network servers, and the maintenance of those network servers provided by the Assembly, as well as the necessary replacement of *Hansard* transcription equipment.

A fuller rationale of our five-year plan of course is in the budget document. Right now I just want to highlight for this coming fiscal year how our budget proposal fits into that five-year plan.

In the 2000-2001 fiscal year we include the purchase of equipment which was put off last year. This equipment includes the purchase of 17 computers, 3 network printers, and 21 monitors, and those costs add up to about \$59,200. Our servers also need some upgrade and maintenance.

But a big project for the LAO this year is the replacement of our existing software, Windows 95 and Office 97 with Office 2000. So with that, the Assembly will also have to enter into a new licensing agreement with Microsoft because of that, plus the fact that our current licence has expired with this year. And that cost has also gone up.

We also need new network management software. And one of the reasons we're moving ahead with a software upgrade at this point — the first one in four years — is that our current version of e-mail exchange is no longer supported by Microsoft, and of course with the roll out of the new software we will require a training program for our staff as well on those new features of the software.

An important initiative this year is the replacement of the *Hansard* transcription system.

The system dates back to the late 1970s. It includes audio transcription of both the House and the committee proceedings. For those of you who are unaware, the present system involves the use of magnetic tapes, taping in five minute chunks, and then transcribers taking five-minute chunks and those are all put together, edited, and then published using digital technology. A lot of those things will be automated.

So unfortunately with the age of that equipment . . . And replacement equipment can't be done piecemeal because we're going from an old analog magnetic tape system to a digital system. So we can't do it piecemeal over a number of years; we have to do it all at once or not at all. So this will create a complete replacement at a cost of about \$105,000 if we do everything including replacing the systems for both of our committee transcription and recording units.

As I was saying, an important component of replacing this equipment is the recording and transcription of committee hearings. The system in this room and in room 255 are very old. They're 22 years old and are becoming unreliable. And some of

you who have been members of Public Accounts and some of the other committees will know that in the past three years we have experienced the occasional breakdown and we have been cannibalizing other equipment just to keep the present equipment going.

So the equipment is unreliable and eventually parts will be hard to find. I think it's a tribute to our broadcast technicians that they keep this system together for as long as it has been kept together, but I think it is now time to replace it for a couple of reasons.

One of those reasons is that we only have one portable system, and that being the one that's in room 255. This means we cannot conduct more than one committee hearing outside of this building at a time.

And currently we have . . . we're looking at renting equipment for the children's abuse special committee because our portable unit is being utilized by Mr. Kowalsky's Special Committee on Tobacco Control. The cost of renting even this old and antiquated equipment to match our own is about \$4,000 for three weeks or more of public hearings.

So what we're doing in this budget is replacing, proposing the replacement, of both those systems with new digital-based recording systems.

Finally, on the issue of digital technology, I should point out that this is already a standard in many Legislative Assemblies in Canada. Any new sound system that will be put into the Chamber — and there are plans for renovations in the Chamber whether they be in the near future or not we don't know that at the moment — but any system that goes in there will be digitally based. And having the *Hansard* digital sound system and transcription through a server and transcription units, will facilitate and put us in better stead for when that date comes.

So I want to end this short outline by trying to put into long-term context the budget requests this year. On page 20, we've provided a table of our hardware cost over the past five years and the projections based on our five-year plan. And I use this because it's hardware where most of our discretionary expenses are budgeted.

Our hardware request this year is for \$167,000; the average over the last five years has been \$127,000. To put that into context, the request this year attempts to catch up on a zero budget of a year ago and replace a 20-year major system with new equipment. So as you can see, beyond this year we project the average over the next six years will be somewhere around the neighbourhood of \$110,000, so that'll come down.

And as also pointed out in our budget document, our highest priority will be the maintenance on our network for the replacement of the transcription equipment and also for the regular roll out plan for maintenance and replacement of existing equipment.

So this . . . within the context of our five-year plan to stage maintenance and to build a basis providing enhanced and new services to the members and public . . . for the public tells you that we have quite an investment in the technology we have

today, and that technology is the basis of how we function internally and how we provide the services to all 58 members and the public at large. In fact we're quite proud of the fact that our web site had 91,000 visits last year. We have a plan to safeguard and build on that investment; we just hope that the board will support our budget request this year.

I don't know if there's any questions on that now that I can try to take or do you want me to go on to the position request.

The Chair: — Mr. Kowalsky has a question.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'm going to ask a question which I'm doing for information purposes because a lot of this technology stuff, you know, it happens so fast and you hear all these names going back and forth that it . . . unless you're on the Net or someplace . . . so in the magazines all the time, you quite often don't feel that you really know what you're asking about. But my question is you referred to refurbishing with Microsoft.

Mr. Putz: — Re-licensing.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Re-licensing with Microsoft. Is that a decision that's already made or is that something that you're going to be asking the new person to look at and compare to any other system that's in place?

Mr. Putz: — Well right now as I said we're a Microsoft shop basically and really there is no other system out there. It's basically a monopoly and what we're doing is we're going to roll out the latest version. I mean it has been out for a while, but we won't be the first one to use it, but for the reasons I suggest that we need to replace that software, but in any event our licensing agreement with Microsoft has expired. And partly because they have a corner on the market, they dictate the pricing of those licences and those have gone up regardless of whether we stay with our old system or go into the roll out of the new software.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Basically it comes to operating systems. You do have choices; there's Linux out there. But it's like buying a railroad. You can buy the standard railroad, which is Microsoft, or you can buy a narrow gauge that nobody can run anything on. Those are your choices. So you go with Microsoft.

Mr. Kowalsky: — That sounds . . . it's getting right down to good language there. Thank you very much, Mr. Dan.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Greg? Yes, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One of the things that you talked about in here was connectivity with the various departments. You have \$112,000, I believe, in costs. If I can find the right page here.

I was wondering . . . okay . . . yes, operating costs for telecommunications lines, system maintenance, support supplies, training — of 110,000 on page 17. Those telecommunication line charges, are they related to all telephone use in the building or just Internet connectivity?

Mr. Putz: — No, they relate to those. As I mention in my

presentation . . . (inaudible) . . . connections between our finance . . . or our financial services branch and the Finance department. Also . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's an in-house networking system then?

Mr. Putz: — No. These are connections to the outside world because we utilize those services in the Department of Finance. We also utilize services that Linda Kaminski's branch uses. The library has on-line cataloguing services that have line charges. And then there's also our Internet. We have a T1 line with SaskTel and that's based on our utilization, so there's fees for that. And those have gone up . . . (inaudible) . . . Projections are . . . they tell us they're going up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are all of your offices and services in the building here connected up through one Internet connection or do you run separate independent Internet connections for all locations?

Mr. Putz: — No, we run . . . we have a server that we run all of our internal network off of.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But the Internet runs through that server?

Mr. Putz: — Through that server, that's right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Because there's considerable savings to be made operating that way than operating with independent connections. That's why I was asking that question.

Mr. Putz: — No. There's nothing that's modem based and it's all through that server.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is the entire legislative offices connected up through that network, in the entire building?

Mr. Putz: — Yes. And plus externally to those offices that are outside of the building like *Hansard* and some of the library offices over in Walter Scott Building.

I don't know if you're aware there's a tunnel for the heating system. That's where we've run our lines, through that tunnel, over to Walter Scott to connect our folks over there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I know that when you're looking at computers and computer services, there is a built in obsolescence and it happens fairly quickly. And that you have to be on top of it at all times and make the changes when it's appropriate and those changes happen, as I said, fairly rapidly. And the service, the technology that you bought three or four years ago, it's extremely difficult at times to run programs on it. You have to stay on top of it.

Mr. Putz: — Exactly. And I can just re-emphasize something we said in the budget document, that was part of the rationale for members having the directive for allowances, it gives them a four-year cycle to replace the equipment in their constituency offices. And with our five-year plan, that's trying to put us on something akin to that where we do have a plan to replace equipment as it goes obsolete and replace software as it

becomes obsolete and needs replacing.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The network that you set up within the legislative offices, what kind of a cost was there associated with the establishment of that network?

Mr. Putz: — If you look at the costs from five years before and five years after, I forget what page that is on there, page 20, you can see in there that in fiscal year '95-96 there was a big cost for some of our hardware, that was \$280,000, and that was part of when we started developing our internal network.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But that would have been also though, in all likelihood, the cost of purchasing new terminals, not just the network connections.

Mr. Putz: — Just terminals and servers, right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Do you have any idea what the wiring and server costs were?

Mr. Putz: — I don't recall, I don't know if maybe Judy Brennan, who's also on our management committee, might remember. Or Linda, you don't remember?

Mr. D'Autremont: — It was just a cost that I was interested in because I think, just like our telephone system here, we should have the building wired for web services, not web services, but networking services available to members. And I realize that this entails in a large part, changes to the rules to access those services in the House. That's something I think that we need to take a look at and that, while it's not appropriate today, to provide funding for that. That we consider looking into those matters in conjunction with the Rules Committee, with the Committee of Communications with a view to exploring the opportunities, the availability, and the necessity of having web services — not web services again — network services throughout this building for caucuses, for members, and for the legislative staff.

I mean we're sitting in committee room here that you can't provide access . . . that you can't access your information from, from this committee room, which technologically is certainly available.

The Chair: — That may be a good point and opportune since there will be some . . . as I understand it, Property Management will be making some significant renovations, and they might be able to build for the future, be alerted to allowing those types of connections or connectors or lineage to be built in or at least the pipes or, or tunnels or whatever they require to be built in for that sort of consideration.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well since we're already pulling the ceilings down in some places, that's the time when you're going to . . . if you're going to do it, to implement those things. And I think this is a time to start thinking about it and to start looking into it and reviewing what exactly we would want, what exactly we would need, and what exactly we could afford.

