



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT

Published under the authority of
The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



No. 2 — February 23, 2004

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY
2004**

Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky, Chair
Prince Albert Carlton

Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Glenn Hagel
Moose Jaw North

Hon. Deb Higgins
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Don McMorris
Indian Head-Milestone

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Regina South

Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 8, Legislative Building
Monday, February 23, 2004

Present:**Members of the Board of Internal Economy**

Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky, Chair
Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Mr. Glenn Hagel
Hon. Deb Higgins
Mr. Don McMorris
Hon. Andrew Thomson
Mr. Kevin Yates

Staff to the Board

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

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

Mr. Gerald Gerrand, Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Ms. Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

Ms. Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman

Ms. Joni Sereda, Deputy Ombudsman

Ms. Lynne Fraser, Human Resources and Financial Administrator

Office of the Children's Advocate

Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate

Ms. Bernie Rodier, Human Resources and Financial Administrator

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Mr. Gary Dickson, Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner

Ms. Pam Scott, Office Manager

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Mr. Guy Barnabe, Director of Information Services

Ms. Judy Brennan, Director of Hansard

Ms. Lorraine deMontigny, Director of Visitor Services

Ms. Lenni Frohman, Hansard

Ms. Linda Kaminski, Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services

Ms. Pat Ms. Kolesar, Assistant Legislative Librarian

Ms. Iris Lang, Clerk Assistant (Committees)

Ms. Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian

Mr. Gregory Putz, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Ken Ring, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk

Mr. Pat Shaw, Sergeant-at-Arms

Mr. Gary Ward, Director of Broadcast Services

Ms. Margaret Woods, Clerk Assistant

AGENDA

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

MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. McMorris, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #1/04 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1**Table Items:**

a. Legislative Assembly Quarterly Financial Forecast Report

The Chair tabled the third quarter financial and fiscal forecast report for the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

b. Members' Accountability and Disclosure Reports

c. Audited Financial Statements, Auditor's Opinions, and Schedule of Fixed Assets for the Government and Opposition Caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003

d. Financial Statements for the Offices of the Independent Members of the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003

e. End of Term Financial Statements for the Offices of Independent Members of the Legislative Assembly

f. Audited Financial Statements, Auditor's Opinions and Schedule of Fixed Assets for the Opposition Caucus, for the term of the 24th Legislature

The Chair tabled the reports.

ITEM 2

Table Items: Report of the Provincial Auditor – Memorandum of Audit Observations for the Year ended March 31, 2003

The Chair tabled the report.

ITEM 3

Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

The Estimates, in the amount of \$122,000, were presented by Mr. Gerald Gerrand, Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

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

ITEM 4

Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Chief Electoral Officer

The Estimates, in the amount of \$761,044, were presented by Ms. Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer.

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

The Board recessed for a short time.

ITEM 5

Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,707,000, were presented by Ms. Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman.

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,178,500, were presented by Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate.

Additional Estimates in the amount of \$199,000 for information management – phase II implementation costs were presented by both Ms. Tomkins and Dr. Parker-Loewen.

A debate arising, the items were deferred until later in the day.

The Board recessed for a short time.

ITEM 7**Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**

The Estimates, in the amount of \$414,573, were presented by Mr. Gary Dickson, Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner.

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

ITEM 6**Recruitment Process for the Provincial Ombudsman and Chief Electoral Officer**

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

Chair of the Public Service Commission
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Representative selected by the Government
Representative selected by the Opposition;

And further, that the panel have the following mandate:

- (1) Hold an open, national competition;
- (2) Develop selection criteria;
- (3) Screen and interview applicants;
- (4) Make a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy;
- (5) Complete the process for each position to be in place as close to the vacancy date as practicable.

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

Minute #1572

ITEM 8**Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Legislative Assembly****ITEM 8(a)****Information Items:**

- (i) **Report on 2003 Members' Survey Results**
Remarks by Ms. Ronyk, discussion followed.
- (ii) **Call for Estimates Letter from Minister of Finance**
Remarks by Ms. Borowski, discussion followed.