If you look at the House of Commons, the House of Commons does provide that kind of service to all caucuses and to the parliamentary staff to be able to access all of these things. And I would think you could operate it sort of like the telephone

system. We each, as caucuses and the legislative offices, do not provide our own, independent telephone services in this building. It's provided by a central service. It's simply a matter of reconfiguring that service to meet the current needs of the staff and of caucuses. And the same kind of service could be provided for networking in this building, run by the legislative office, and with the appropriate security measures in place.

Mr. Putz: — If I might, I think there's two issues involved here you mention sort of in conjunction: one is the Chamber aspect, and the other is the wiring of the building.

Now in the Chamber, that's if it ever comes that the Chamber's renovated and rewired to allow that sort of thing, then yes, the House will have to decide to change its rules to allow members to utilize that technology in the House. Outside of that it's probably a decision of this board whether they want to make the expense of wiring the building with a network that each of the caucuses can access so that they don't have to invest themselves in that infrastructure each time a caucus enlarges, contracts, or moves about in the building.

So there have been some preliminary discussions with the caucus chiefs of staff in the recent past; some ideas were thrown out, and certainly that is one of the ideas that the Assembly is willing to pursue with the various caucuses if that's the desire.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I would think that perhaps this committee could provide some direction in asking that the . . . that there be a review conducted or an investigation carried out as to the desirability, and if that, if it's desirable, what would be needed?

The Chair: — It may form part of some recommendations perhaps based on some factual, some hard evidence as to what might be useful or necessary . . . not only useful but necessary in the not too distant future.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could I just ask a question in terms of Greg? Have any preliminary estimates of cost been done to bring the building up to the kind of standard and ability to provide the services that Mr. D'Autremont talks about.

Mr. Putz: — No, no cost analysis has been done. There's been discussions of perhaps when is the appropriate time to do it. As Mr. Speaker has said, if in phase two of the renovation of this building, sprinkler systems and that are being put in and that might be the time to do it rather than having — if it's the decision of the caucuses and members that are lodged in this building to go ahead with that — rather than having to then re-rip up carpets and floors and walls to put those network lines in.

That's about as far as we've gotten on the discussions and whether the Assembly would pay for the wiring — that would be a board decision — or whether perhaps while SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) was going about doing this, that they would absorb those costs being the landlords in this building, I don't know.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I don't want to interject but it's on the same topics you're speaking of. SPMC in terms of phase 2 and the completion of phase 2, do you have any idea what that

time frame is?

Mr. Putz: — I have no idea. Maybe Mr. Speaker or the Clerk . . . two years, Gwenn says.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think Mr. D'Autremont raises a very, you know, very timely issue in terms of what SPMC is doing. And I think it would not be inappropriate for us to ask the Legislative Assembly Office, through Mr. Speaker, to pursue some discussions with SPMC first of all to determine, I guess, internally what technically would need to be done, what kind of infrastructure would have to put into place to modernize and to bring this building up to a standard with respect to electronic access that would serve the building and serve the legislatures over the longer period of time.

You know, I think it's fair to say if you've got walls open and if you're doing wiring and you're redoing your heating and air conditioning, those kinds of things, that it would be reasonable to have a look at what kind of electronics might — and carrying capacity and that — might be available, what the cost might be. And I think secondary to that to have some discussions with SPMC with respect to how it's paid for.

This is SPMC's building, as I understand it. SPMC owns, does renovations, and does upgrades and so I think it would not be inappropriate to pursue with SPMC whether or not they would be willing to entertain that kind of activity on our behalf.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Lautermilch. We will undertake to commit to bringing back to the board in a timely fashion the types of information that you're looking for.

Mr. Putz: — And I might add the Assembly is very willing to take responsibility for the servers once that network and that infrastructure part of it has been dealt with and maintaining that network as well, because we do it for ourselves right now with our own network.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I think part of this as well will be what the Rules Committee and other committees are looking at in terms of how . . . what functions are done in the Chamber themselves and what the role of committees will be in the future. I think that there's some thought to looking at . . . and is, I think in fact some people are putting their minds to what kind of changes the committee structure might take, and what we might need in terms of accommodating that.

So I think some discussions will have to take place here, before we would make any kind of decision on that kind of expenditure, if it would be a board issue, or a board responsibility. So I think it would be reasonable to pursue, on sort of a broader base, what the requirements could be and what that costs would be.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. Anything else, Greg, while we're on this topic?

Mr. D'Autremont: — We had the opportunity to have audio services, digital audio, during the Agriculture Committee on the floor of the House. I'm just wondering how did that work out and how was it received by the public? Did the actual experiment work well?

Mr. Putz: — I think it worked very well. What we did was — because we had very short notice on this — we took somebody's computer and used that as a server to run this. I think that's true, is it not Jeremy? So somebody was without their computer for the day that the committee ran its hearings. But that went out and we used real-time audio and I think it was very well received. It worked well.

I don't know if any of you had a chance to listen to it as it went on, but there was a slight lag in what was being broadcast on Gary's system, but the sound was very good I thought. And Jeremy has informed me that we had many good responses to our web master, which is Jeremy, about using that technology and making the hearings available on the web site in real-time audio.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Under this current budget, is it planned or is it in the five-year plan for some place down the road to implement digital audio of the proceedings in the House?

Mr. Putz: — Not this fiscal year but the next fiscal year that's what we'd like to add on. We'd like to make that available, and subsequent that's part of our five-year plan. We're planning to add a server for that and to make that available, if again the House allows us to.

As you recall with the Agriculture Committee, as part of its order of reference, the House authorized the transmission of the audio on our web site, just as the beginning of every session, the House authorizes the publication of the debates and the House has authorized through its standing orders the broadcast of the Assembly proceedings on Gary Ward's legislative broadcast network. If the House allows us to do that, then we can do that with the House or any committee that the House authorizes us to do.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I know that through our offices there was positive comments that people liked to be able to access it and would like to continue to be able to access it and really don't understand why if you could do it once you can't continue doing it.

Mr. Putz: — Well I just told you why, but . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, but people from outside who are asking the question, well you did it once why can't you do it the next time.

Mr. Putz: — It's not an awfully complicated thing to do and as you know other Assemblies are doing it on a regular basis. Prince Edward Island has been doing it for a while. I know Manitoba does it when their House is in session. I think they just do question period, but other Houses are doing it, and you'll see more Houses doing it in the very near future.

And our little experiment with the Agriculture Committee showed that we can do it, it's just we need the equipment and the software to do it on a regular basis.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I would be supportive of continuing to do it.

Mr. Putz: — And once we have the digital sound and are able

to do this, then of course we have a digital audio record and eventually members if they want to have bits and pieces of those — of that audio record on personal web sites then that would be feasible as well too.

The Chair: — Anything else Mr. D'Autremont?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Were we on to directive #24 discussions yet or not?

Mr. Putz: — I don't know if you want an explanation of the branch director position request right now or . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, please.

The Chair: — Might as well while you're here.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Now as you see in your budget document, and Gwenn mentioned this, we're requesting that we turn our consulting dollars, for the past number of years has been in 72-\$76,000 range, and converting those consulting dollars into a permanent position giving us a cost savings of about \$6,000 a year.

And I'll just give you a brief explanation why we're doing this now and why we weren't trying to save \$6,000 in past years. As many of you know for the past seven years we had Chris Hecht as our consultant and he not only provided support but he designed our network and our web site as well. It was all done in-house — in-house meaning Chris Hecht as part of our staff as a contractual employee.

And as I just mentioned Chris was on contract, we budgeted every year to pay him through the consulting subvote of our budget. And over time as our system grew in complexity, especially after the development of the web site, Chris basically spent all of his working hours supporting the Assembly activities, part of the reasons that Chris was a very senior person rather than him doing a lot of the mundane day-to-day things. That's why we eventually created the position that Jeremy now occupies. But even so the complexity of things as they grow over the years, Chris was more or less full-time occupied serving us.

This year, well late last year, Chris decided to take leave of his consulting business and pursue other endeavours in Papua New Guinea. And given his departure and the fact that his consulting hours have been developed to the equivalent and more of a full-time position we decided it was timely now — better — in our interests now to convert those consulting dollars to this position.

There are a number of reasons, four main reasons. It would be cheaper for us given his billable hours each year. It would be cheaper for us, as I said, to have somebody on salary and we estimate it will save us about \$6,000 per year.

Now I say we estimate that because we've outlined the responsibilities of a director position and we've provided those to our consultants, that Gwenn mentioned in our other classification processes. We retained those consultants and those consultants are analyzing the job requirements and will come back to us with a position recommendation, a

classification recommendation, and we expect it to be around the \$66,000 year range.

We are fortunate that Chris stayed with us for seven years. He gave us consistency and a corporate memory and we wouldn't necessarily have that with other consultants. There is a real possibility that we would be having different consultants at different times in a given year, or at best different consultants perhaps every year, so we wouldn't have that consistency and familiarity with our system.

Thirdly, we need that full-time consistency for the purposes . . . for Jeremy's supervision. If there's somebody new coming in each time, eventually it will be Jeremy training consultants each and every time, spending a lot of his time training the people that will be supervising him. So on that front it also makes sense.

And fourthly, we need that level of expertise, that senior level of expertise in our strategic planning. Chris is the one that has rolled out our five-year plan, he's the one that has advised us on budget initiatives. And also to design the enhancements to our system to oversee such things as digital audio that we're asking for this year, perhaps the network wiring, if that's approved, of this building and also the Chamber during those renovations, the wiring and networking of the Chamber, and each and every one of the members' desks in the Chamber.

And it's just those initiatives, we need to have more a senior person. So those are the four main reasons. You have the decision item in your budget documents and that's the basis of our request.

I don't know if there's any questions about that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think there is value in having a person on site who knows and understands your system and is able to look at it at the appropriate times. I know in our own office it's not unusual to have someone coming in with a computer problem — we have the computer problem; they're coming in to fix it — even sometimes once a week. And we only have three computers.

But the one question I do have, the system you said was developed by Chris. Is this an in-house system that you were operating or is it an off-the-shelf system?

Mr. Putz: — It's an off-the-shelf system but he designed the architecture and all these different connections — the library on-line cataloguing. There are some things that are specific in applications that are specific to the Assembly and that's where we utilize that expertise as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I have some difficulty with custom operations that you hire your own person to develop. You quickly run into problems when they end up going to Papua New Guinea and nobody is left that knows how to operate the system.

Mr. Putz: — No, that's not the situation here at all. It is an off-the-shelf system. As I said, there are some specific things. There are only so many legislative libraries with that kind of connection. And it's our web site too.

It's just having that corporate memory familiarity with our own system that we're looking for. And we just fear that if Chris stuck with us and in future if we have to rely on hiring consultants every year, we'll have somebody different and we'll just have to retrain them as to the peculiarities of working in a legislative environment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think it's worthwhile.

The Chair: — Thank you. Anything else? If not, we'll . . . Sorry, Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just a couple of questions I have. Not many. I'm quite impressed, by the way, with your graph, Ms. Ronyk. I've been privileged to be a member of the Board of Internal Economy over the time period that you've outlined here, from '95 to the year 2000.

And when I look at the three different areas that you've identified here — budgetary, the statutory, which basically deals with costs of MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and their offices and such, and then the total — the Legislative Assembly budget has fairly pretty much held the line over that time frame.

I note that the statutory component that deals with members' pay and rations and offices takes a bit of a dip and is pretty much flat. And I think that is a very good trend. I think the general public would be very pleased to see the operations of the Legislative Assembly budget and the operations of the Board of Internal Economy through that.

And I guess the government and opposition members, all members of the board, and you and your staff can take a lot of credit for delivering the services without imposing in a very negative way on the public purse . . . or a positive way I guess it would be, on the public purse, negative or positive depending on which way you're looking at it.

This year you're requesting in the estimates an overall increase of 3.27 per cent and as you've indicated in your opening remarks and some of this is outside of what you are able to do internal to your budget and a cost of living adjustments to employees, the reclassification, and of course the pay equity and reclassification plan that were implemented that I know it was a matter of discussion over the years in terms of the inequities that you outlined with your staff in terms of who was paid and some of those levels were perhaps a bit unfair. And that those have been adjusted and put into I guess a fairer scale and a fairer range.

I want to ask some questions just with respect to the position requests that you've outlined. And we talked a bit about I think all of that, the director of information systems, personnel that you're requesting, and the fact that you would want to be doing it in-house through an employed position as opposed to by contract. And I guess it would have some cost savings for the Legislative Assembly office and I think that probably makes some sense as we've seen the pressures in that area grow, Greg.

It would appear to me that if we had on a salary basis a position within the LAO it would make some sense. I think I'm a little less understanding of the pressures with respect to your request

for the Clerk Assistant and administrative support. And I'm wondering if you could maybe elaborate? And I'd like to do it sort of I guess in the context of the earlier discussion that we had in terms of rule changes. Quite clearly there are some pressures on your staff with respect to the committees and the functioning of the different committees that you've articulated when they are out doing their work.

And it's really difficult to determine how many committees are going to be functioning over the course of a year or two or three. And then on the other hand, if there are some changes that the legislature decides to implement in terms of the roles of committees, how they function, what their responsibilities are, and whether or not we can have committees operating simultaneously. I mean all of these things I think are subject to discussion and perhaps subject to change.

And I don't know that yet. And I don't think the Rules Committee or whichever committees deal with that have, have come to any kind of decision or recommendation to the legislature. So I think that is somewhat up in the air at this point. And I'm just wondering . . . and I'd like some comments as to whether or not we would be prudent to operate perhaps on a temporary basis at this point until some of those decisions are better defined for us, then we would be to, to expand our employee complement not knowing really where, where we're going here yet.

Ms. Ronyk: — Certainly I'd, I'd like to respond to your question. The committees are an area that we have never been able to predict, and they do fluctuate. And so we have never staffed to, to serve committees because we haven't been able to feel we could justify it the rest of the time when they're . . . committees were less active. However, over the years the increase in the rest of the work has, has just become — even without these three special committees that we have — the three Clerks and the two support staff in my office are, are just at a point where we cannot fulfill the requirements that are, that are there.

We had prepared this proposal before we even knew the three committees were going to be proposed in December. So they're sort of the, the straw on the camel's back, but they're not . . . they're not the main reason for our request. They sort of make it more critical I guess. And if indeed the House does propose in the next year or two to change the committee structure that will have to be considered again. But right now we do have three committees that, that do need to be served.

But in addition to that, it is over the last 20 years, the increase in the administrative side that has created the problem in that we have consistently for a long time neglected the procedural side of a Table officer's duties. My work is almost wholly administrative except for the hours that I actually spend in the Chamber. We deal with the, the rulings and points of order and things as they arise, but, but I'm ashamed to say that we are not as, as prepared. We do not have the sufficient background. We don't have the time to, to have kept up with modern procedure and developments. Greg's time is more and more taken up with administration. And even our Clerk Assistant, who used to be our sort of bastion of protecting that person's time to devote to committees and procedural stuff is, is becoming under administrative demands as well.

We did ask a consultant to come in and look at our organization to see if it was the way we were set up that was creating some of our problems, if there was a better way to meet the needs. Just what were our needs. We didn't even get time to ever, to think about what the requirements really ought to be in that office.

So we did bring in a consultant and I'd mentioned that in the decision item that, item 14(b). We brought in some consultants that have some public service experience. And they, you know, identified the number of needs. They basically said we were seriously understaffed for the variety of functions that we were required to perform and the time frames under which we were required to perform them. And the sensitivity of the issues that we addressed, because we're dealing with individual members and with caucuses and committees, and our mistake can be a severe problem or embarrassment for the member or the caucus or the House itself.

And they basically suggested that we should have three additional positions, or two permanent and a part-time. We feel that new staff is a problem in itself — it takes a lot of time to recruit and train and equip and re-establish the working relationships, so we're only prepared to go with two at the moment.

We have, in the last number of years, been trying to meet our crises times by bringing in temporary staff. Right now, we have a secondment here for three months from the Ontario Legislative Assembly, an experienced committee Clerk who is able to step into our office and with a week of briefing and training can be a real help to us. But you can't just get somebody off the street that's going to be any use to us at all in the House or at committees or even in the administrative support that committees and parliamentary delegations and so on require.

We have on the office side and the administrative support side, we have over the last number of years, brought in sessional help and summer help and so on. And that kind of gets us through, or it allows our regular staff to take a day off or a break. But it doesn't deal with the real workload issues because they're not something that you can just bring somebody off the street and have them do reliably. It does take time. The Legislative Assembly is a unique workplace. We respond to 58 bosses.

All of our front-line staff deal with elected members and your staff every day. No other public servant in the government is required, at their levels, to deal with the ministers and the elected members, and it's a sensitive and important job. And we don't just feel that it's appropriate to bring somebody off the street and have them answer our phones and answer the public enquiries about what's going on in the House. It just isn't wise and we can't do that. We have been trying to do that; we don't feel we can do it longer. And also, if we try to establish a non-permanent position and fill it, we know our pool of talent interested is a much narrower one than if we can offer a full-time position.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, thank you. Information technology expenses, you're requesting a total, I understand, of 322,000 which is an increase of 112 over the 1990 estimates; hardware or software comprising about 212,000 and operation

and maintenance of 110. And I think it's been . . . we've been through this a number of years and I . . . it's a big amount of money on an annual basis.

And I've noted here on page 20, you've included projected budgets which would appear . . . the 167,000, 150 well, 150, 60,000 on sort of an annual basis, 2001 outgoing to 2005. And I'm wondering if in that global amount for 2000 and 2001, if there would be a way . . . if there would be a possibility of deferring some of the expenditures in this fiscal year or would that just create us difficulties on the out years?

Mr. Putz: — Part of the reason for what we're asking for, this increase, is because last year our hardware budget was reduced to zero. And so, as I was mentioning, we do have a five-year planned regular maintenance replacement plan so we're trying to make up some of that this year.

Part of that also, as I was explaining, is the need to replace our *Hansard* transcription — that's a good portion of the request this year. And again, I think that's an important initiative that we're going to have to make whether it's this year or another year.

There are other issues if we go to networking the building and all those expenses, and some of those are in our projections for the next five years. Now whether those things will come to pass I don't know; then we will take them out if they don't. But that's part of the reasons for some of these expenses in the next few years is we're anticipating the implementation of changes in the Chamber, changes with the networking of the building, and the servers, and running the maintenance of that and that sort of thing.

But for this year, it's the makeup of some of what we lost in the last fiscal year in some of our regular maintenance, as I indicated replacement of 21 or so computers, 17 monitors, the printers, and that sort of thing. And the other part of that is some maintenance on our servers and also the digital transcription units for both the House *Hansard* and the committee *Hansards*.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just aside then from operating costs, line charges, maintenance, and support supplies, it was 110. Then of the remaining 212, and I'm not sure if I understood you correctly, Greg, but how much of that would be in anticipation of networking changes that may or may not happen. We were sort of, I think, requesting that the whole operation be looked at in the larger scheme. If that weren't to happen in this fiscal year — and I don't know that, SPMC has a two-year target as I understand — how much of this might be able to be deferred to that kind of an expenditure and that kind of an initiative?

Mr. Putz: — In this year's budget there's nothing budgeted for that. We don't know.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's only in the out . . .

Mr. Putz: — It's in the other years that we're anticipating that some decisions will be made and we've put in money for servers and that sort of thing. And of course if that's not agreed to then we take those out.

For instance, we've put money — not in this fiscal year but the next fiscal year — a server so that we can begin the process of allowing our financial services branch to offer more electronic transactions between constituency offices and the building here. But of course if these are things that the members don't want to see happen, then we'll take them out. But for this fiscal year none of that networking is projected in this budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — If we were to ask for a bare-bone's expenditure in terms of information technology for this fiscal year, what could that . . . You know, I'm not suggesting you're asking here for frills, what you're trying to do is enhance service to members and I understand that. But if we were to ask you what a bare-bone's expenditure for 2000-2001 would be, could you give me some kind of an indication as to what we might be able to look at in that regard.

Mr. Putz: — Well our preference would be to keep our five-year plan intact, given the situation that we experienced last year. So that would bring us to the *Hansard* digital transcription. And I suppose we could get away with that. I mean there are two components to that. There's the committee rooms and then there's also the main.

I mean if we were going to do the main, then perhaps we could get away with one or both of the portable committee *Hansard* systems. So if we were asked to make some cuts, that's where I would suggest we make them, on the committee side, not knowing the level of committee activity.

But we would like to embark on digital audio if it's not the whole operation, because as I said, we can't just piece meal the digital audio project because one technology is 20-years old and we just can't add little bits and pieces until we come up with a new system. We either have to do the whole thing or nothing. but in that whole or nothing, we do have two components — one is for the House and the other is for the committees.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What is the value of the committee audio?

Mr. Putz: — The committees, the portable transcription is \$50,000 — \$25,000 for each unit.

The Chair: — Yes, Mr. Bjornerud.

Mr. Bjornerud: — I just have a question for Ms. Ronyk. You based, your estimates are based on 76 days. What is the actual cost per day extra when the session is on? Is there . . . do you have a specific number of that?

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Bjornerud, that number has changed over the last number of years primarily because we no longer print a lot of our daily documents that used to be substantially higher if you were looking at a day's printing on top of the other expenses. Now the additional expenses per day to have the House sit, as opposed to the House not sitting, is only in the realm of 8-\$10,000 a day.

Mr. Bjornerud: — That would be additional security and pages and things like that.

Ms. Ronyk: — Those are our sessional staff . . . Of course it

doesn't account the permanent staff that are there anyway, but it is the sessional staff and the printing that we do do, the *Votes and Proceedings*, and pages and House staff like that and the members' secretaries.

The Chair: — Anything further, Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I'm fine at this point.

Mr. Putz: — If I could just add a comment to what I said earlier. Judy Brennan, the director of Hansard, came up and suggested to me that we're not sure that if we did without one component in that, we could run in parallel. Now that's something that we need to investigate further. But just as a kind of a corollary to what I've said earlier.

The Chair: — Yes, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I do have a question related to the COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) clauses and the increases. The COLA clause is set out as a 2 per cent increase, and yet the cost of living increases in other areas is 1.7. Why the differences and where do they come from?

Ms. Ronyk: — The COLA clause for personnel is not based on the cost of living, it's the negotiated cost-of-living agreement that the government and the Public Service Commission negotiated with the union, and then applied some similar figure to the out-of-scope employees. So it doesn't just directly match the cost of living.

A Member: — It's not actually a cost-of-living increase.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, it's considered a cost-of-living increase, but it is a negotiated and agreed one between the union and the employer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would simply view it then as a negotiated salary increase versus a real cost of living. COLA to me should say cost of living, which is what COLA means, and that's the actual figure rather than a negotiated number which may or may not be relevant to the cost of living. Thank you. I wasn't sure why the difference was there.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — If I could just go on, you know, I think you raise a good point . . . (inaudible) . . . that there's different ways of negotiating and it may be that you do the actual COLA. But in terms of government's position, I think it's fairly clear that from our perspective that you need to have some kind of, given the fact that union contracts are very much part of our annual expenditures, that the stability for government and for the employees is somewhat important in that the 2 per cent — I mean you can pick an arbitrary figure of 51 per cent or it could be two and a half.

But the agreements and negotiations ended up at being 2, which gives us some stability in terms of being able to project our costs so that on an annual basis as opposed to finding the period where the cost of living as it may be, right. Well with the high fuel prices, you will know, that may have a very, you know, major impact on the cost of living in an upward way. And if we have negotiated a straight COLA clause without some kind of a figure we may be looking at a contract that would obligate us

next year, and I'm not speculating, but I'll just throw a figure into the air, maybe a 5 per cent figure.

Now if that would be the case that would mean the Legislative Assembly office and every office in government scurrying like dickens. Either that or we would be going to the taxpayers for a fairly major bump in taxes. And I think from government's perspective we're sort of headed the other way and we want to see some tax reductions. And part of, I think, good management is trying to tie some of those costs to something that's tangible as opposed to a fluctuating amount.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think we all want to see to tax reductions. Just use of the term COLA for that increase when we have another increase in here that's written as cost-of-living increase and they differed, it is . . . one of them is obviously not cost of living and that's why I wanted the clarification on it.

Ms. Ronyk: — There is a difference there and the 1.7 per cent cost of living is required by the directive to be based on the consumer price index, StatsCanada figures, and that's 1.7. You're right, that is the true COLA.

The Chair: — Okay, are we prepared to move on or were there . . . Ms. Jones you had . . . Sorry.

Ms. Jones: — No, I don't want say anything other than I'd love a five-minute break.

The Chair: — Okay, can you hang on for just a . . .

Ms. Jones: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay. All right. All right, so we'll go to decision item 14(b) and that's for the . . . that's in your binder as Office of the Clerk reorganization review and position requests.

Unless there is any further discussion or questions about that particular decision item, I would entertain a motion . . . I'm sorry. Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'll just make, just make brief comments. I think the Clerk has made some strong arguments. I would've . . . I think I would've tended to ask that the Clerk's Assistant position remain a temporary position. But I think you've satisfied certainly me that we should be adding to, to that base of staff component.

I mean the committee structure seems to be something that the legislature is going to be using more on an ongoing basis. And I really do have a feeling that there is a desire for renewal and change in terms of how the Legislative Assembly Office works and perhaps a strengthening of the committees and their roles and the duties that they perform, which means that in fact you may be coming back to us asking for a larger staff component at some point.

But I think I would certainly be willing to move the decision on both the office assistant and the Clerk.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments from the board members? If not, is there someone prepared to move a motion to that effect? Mr. Lautermilch, thank you. If that is the

case I'll read the proposed motion for the board members and just to clarify in my own mind that moved by Mr. Lautermilch:

That a new permanent position of Clerk Assistant (committees) be established effective April 1, 2000 and,

A new permanent position of office assistant in the Office of the Clerk be established effective April 1, 2000 and,

The Speaker approve the classification level for each position following the appropriate review by the classification consultants.

That is the motion. Do I have a seconder, please? Mr. Kowalsky. If there's no further discussion, all those in favour? Opposed? None. Carried. Thank you very much.

Now at this point could we take a five minute break and resume about 2:55. Is five okay or will that give you enough time for a stretch or not?

A Member: — Yes. We'll just take a quick stretch and then we can get back at this.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — I'd like to call the meeting to order please so we can move along on the agenda.

The next is a decision item on your agenda, item 14(c), that decision item for a permanent position — director of information systems. In the presentation Ms. Ronyk gave you earlier, the explanation being that from a contractual position to a permanent body within the information systems department would serve now as a permanent employee.

The system has been managed by an administrator on a part-time contract. So the contractual arrangement for this function does not meet our present, our current, or our future needs and this was the reason that the proposal for a permanent position. And as Greg explained — and I won't take up your time by travelling over old ground again — but just briefly to remind you that the staffing the position with part-time does not allow for sufficient human resources to adequately plan and support the Assembly initiatives. And that was one of the reasons — just to highlight and underline a couple of the reasons — for that contractual position being converted to a permanent. So that's the decision item before the board.

Any questions?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I think you've already answered it and it is contained in the written material here, but as you know, we're hearing some rather dramatic proposals for reform of the Chambers in terms of IT and wiring and laptops. And I guess we don't know where all that's likely to take us yet; it's too early to say. But is this the position that would lead us through that process, if that's the direction we decide to go?

The Chair: — In answer to your question, it would be, Mr. Hillson. Again earlier, perhaps Mr. Putz — Greg Putz had gone through the intentions for the future and taking into consideration the renovations, phase two of renovations to the

building. And yes, those were taken into consideration and yes, the position would then be the lead to ensure that the needs, requirements for computer technology, wiring, and so on, systems would come under that office and the committee that's composed to discuss those needs. Does that answer your question?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, I think so. This position, as well as advising us on the technical side, would this position also be able to tell us what, you know, the larger policy decisions that need to be addressed here as to what sort of technology a modern Chamber should have?

The Chair: — That will be reviewed by a committee that is already in place and the information brought back to the board.

There is — and I agree with you — there will be a need for a considerable amount of information and Mr. Putz has already committed to with his committee and with consultation with others who are knowledgeable in that area and who may be affected by the needs for those systems connections, and then report back and explain what the needs may be. Mr. D'Autremont, maybe you'll elaborate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, I would certainly see, if this position was to be made a full-time position, that this person would be a major resource to the legislative staff on any changes, particularly dealing through with the Rules Committee and perhaps the Committee of Communications in dealing with IT information services within the building, that this would be one of the major resource persons that would be accessed by those committees.

The Chair: — Thank you. Good point. Yes, Ms. Ronyk.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I might add, you know this one person isn't going to be able to single-handedly handle expansion of the Assembly system to the whole of the building in terms of all the issues that would come up in the daily work. And nor would this one person necessarily have all the expertise we might need in retooling the building, if you like.

But what that person would do for us is insure that whatever technology experts or advice we get, this person would insure that it's tailored to suit a legislature and that it provides the needs that the members . . . the services the members need and the House needs and the committees need and not just, you know, getting something that is designed for a downtown business or something else. They would insure, he would be our resource to insure that whatever we do is going to serve us best and would be our point person to do that. And very likely would be able to provide, as Mr. D'Autremont says, a major resource for these developments in the future.

The Chair: — Any further discussion? Questions? If not, I would be prepared to have someone move a motion. Mr. D'Autremont, moved by Mr. D'Autremont:

That effective April 1, 2000, that a new permanent position of director of information systems be created; that the Legislative Assembly work with the Assembly's classification consultants to determine an appropriate classification level; that the Speaker of the Legislative

Assembly approve the classification level for this position.

Do I have a seconder for that motion? Secunder, Mr. Hillson. Any further discussion or questions? If not, all those in favour? Please signify. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously.

Thank you very much.

Now, we'll move right along and the next we have added to the agenda is information item. Or, pardon me, directive no. 7.1, caucus grants, information technology expenses. You would have this in your package. Are there any discussions or questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It should be directive no. 7.1.

If you haven't had a chance to go over that particular item, just very briefly it's a change in an allowance in the amount of \$825 per year for each member, monthly, in arrears to each caucus for information technology expenses.

While you're looking that over, Ms. Ronyk will just give us some brief background as well.

Ms. Ronyk: — What this proposal is, is to add some funding to caucus grants. In the past we have never provided in our basic caucus funding for information technology funding. These grants were basically designed at the time when we used to hand out typewriters and dictation machines, and they've never really been changed to reflect the need for computer and other information technology.

The board in the past has, I think, twice in the last 15 years given a one-time, a small one-time grant. That no longer meets the needs of caucuses to establish and maintain up-to-date information technology systems in their offices. And this is a small step really to providing some ongoing funding within the caucuses for establishing and maintaining information technology services in the caucus.

The Chair: — Any discussion on that item?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I appreciate your recommendation on this. And I think that the caucuses need to have up-to-date equipment and should be kept up-to-date on a regular basis very much like the rest of the Legislative Assembly, so that we can stay abreast with the technology that is available. So I'm prepared to support this.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — My only question is it's calculated as 825 per member, but then further down there is, of course, a reference to caucus which does cut out an independent. Why would the 820 — which, of course, we have none at this point — but why would the . . . if it's a per member rather than a per caucus anyway why wouldn't we just say 825 per member, period. And then we've automatically taken care of the independent issue.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I might respond, really what this directive is it's just establishing a formula for each caucus. There are separate directives that deal with the funding for independent members. And it's a good point that you raise. We haven't specifically provided for that and we should do so by amending the appropriate directive that deals with funding for

independent members.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well okay, like I say, I realize that it doesn't even appear now but sometimes it's best to do these things when you don't have a specific request, so we're setting a policy as opposed to dealing with one member's request.

I'm not projecting any future plans here, Mr. Speaker. I mean I have no personal, you know, stake in this.

The Chair: — Well thanks for clarifying that but I . . . it is a good point and that can be brought to the fore at a future time for change.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think the directive as presented should stand, but perhaps there is a change that could be made in the independent member directives. If it was changed to simply say each member, it would seem to indicate that the eight twenty-five would go to that individual member rather than going to . . . for caucus services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could I ask, Gwenn: do you have the directive as it pertains to independent members that we could do the amendment and finish that off today as well?

The Chair: — Can we deal with this item first? And then we'll deal with . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We can deal with this one as is, as long as that can be addressed in the directive. Okay, fair enough.

The Chair: — Any further discussion on this item — decision item? If not, I'll be prepared to accept the motion. Mr. D'Autremont. And if I may recommend the motion:

That directive #7.1 (caucus grants, information technology expenses) be approved as attached.

Do I have a seconder for that? Ms. Jones. If there are no further questions or comments, all those in favour, please indicate. Thank you very much. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Dealing with the amendment to the directive for . . .

Let's move on to item 14(e) while they're redoing the amendment for the independent members. And that is decision item, amendment to directive #6, constituency assistant expenses. Just . . . And I'll perhaps ask Ms. Kaminski to speak to that if you will. Linda, please.

Ms. Kaminski: — Item number 14(e), decision item then, which is an amendment to directive #6. Presently you can see from the background information given in this decision item that we do not at the present time provide additional funds to members in their allowance or their expense provision to offset the cost to pay replacement workers that are required when their regular staff or regular constituency assistants do require sick leave absences. This has posed a long-standing problem and this directive attempts to address that.

What has happened in the past then is that sick leave benefits or

paid sick leave benefits have been left up entirely to the discretion of each individual MLA. And for the most part I'd say that MLAs have provided some minimal paid sick leave benefits, but because of the restrictions of the allowance, those sick leave benefits have been for a day or two absence per year. And MLAs have not been able to provide any paid sick leave benefits for any greater length's sick leave absences that are required.

It is proposed then that paid sick leave benefits be provided to constituency assistants, and those benefits would be applied in a similar manner as they are to civil servants — they'd be calculated in the same fashion. And there is certainly a budgetary implication in order to approve this directive. We would need some additional funds.

It's estimated that for the statutory estimates we'd have to add \$90,000 for this upcoming fiscal year in addition to what's already presented to you in the budget document. And that is an estimate. One needs to work with the calculations to actually determine over the course of time what really would we need for a pool of dollars to adequately provide funding for the sick leave absences that are required by constituency assistants over a period of time.

This particular proposal would be effective as of April 1, 2000. We would start accumulating benefits as of that date, and also it's noted that in terms of a budgetary implication there are also some staff costs that would be required in my branch to actually implement such a new program because I can't do it with the present staff levels in my office.

Also with this proposal is extending employee and family assistance plan benefits to constituency assistants. And again at the present time, we do not have them included in the employee and family assistance plan, and so therefore this proposal would include the constituency assistants in the existing Legislative Assembly employee and family assistance plan of which members and Legislative Assembly employees presently participate. And that plan is administered by the Public Service Commission and follows the same guidelines as the benefits provided through PSC's employee and family assistance plan. The advantage with that, of course, as well is that the services are available out in the rural constituencies, and there would be a mechanism for staff to be referred appropriately.

So those are the two aspects of change then — are adding paid sick leave benefits, and also adding employee and family assistant plan benefits to constituency assistants. And the recommendation then would simply require an amendment to the existing directive by adding the sentence:

Constituency assistants shall receive paid sick leave benefits similar to Public Service employees and be entitled to benefits under employee and family assistance plan.

And that would be added at the very end of directive # 6, (4).

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I just want to say Mr. Speaker, I support this recommendation. I can't think of another arm of government where these benefits haven't been allowed to people who are on the public payroll. And I think it has created

some difficulties for some constituency assistants and I really do support both recommendations on that basis. So I would be willing to move and pleased to move the recommendation.

With respect to the budget implications, I think we can probably have more discussion on that when we return to the LAO budget so . . . anyway, I would move the recommendation.

The Chair: — It has been moved by Mr. Lautermilch that effective April 1st, if I may suggest the format for the motion.

That effective April 1st, 2000, directive #6 (Constituency Assistant Expenses Provision) be amended as follows:

Subsection (4). Adding the following at the end of subsection(4):

Constituency assistants shall receive paid sick leave benefits similar to public service employees and be entitled to benefits under an employee and family assistance plan.

Do I have a seconder? Mr. Bjornerud. Thank you. Any further discussion?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I think Linda has answered this but on April 1st, no matter how many years someone may have been working for us, they still have zero in their bank on April 1st.

Ms. Kaminski: — Correct, yes. We're not applying any retroactivity.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Did you look at all at what would be the implications of allowing up to one year going back, one year's credit in the bank. Would that be a major issue?

Ms. Kaminski: — I guess all it would do potentially is increase the amount of funding that would be required. Because as you go back and apply retroactive credits, what you're potentially doing is increasing your liability into the future.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Liability down the road.

Ms. Kaminski: — Exactly. Now whether or not, you know, to what extent people are going to use the benefits, we don't know that yet. And that's going to be determined over time.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So it's very hard to budget.

Ms. Kaminski: — That's right. But this proposal, certainly if you accept it the way it's written, it certainly was the intent that it would not be applied retroactively and that we would do this as of April 1.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think it's something that should have happened before, didn't, and we're merely correcting an error that was made in the past. These people are to all extent and purposes, government employees and should be treated as such.

To go back though, retroactive, I think is something that we can't do. We could make changes today but, if you go back one year, should you be going back two, or should you be going back ten, or what. I think you start off fresh, a new fiscal year and go on from there.

The Chair: — Thank you Mr. D'Autremont. Any more comments or discussion. If not, all those in favour of the motion as read, please indicate. Thank you. Any more comments or discussion? If not, all those in favour of the motion as read please indicate? Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Now the next decision item again is an amendment to directive #21, annual indemnity and allowances. Are you going to speak to that, Marilyn? And I would ask Ms. Borowski to speak to that directive.

Ms. Borowski: — This is an amendment to the directive that just changes the way we paid the allowances that members received for sessional duties . . . the additional duties they receive for session. And, if you turn to the directive, 7(b) lists those positions. The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act says that each member with an additional duty who holds this position for a session is entitled to this amount.

Our way of paying it in the past has been to wait until the end of the session and then to pay the whole amount out at that point. What we are doing with the amendment to this directive is saying, once session starts and once a member has been appointed to that position, we will take the sessional amount and divide it into instalments and pay it with a . . . included on the member's annual indemnity and expense allowance cheque.

If the session goes over 12 months then, clearly that whole amount will have been paid out. If not, if the session for example only ends after 7 or 8, at that point we would pay the remainder to the member. So what this amendment does is just give the member, over the course of the session, the earnings for that additional duty instead of right at the end of the session.

The Chair: — Any questions or comments from the board?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes. I note that you use the term prorogues and of course at the end of session we have . . . we have got the custom of adjourning not proroguing, and the prorogation of course, as we fallen into the habit of proroguing only the morning of the Throne Speech. So I just wonder if . . . so I just wonder what the, you know, what is the intention, just for my clarification?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Just on that item (d) the payment has never been paid until that . . . (inaudible) . . . happens . . .

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — The formal prorogation.

Mr. Kowalsky: — The formal prorogation, yes.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Then, okay, so the answer is that when we adjourn in say June, that's not a prorogation and so the payment is not owing?

Ms. Borowski: — And the reason why is because if there is some timing between adjournment and prorogation, and if the position changes and we've paid that amount out when the session adjourned or you know if the session comes back afterwards, we're saying it's the same session but we'd already have paid the funds out perhaps to a different member or, you know, perhaps a new member is holding the position.

So we have always waited until prorogation to make that final payment even though we've allowed an advance.

Ms. Ronyk: — But in this case you still will be getting a monthly payment through that interim period.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So because of that in effect you say under our custom, then we have a 12-month session in effect. But what would happen under this directive if you actually sometime ended up with a one-week session. What would happen under . . .

Ms. Borowski: — The amount according to the Act is payable for the member who holds that position for a session. So if the session was one week, the full amount would be payable.

Ms. Ronyk: — Because it would prorogue.

Ms. Borowski: — Right.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I realize that's not our custom at present anyway. I understand at one time it was — maybe Gwenn can help me here. So I realize our custom would at present would not lead to a one-week session, but I just wonder if that's seen as a possible loophole that could lead to a potential abuse.

Ms. Ronyk: — In the past when we did have, say, two sessions in a year — two complete sessions for whatever the current reasons of the time were — the House usually dealt with those issues and made some special provision to say that it would not be considered a session for purposes of certain of the payments that were only paid sessionally. It's something we can deal with if that situation arises.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — If it ever arises. Okay.

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. Under section (b) on page 2, there's two highlights — one, 7.1. But the highlight on 7(b) is there any reason why that item is highlighted?

Ms. Borowski: — When these directives were amended after the McDowell report, the Opposition House Leader was included under (a). However, it is not paid like the (a) list . . . the (a) additional duties are. So actually it was an error — it never should have been under section (a); it should have been under (b) So since we are amending this, I've corrected that as well.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. Fair enough.

Ms. Ronyk: — And the board needs to be aware that there's no new money being provided here. This is the same dollars. It's just being paid out in a different manner.

The Chair: — If there are no further questions or comments, prepare to have someone move a motion. Mr. Hillson. And if I may propose the following motion:

That directive # 21 be amended by adding 7.1:

The sessional allowances set out in subclause 7(b) shall be paid in monthly instalments in arrears on the first day of the month for each previous month provided that any balance owing with respect to the amount of the sessional allowance for a session is paid in the month following the date the Assembly prorogues for that session.

Do I have a seconder . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, I'm sorry.

And an addendum would be: "Moving the Opposition House Leader from the 7(a) to 7(b)."

Do I have a seconder? Mr. Bjornerud. Any further discussion or questions? All those in favour, please indicate. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Now the item 14(1) is a special warrant request. You have that, you have that in your documents. Budgetary expenditure under admin., \$90,000. Newly elected members and returning members requiring office furniture and equipment have been using the provisions of directive #24 resulting in the over-expenditure in this area.

Under committee support services the cost of two new committees — the Committee on Tobacco Control and the Committee to Prevent the Abuse of Children — are unable to be absorbed presently within the committee budget, and that's \$120,000.

Legislative Assembly, it is anticipated there will be fewer sitting days than 76, 76 days that were provided for in the budget. This will result in savings in staff, broadcasting, printing, and mail expenses of \$150,000.

So the Legislative Assembly special warrant request is \$60,000 and would be distributed as follows: under subvote 0011, committee support services, \$60,000.

Any questions or comments from board members? Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones: — I'm wondering on what basis we anticipate there will be fewer than 76 sitting days? How do you anticipate that?

The Chair: — The same as the budget is projected on an average of sitting days, and we're using that just as an average, Ms. Jones.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I might explain as well that the special warrant is for additional funding for this current fiscal year. So we know that we've already had only 33 sitting days in this fiscal year, and we expect to sit by early to mid-March at the earliest, and we know we'll only have three or four more weeks of sitting days in this fiscal year. So we can be pretty close to assuming that we're not going to spend the whole amount.

Ms. Jones: — Thank you. I was not thinking about March 31 as being . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. Just can you . . . when would the special warrant be forwarded. I mean I have no knowledge of when we're going to be in the legislature. If it should be that we're not in until the very end of March, would this

appropriation be then required based on the anticipated sitting days? Or would it not?

Ms. Ronyk: — We don't know that sure, but the special warrant decisions are made by Treasury Board. Like last week they, they were desperate for our numbers. So I don't think we can wait to find out. Special warrants have to be, have to be agreed to a minimum of seven days ahead of the time the House opens. And practically speaking, it's quite a bit longer time frame than that to get them through the process.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. If we then approve this appropriation be forwarded and if there isn't a utilization of these revenues, what then? What impact does that have on your budget? And would you be then left with a surplus?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes. We'd be left with a surplus that would revert to the General Revenue Fund at the end of the year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments? If not, I would entertain a motion. Mr. Kowalsky. And the motion would read then:

That a special warrant in the amount of \$60,000 be approved for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Do I have a seconder for that motion? Ms. Jones. All those in favour? Please indicate. Any opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Just to go back to what we discussed about concerning grants to independent members. Can we just go back to that? I have for your consideration, following the discussion we've had, a motion that you may wish to consider.

Before I ask someone to move it, I'll just read the proposal:

That directive #10, grants to independent members, be amended by adding (1.1) as attached.

And the attachment would relate to directive #10, grants to independent members.

Mr. Bjornerud, moved by Mr. Bjornerud. Do I have a seconder? Mr. Lautermilch. Any further discussion or questions? None.

All those in favour, please signify. Thank you. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Okay. We've motoring right along here . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . sort of.

All right, we'll go back to our budget documents then now and we'll get some figures on the overall as a result of the board decisions that have just been made.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, if I could comment on the impact on the directives. I think there's some uncertainty with respect to the administration of — at least there is in my mind — of the benefits for the CAs (constituency assistant) and I think there was a request for additional non-permanent

staffing.

And I think in light of, I guess, our inexperience with what kind of impact that will have on the Legislative Assembly administration, I would think it might be prudent for us to ask that office to absorb the operations and the changes that they . . . I mean they may be minimal, they may be large. I don't know. But I think rather than allocate additional non-permanent funding for that, I would request that and I would suggest to the board that we might ask them to absorb that for this year.

I have — I think in terms of the overall budget — I think it's been presented well and the, you know, the expenses have been . . . and the questions have been answered that would certainly satisfy my curiosity in terms of their appropriateness.

But I think in terms of the size of the budget, I would ask that this be absorbed for this year, and we can revisit it if we need to in the next fiscal year.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Lautermilch. Any comments? Mr. D'Autremont? Mr. Bjornerud? Yes, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So what you're saying Mr. Lautermilch, is the LAO absorb the \$115,000 estimated cost within their budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I'm suggesting that the 90 is statutory and that should probably be posted in the budget and added to the budget because it will be an ongoing statutory cost with respect to the administration of the Legislative Assembly Office — the 25,000, we don't know. At least I'm not satisfied that it needs to be there on an ongoing basis.

So I think if we would just ask that if you could absorb it for this year and let's have a look at how this is impacting on the office next year.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes Mr. Lautermilch, I think we can manage that. We do know that we will need extra hours to do, to do the work, but we will absorb it somewhere within our budget.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Fine, thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. Any other questions? Any specific areas that you might want to address within the budget document? If not, I would entertain a motion with respect to the LAO budget.

Excuse me, I apologize for the slight delay. I would entertain a motion with respect to the budget for the Legislative Assembly offices. Is someone prepared to so move?

Just to clarify then, moved by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the 2000-2001 estimates for the Office of the Legislative Assembly be approved as follows: budgetary, \$5,758,000; statutory, \$10,340,000; for a total of \$16,098,000.

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

Do I have seconder? Mr. D'Autremont. Any further discussion or questions? All those in favour of the motion? Thank you. Opposed? None. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

A Member: — . . . just a bit?

The Chair: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — There's 90,000 impacted by, by the directive. Does this reflect that?

Ms. Ronyk: — The other is directive #7.1 — the caucus grants, information technology.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Oh yes. Okay, fine.

The Chair: — All right, we're moving on then to item #15 which is the Legislative Assembly classification plan. And I wonder if perhaps I'd ask Ms. Kaminski to address that subject to the board.

Ms. Kaminski: — Item #15: decision item regarding Legislative Assembly classification plan. And what I have for the board is the classification plan for the Legislative Assembly as approved by the Speaker and we wish to have the document tabled with the board and to become part of the permanent records of the board.

In terms of the background to this particular item, we want to make the board members aware that the Legislative Assembly has tied its classification systems, its personnel and payroll policies and systems, to those within the public service.

We have grouped our employees within the Legislative Assembly to either the management and professional classification plan within the out-of-scope classification system within the public service. And we have also grouped our employees to the in-scope classification system, the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) new classification plan.

SGEU or within the public service, a new in-scope classification plan was implemented on October 1, 1998 and as we have spoken about previously, the two main features of this classification plan are equal pay for work of equal value and pay equity.

The Board of Internal Economy, as per minute #1470, had approved the Legislative Assembly's realignment to that new classification plan retroactive to October 1, 1998.

We utilized classification consultants to assist us in conducting that classification review, and the Speaker was given the authority to approve the classification levels that were recommended.

We have just recently completed that process, and the Speaker has approved the classification levels and the results then are presented in this document, our *Classification Plan*. So the recommendation before you then is that the *Classification Plan Manual*, as presented, be received and recorded in the minutes, and that the director of human resource and admin. services be directed to maintain that *Classification Plan* information to

reflect the appropriate cost-of-living increases and any approved classification changes.

The Chair: — Thanks, Ms. Kaminski. Are there any questions, comments?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just, I support the recommendation; I would only make just a small amendment, and I think that's in the recommendation. The reclassification, I think, makes sense. The process you're using is something I think that we need and would want to do, and I think the board needs to be responsible for establishing new positions in the Legislative Assembly. But I believe that the Speaker would want to consult with the board with respect to reclassification.

I know as a minister, cabinet minister, it's prudent, I think, to be consulting with your colleagues. And so I would just amend that to say that the Speaker's responsibility, of course, would be the reclassification in approving that, but I think I'd reword it that the Speaker, in consultation with the Board of Internal Economy, be responsible for approving the classification level. And I think that all that's doing is asking the Speaker to give us a heads up and bring in for our input and for our thought what the reclassification may be.

Ms. Kaminski: — Actually, if I may, Mr. Lautermilch, you're actually commenting then on item no. 6, decision item . . . pardon me, not no. 6, no. 16 . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — 16.

Ms. Kaminski: — Sorry, and I was addressing item no. 15.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm sorry. I had a sidebar conversation going here, as you can see.

Ms. Kaminski: — That's all right. We're just one step behind you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, sorry, sorry.

The Chair: — We thought we just caught up and we're way behind again.

Ms. Kaminski: — Item no. 15 was just simply the tabling of the *Classification Plan Manual* and that the director of human resources and admin. services be directed simply to maintain that *Classification Plan* information.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, I support that too.

Ms. Kaminski: — Okay, all right. So I think then we have a motion then.

The Chair: — Yes, I'm prepared to accept the motion. Ms. Jones. And the motion would read:

That the Legislative Assembly classification plan as presented in the attached *Classification Manual* be received and recorded in the minutes and that the director of human resources and administrative services be directed to maintain the *Classification Plan* information to reflect cost-of-living increases and approved classification

changes.

Do I have a seconder please? Mr. Lautermilch. Any further discussion or questions? All those in favour, please indicate. Opposed, none. Carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Now we will go to no. 16 and we'll catch up.

Ms. Kaminski: — Moving to item no. 16. And if I may have an opportunity to speak to the item first.

All right, item no. 16 then, classification approval process for Legislative Assembly positions. The request before you then is that we give the Speaker the responsibility for establishing classification levels of new positions and also with dealing with reclassification requests for existing positions within the Legislative Assembly.

In terms of the background to this particular item, again you're reminded that Legislative Assembly employees are not members of the public service, however again we've tied ourselves to the classification plans and the personnel payroll policies. So again we have linked our classifications to either the management and professional classification plan or the in-scope SGEU classification plan.

Now within the public service there is a centralized body with the Public Service Commission that deals with the classification requests and with the establishment of classifications for all positions within the executive arm. Unfortunately we don't have a similar body here within the legislative service. We don't have the PSC, so therefore what we have done in the past is that we have certainly brought forward requests to the board for approval of classification levels, assignment of new positions or reclassification requests.

However in more recent years what we have done on a case by case basis is that we have certainly in the decision items recommended that the Speaker be given the authority to deal and to approve the classification levels and the board has approved those particular decision items again on a case by case basis.

Also in the most recent past we have certainly used some independent classification advice to assist with the recommendations for the classification levels. In our process of converting to the new in-scope classification plan we contracted with classification consultants who analyzed, evaluated and recommended the classification levels for all of the positions that needed to be converted to the new in-scope class plan. And their recommendations then were forwarded to the Speaker for his approval.

It is our intent to continue to use outside contract classification consultants to analyze, evaluate, and recommend what the classification levels shall be. And again they are evaluating the classifications on the basis of the plans that are used within government and applying those same classification review factors to recommend what classification levels shall be.

So in terms of the classification process that we have most recently established, we have been using then outside contract classification consultants. We have developed a formal appeal

process which is similar to government; government also has an appeal process available to civil servants where they can appeal the classification assignment recommended by the classification consultant. And we now feel that we have set up a parallel process within the legislative arm that parallels the procedures within the public service.

Therefore then continuing to use that same outside professional advice as well as with this new process, we are recommending that the board would continue to deal with approving all new position requests, the creation of new positions, but that the Speaker be given the responsibility to approve future classification requests as they arise.

So that is the recommendation then: that the board continue to be responsible for establishing the new positions; and that the Speaker be responsible for approving the classification level of the positions following the appropriate classification review process.

The Chair: — Questions?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Now we're back where I was.

The Chair: — You've got to take another shot at it.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm not going, I'm not going to repeat what I said before, I think, other than I would just suggest an amendment that read, that the Speaker in consultation with the board be responsible for approving and so on.

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Speaker, if I may ask the board to consider some . . . maybe modification of that amendment. One of the reasons for asking for this process is that to get our reclassifications considered on a timely basis, it's very difficult; because the board is so busy when it does meet and it doesn't meet on a regular basis that it's difficult for us to deal with these on a timely basis.

Part of our new process for classifications is that we're following the public service provisions where the classification, the reclass will date back to the month that it was requested. So that if you know, it's delayed a year or two, we're still . . . we're accumulating a backlog of costs there.

Also, if the amendment as proposed is made, we're really back to the very same position we were in. All we need to do is really just defeat the request I guess. And I'm wondering if the board would consider having the Speaker report to the board whenever he has approved any classification issues, or some sort of consultation process that doesn't require an official meeting.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think in terms of the timeliness of decision making, I understand the, you know, the difficulties of getting the board together at times. It is retroactive so in terms of any impact the reclass would have, I mean there wouldn't be any financial impact quite clearly, because remuneration would go back to the date requested.

I think, I think the Speaker would want the protection of the discussion and the support of the board in terms of

reclassification. Part of this is the Speaker is dealing with his own staff, his own office staff, I would believe. And I think the second look would probably be prudent for any decision of this kind.

My understanding of the decision item was supporting the process by which you do the evaluation; the Speaker's responsibility being one component of that. But I just believe that it would be prudent for the Speaker to . . . You know, it would be a matter of keeping your board up to speed and describing for the board the rationale for the reclassifications. Not that the board would have the responsibility to make the decision, but I think the information flow is quite important.

And I don't want to divert from this decision item too much, but this board, as I understand it, does not have the authority to do conference calls on some issues. And I think there's . . . and I think that might . . . (inaudible) . . . legislative change, I don't know that.

But I know we run into difficulties in terms of getting the members together at times. And I think this is the type of an issue that might be able to be dealt with over a telephone call. But I just . . . I want to close by just saying I think that this might be . . . I think it would be prudent to have the consultation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I can understand Mr. Lautermilch's comment about not being able to hold a conference call. The deliberations of this committee are public and a conference call by its nature is not public; though when we're dealing with individuals before this board we normally deal with them in camera. Would a reclassification be dealing with an individual or would it be dealing with a position rather than an individual? I'm not sure whether it would be a discussion that would or would not be held in camera.

Ms. Ronyk: — It's hard to separate it in our small organization that we would normally do those in camera.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if and perhaps because it's in camera then a conference call would be an opportunity to do it. But you probably have to have a motion of the committee to go in camera to do it.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think "in consultation" can be broadly interpreted to suggest that the Speaker might want to phone the members of the board to indicate his intentions. We don't have the responsibility if we pass this . . . (inaudible) . . . as I've . . . (inaudible) . . . it to change your decision. But I just think it would be a prudent thing whether it's a telephone or whether it's at a regular board meeting.

But I think consultation is . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is always good.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And it's always good.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, in other situations I've heard similar to this — and I appreciate Mr. D'Autremont's comments — I've heard of some cases where a conference call meeting can make a decision which is valid

until the next regular meeting of the committee. And I just throw that . . . Of the board. I just throw that out as a suggestion as one possibility of where matters must be dealt with. But on the other hand Mr. D'Autremont makes a valid point when he says that this is, after all, a public committee doing public business.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think it would be worthwhile to have some consultation through some mechanism.

The Chair: — Any other comments? Yes, then I'm prepared to entertain a motion. Mr. Lautermilch. And I would suggest the motion read as follows:

That the board continue to be responsible for establishing new positions in the Legislative Assembly and that the Speaker, in consultation with the board, be responsible for approving the classification level of all positions in the Legislative Assembly following an appropriate classification review process.

Do I have a seconder? Mr. D'Autremont.

Any further discussion, questions? All those in favour? Opposed? None. Carried. Thank you very much.

Item No. 17. decision item, review of directive #24, constituency office equipment and furniture provision.

I am going to ask Shannon Ferguson to lead you through this.

Ms. Ferguson: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. Okay, the decision item before us is that directive 24 continue until further decisions are made with respect to information technology resources for constituency offices. And the reason that this decision item has been put forth is that the Board of Internal Economy is required to review directive 24 at its first meeting after a general election. So that's why the decision item has been put forth.

Now you've each been supplied with the directive 24 review. In it, it gives an overall summary of why we have directive 24, the advantages and the disadvantages. There is also summaries of the 23rd and the 24th legislature and it gives you a breakdown of each of the members' expenditures, the participation, and the total overall expenditures.

And then I conducted a short survey with all of the constituency offices and I'm very grateful for the participation that we did receive. And those survey results are attached. And then actually the directive itself is the last item.

Now I'm not sure if you want to go through it page by page or if you just want to . . . If you have any questions or concerns, we can address them. How would you like to proceed?

The Chair: — Board members, any questions?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think this directive 24 is certainly of value to the members in maintaining proper equipment within our offices.

I guess the one complaint that I receive — and I'm sure that

you've heard it, Shannon — is the difficulty in sometimes accessing local services through this. A person gets a computer system through SPMC and yet there's no local service available when there's a difficulty with it. And some of our members would like to be able to access more local service in acquiring the computer technology. I guess that's the only complaint that I've had about it.

Ms. Ferguson: — And if I could just address that. A member can purchase locally provided that they stay underneath \$2,500 and they buy something that is not in the government standing offer. We are bound by The Purchasing Act, and that is the same government policies, purchasing policies, that SPMC administers. So thus we have to follow the government standing offers if we're purchasing something over \$2,500 in computer equipment and if we're purchasing brand name equipment, IBM, Compaq, those sorts of . . .

A Member: — Dell.

Ms. Ferguson: — . . . Dell, Hewlett Packard. All of those sorts of brand names are in the government standing offers. And because we are bound by The Purchasing Act we need to follow those rules and regulations.

Ms. Jones: — I also would like to add my okay, I guess, to the computer equipment allowance and the photocopier allowance or the rental arranged. I think that that's a very helpful program. But in saying that, I must say that the \$1,000 office and furniture allowance for . . . particularly for a new member is totally inadequate. And the selection and cost through SPMC would really eat that up very quickly.

So I simply want that on the record that the computer and photocopier plan are good, but the allowance for furniture is not.

Ms. Ferguson: — And I would agree that SPMC furniture is priced high. However, it's good quality furniture, and we know that it's going to withstand the test of time. And often you see this furniture being passed from member to member. So that's the one advantage of purchasing through SPMC when we're doing the furniture purchases.

Now if SPMC does not have the furniture that you are looking for, then the member does have the option to go somewhere else and purchase their furniture at a reduced price, but then you're probably not getting the same quality that we're getting through SPMC.

Ms. Jones: — But even with buying cheaper furniture, a thousand dollar allowance is inadequate. I guess that's my point.

Ms. Ferguson: — And I've heard that comment from many of the new members.

Ms. Jones: — It's simply not adequate for a new office. It may be good for an upgrade or adding things, but for a new office it's totally inadequate.

Ms. Ferguson: — Particularly if a new member that is coming in, the old member owned all of their furniture and took it all

with them when they left, it's very difficult for the new member to replace all their office furniture for \$1,000.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — The point I was going to make is similar to Ms. Jones, that I wonder if there is anything to be said for LINC (Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee) — treating differently new members from re-electeds and years, in terms of the computer equipment, rather than legislators.

For those of us who are re-elected, I think the furniture allowance is, and the computer allowance is good if . . . in case of the computer, maybe even generous. Because of course like we had three members who were elected last June and qualified for the old legislature's computer allowance and now the new legislature's. So that's \$12,000 in a few months they qualify for.

On the other hand, the other side of the ledger we have, as Ms. Jones has pointed out, we have a number of our members trying to furnish an office for \$1,000. And in the case of our rural members, many of them actually set up more than one office.

And so I'm not complaining about my furniture allowance this time, but I know when I initially set about setting up my office, I mean it was a real problem obviously trying to furnish an office on a \$1,000. And I know some of our rural members are actually trying to furnish more than one office.

So I'm just wondering if we are going about this in the right way.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I recognize first of all what Mr. D'Autremont says with respect to local service on, in particular, computer equipment, and being able in rural Saskatchewan to access the service that's available to you because there's a lot of difference between what access to technicians in perhaps Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, that would be a lot different than what it might be in Prince Albert or in Regina.

And I think we need to perhaps spend a little time to revisit this. And in light of Ms. Jones' comments, it just occurs to me if we have a package here where we've identified 6 for one item and a 1,000 for another and 200 for another for rental, if we might not want to bring this back at another meeting and have a look at perhaps some flexibility between those two amounts.

I think, as well, the comments with respect to local purchasing — I think these constituency offices, even in spite of what the provincial, you know the Provincial Auditor's concern, these are a unique situation. And I think first of all, MLAs are dealt with within their communities with a lot of scrutiny from the business community. And I don't think it bodes well for someone from . . . (inaudible) . . . or wherever in Saskatchewan to have a computer shipped in from the big city, from Regina. That's a concern. Local purchasing is very, very important.

I think MLAs are very cognizant of where they buy their vehicles, where they do their shopping for clothes. And they try and support their own communities. And in one respect, whether it's accurate . . . or whether it should be or shouldn't be, the pressure on local access to both service and equipment I think needs to be taken into account.

So I would suggest that you would spend a little time as

members consulting with our caucuses. Certainly the CAs have given some good direction to you and that's what you based this on, I know, in part.

I think there needs to be a local component put to this and I think we need to as well look at some flexibility within the directive while not perhaps increasing the amount that's available. I don't think that's the intent here. But I think the flexibility might be something that we might want to pursue.

So I would suggest, if members of the board agree with me, that we will stand this item to the next meeting and see if we can't do a little more work on it. I think what we have here is good, but we might be able to improve on it just a little bit in some of those areas.

The Chair: — Any comments on the proposal to stand this item until the next meeting?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, well I'm in agreement with what Mr. Lautermilch has said. May I just add this last further comment, which really reinforces what he said. If this legislature had lasted only six months, then there would be the public . . . there would have been another public expenditure of approximately 350,000 in computer equipment that would have . . . for which they would have been liable.

So I just throw that out as something that maybe should be looked at, and maybe in some respects is too generous. But as I say in other respects we have new MLAs who are supposed to try and furnish an office for a thousand dollars. Anyway, I just leave it at that.

The Chair: — Okay, so the board's in agreement — we'll stand this item until the next meeting. Thank you. Agreed.

The next item is an information item for members of the board as a result of a meeting previously in December of 1998. The board requested visitor services to do a survey of other legislatures in Canada to determine the nature and cost of visitor services provided in other areas; each Legislative Building.

It was completed in June 1999 as attached. And we have Ms. Lorraine deMontigny, director of visitor services, here if you'd like her to walk through the survey as is appended in your information books.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think, Mr. Speaker, we've all had an opportunity to have a look at it and I really do appreciate the work that your services put . . . in putting all of this together to better understand what's happening around our country. So I move that we receive this as information, if that's required.

The Chair: — Thank you. Are there any questions or anything you'd like to ask of Ms. deMontigny at this time?

Well if not, then this brings us to the conclusion of our items as listed. We were going to have an in camera meeting for a few minutes with our Sergeant-at-Arms.

But before we do that I want to say to the board members here thank you very much for the spirit of working together towards

the representations that were made by members of the Legislative Assembly.

I want to sincerely thank all the members of the Legislative Assembly, particularly the staff that's here, for the yeomen task that they have done in putting this budget document together. And I'm sure it's evident to everybody that they do in fact commit themselves to the best interests of all the members that are in the Legislative Assembly, the constituency offices, and those people that serve us so aptly in those constituency offices as well. So I want to thank them in your presence.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, there is one item here. I don't mean to spring this on members of the board, but I'd like to read what I would propose for a motion that might assist us in next year's deliberations. And we can bring this back if it's not agreed to today or if we need more discussion.

But at any rate, it would just be:

That the Board of Internal Economy adopt the following process for next fiscal year for consideration of Legislative Assembly and officers of the Assembly's budgets:

- (1) Budgets to be distributed to board members one to two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting;
- (2) That senior management appear before the board to present the budget of the respective office;
- (3) That board members discuss the budget and ask questions of the officers;
- (4) The board meets in camera to deliberate on the necessary decisions;
- (5) That the board meets in public, with the officials present, to announce its decision regarding the budget request; and
- (6) That the Chair of the board transmits the approved estimates to the Minister of Finance for inclusion in the *Estimates* book for tabling in the House.

And part of this arises from Mr. D'Autremont's question. We're dealing with some of these as independent officers and I would like to give a description of perhaps some of my actions, and maybe some other board members would, in terms of response to requests for allocation. And I think it would be . . . those would be appropriate times to deal with those in camera.

Secondly, I think that we need to have the budget request documents ahead of time so that we as members have the time to do the proper due diligence to the requests for expenditures. And the rest I think are fairly straight forward.

The other issue that I think is important is that we have a format for presentation as we've requested that will give us the ability to be able to better scrutinize previous year's expenditures and what kind of a base we're operating on.

So if no one has a problem with this, you know we can do this another time if you want to peruse it a little.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'd just as soon hold off on this and deal with it at our next meeting.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Fine. I have no difficulty with that at all but then I would like to work with you on this Dan, so that we're . . . and with you Jack, that we're all on sort of the same wavelength here. Okay, good. So I'll withdraw then.

The Chair: — All right. Then we'll leave that until the next meeting.

I would ask the board, with your permission, I would like to call an adjournment and adjourn the meeting until the next one at the call of the Chair. And then we go into our in camera. If that will be okay with you, and that will allow the staff and others to not have to come back. Is that agreed?

Dan? Is that okay Bob? Jack? No problem with that? Ms. Jones? Okay. Thank you. The meeting has now adjourned.

The board adjourned at 4:19 p.m.