ITEM 8(b)**Decision Items:****(i) Review Budget Document**

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

Budgetary: \$6,441,000

Statutory: \$12,329,000

Total: \$18,770,000

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

(ii) Decision Item: Permanent Positions – Hansard and Broadcast Services

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

That, effective April 1, 2004, the two contractual Broadcast Services Technicians be converted to permanent positions, the position title of Senior Broadcast Electronics Technician be established for each position and the Professional Level 5 classification be assigned to each position.

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

Minute #1573

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. Thomson:

That, effective April 1, 2004, a new permanent position of Assistant Director of Hansard be created and that the classification level be established as Professional Level 5.

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

Minute #1574

(iii) Decision Item: Conversion to Permanent Position – Office of the Speaker

A debate arising, no motion was moved and the item did not proceed.

ITEM 8(c)

Decision Items: B Budget Requests:

The Board reviewed the B Budget Requests (pg 27-31) in the following amounts:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Repair of the mace | \$5,000 |
| Enhanced video streaming | \$14,500 |
| Chamber sound system replacement | \$272,500 |
| Chamber refurbishment and technology upgrade | \$463,000 |
| Development of the 4 th Floor committee room | \$1.5 million |
| Centennial Event – Legislative Building open house | \$5,000 - \$15,000 |
| Centennial Project, student web site development | \$15,000 |
| Special commemorative session of the Legislative Assembly | TBD |
| Joint celebration with Alberta for 2005 Centenary | TBD |

The Board agreed to include the repair of the Mace in the Legislative Assembly budget. The Centennial project options were discussed. The open house proposal was received favourably with a fall 2005 date suggested with funding to be determined in 05/06 budget. The former Members biographies web site by students was received as a reasonable proposal for the 05/06 year but it was felt that there should not need to be any costs associated with the project. The special commemorative session proposal did not receive support. The joint celebration with Alberta was left open for further details and a later decision. The chamber refurbishment and 4th floor committee room projects should be proposed by the Government in the negotiations for federal funding assistance.

(i) Information Item: 2002 Cost Analysis of Committee Reform

The documents were received.

(ii) Information Item: Proposal for Second Committee Room on the 4th Floor of Legislative Building

The documents were received.

The Board recessed for a short time.

ITEM 3 (con't)

Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

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

That the 2004-2005 Estimates 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.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1575

ITEM 4 (con't)**Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Chief Electoral Officer**

Moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. McMorris:

That the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, in the amount of \$761,000 (Statutory) be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1576

ITEM 5 (con't)**Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate**

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. McMorris:

That the 2004-2005 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,581,000 as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Budgetary to be voted: | \$1,453,000 |
| Statutory: | \$ 128,000 |

And further,

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

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1577

Moved by Mr. McMorris, seconded by Ms. Higgins:

That the 2004-2005 Estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,150,000 as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Budgetary to be voted: | \$1,022,000 |
| Statutory: | \$ 128,000 |

And further,

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

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1578

ITEM 7 (con't)**Decision Item: Review of the 2004-2005 Estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Ms. Higgins,

That the 2004-2005 Estimates of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$387,000,

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

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1579

The Board recessed for a short time.

No minute

Minute #1580

ITEM 8(d)(i)

(i) Decision Item: Amendment To Directive #21 – Annual Indemnity and Allowances to provide for payment to Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standing Committees

Moved by Mr. Thomson, seconded by Mr. D’Autremont:

That effective upon the coming into force of the applicable amendments to *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, Directive #21 – Annual Indemnity and Allowances be amended by deleting section (7) and substituting the following therefore:

- (7) Every Member with additional duties in the Legislative Assembly shall be paid:
 (a) an annual allowance for extra duties as follows:

| <u>Positions</u> | <u>Amount*</u> |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Speaker | \$34,435 |
| Deputy Speaker | \$11,478 |
| Premier | \$57,393 |
| Deputy Premier | \$45,916 |
| Minister | \$40,176 |
| Leader of the Opposition | \$40,176 |
| Leader of the Third Party | \$20,088 |
| Deputy Chair of Committees | \$ 5,739 |
| Legislative Secretary | \$11,478 |
| Deputy Leader of the Opposition | \$11,478 |

- (b) a sessional allowance for extra duties, at the rate in effect at the time the Assembly prorogues, as follows:

| <u>Positions</u> | <u>Amount*</u> |
|---|----------------|
| Government House Leader | \$ 11,478 |
| Deputy Government House Leader | \$ 5,739 |
| Opposition House Leader | \$ 11,478 |
| Deputy Opposition House Leader | \$ 5,739 |
| Third Party House Leader | \$ 5,739 |
| Government Whip | \$ 11,478 |
| Opposition Whip | \$ 11,478 |
| Third Party Whip | \$ 5,739 |
| Government Deputy Whip | \$ 5,739 |
| Opposition Deputy Whip | \$ 5,739 |
| Chair, Standing or Special Committee | \$ 11,478 |
| Deputy Chair, Standing or Special Committee | \$ 5,739 |

A Member may assume any number of the extra duties enumerated above; however, no Member shall claim more than one annual or sessional allowance for extra duties pursuant to this clause.

- (7.1) With respect to the additional duties for the positions of Chair and Deputy Chair of Standing and Special Committees set out in subclause 7(b), the Board of Internal Economy directs that Members who occupy the positions of Chair and Deputy Chair for the following committees are eligible to receive remuneration for these additional duties:

- a) Standing Committee on Public Accounts
- b) Standing Committee on Human Services
- c) Standing Committee on the Economy
- d) Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

e) Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

- (7.2) 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.

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

Minute #1581

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

That Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy, write to the Minister responsible for *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act* to communicate the Board's request for amendments to the above Act to authorize the Board to establish certain positions with additional duties and to set allowances for those additional duties.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1582

ITEM 8(e)

Decision Item: Caucus Information and Technology Enhancements

That Directive #7.3 – *Caucus Information Technology Resources*, as attached, be adopted,:

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1583

DIRECTIVE #7.3
(s.50(3)(n), (o), c.L-11.1)

CAUCUS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

- (1) Following the returns to the writs of election, there shall be paid to each caucus of the Legislative Assembly, a grant in the amount of \$1,000 per elected Member belonging to that caucus, to be used for information technology enhancements in the caucus office. Information technology enhancements include the purchase of information technology hardware and software, technical computer support, maintenance and system development expenses.
- (2) The grant amount specified in clause (1) shall be subject to all of the accountability requirements specified in Directive #23 – *Caucus Accountability and Disclosure*.
- (3) This amount shall be paid to the caucus once each term of the Legislature.

ITEM 8(f)

Decision Item: Amendments to Directive #3.1 – MLA Travel and Living Expenses

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. McMorris:

That effective April 1, 2004, Directive #3.1 – *MLA Travel and Living Expenses* be amended by:

- (1) deleting “20,000 kilometres” where it appears in subsection (11)(a)(i) and substituting “30,000 kilometres” therefore, and
- (2) deleting “20,000 kilometres” where it appears in subsection (11)(b)(i) and substituting “30,000 kilometres” therefore, and
- (3) deleting “32,500 kilometres” where it appears in subsection (11)(c)(i) and substituting “42,500 kilometres” therefore, and
- (4) deleting “45,000 kilometres” where it appears in subsection (11)(d)(i) and substituting “55,000 kilometres”

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1584

ITEM 8(g)

Decision Item: Motion to approve Budgetary and Statutory Expenditure Estimates of the 2004-2005 Budget for the Legislative Assembly

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

That the 2004-2005 Estimates of the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$18,695,000 as follows:

Budgetary to be voted : \$ 6,319,000

Statutory: \$12,376,000

And further,

That the 2003-2004 amortization expenses for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$106,000; and

That the 2004-2005 amortization expenses for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$97,000;

And further,

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

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1585

ITEM 8(h)

Decision Item: Motion to approve Revenue Estimates

Moved by Mr. Thomson, seconded by Mr. Yates:

That the 2004-2005 Revenue Estimates for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$7,000,

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

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute #1586

ITEM 9

Other Business

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

That Directive #13.1 – *Transition Allowance* be amended as attached.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1587

DIRECTIVE #13.1
(s. 50 (3)(h), c.L-11.1)

TRANSITION ALLOWANCE

- (1) Subject to clause (4), a transition allowance, calculated in accordance with clause (3) shall be paid to each Member who:
- (a) ceases to be a Member due to defeat at the polls;
 - (b) was a Member at dissolution but does not stand as a candidate for re-election; or
 - (c) resigns his or her seat prior to dissolution due to personal illness certified by a duly qualified medical practitioner.

- (2) A Member is not eligible to receive the transition allowance if the Member:
- (a) is receiving a superannuation allowance pursuant to *The Members of the Legislative Assembly Benefits Act*, during the period of transition;
 - (b) is appointed to a paid position on a government board, commission or agency during the period of transition;
 - (c) begins employment or returns to his or her former position or employment in a provincial government department, Crown corporation, agency, board or commission during the period of transition.
- (3) The transition allowance shall be equal to one month's indemnity, as determined pursuant to clause (1) of Directive #21 – *Annual Indemnity and Allowances*, for each period of twelve months of service to a cumulative lifetime maximum of twelve months to be paid monthly during the transition period. For purposes of this calculation, service will be calculated starting on polling day and ending on the day the Member ceases to be a Member for pay purposes (both included) and any portion of a twelve month period of service is deemed to be equal to one twelve month period of service.
- (4) If a Member dies while in office, the Member's estate shall receive a payment in the amount equal to the amount of any transition allowance that the Member would have been entitled to receive on the day of the Member's death.

Upon request by Mr. D'Autremont, the Chair committed to review the guidelines regarding the approval of Members' training and registration fees, and that information on these guidelines would be brought forward to for Board consideration.

Upon request of Mr. D'Autremont, the Chair committed to review the accommodation portion of Directive #4.1 – *MLA Travel and Living Expenses*, and that information on these guidelines would be brought forward to for Board consideration.

Upon request of Mr. Yates, the Chair committed to review the guidelines regarding the enumeration options related to the calculation of allowances under Directive #4.1 – *Constituency Service Expenses*, and that information on these options be brought forward for Board consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 23:00 hrs.

The board met at 09:00.

The Chair: — Well good morning to everyone, all members of the Board of Internal Economy. I want to welcome you to our first meeting after the election, most recent election, and especially it's a pleasure to welcome you to our new surroundings.

This is sort of a historical moment. This is the first official meeting that is being held in this room since it's been renovated, and of course we've got all . . . every one of us is sitting in a new chair. And the desk is flawless; it's the first time it's actually been used. And the system that's been installed here is also all new.

And I think maybe a good thing to do before we even go any further is to just take a tour of this room and put in on record as to what exactly has been done. And I'm going to ask our Clerk, Gwenn Ronyk, to just take us around the room and give us a little visual tour.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, I'm sorry that Greg Putz isn't here today, this morning — he'll be here later — because Greg was responsible sort of for coordinating the design of the room and working with all of the many, many people that were involved in redesigning our committee room.

The first thing that we needed to do in order to put television in was to expand the room a lot — a bit.

And the SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) was helpful in allotting to us the adjoining room which then was able to be expanded into the end of this room. This now gives the committee room the opportunity for public hearings in a really substantial way. We have room for the public to come and to be involved.

The whole room was redecorated, and SPMC and their carpenters and their decorators did a wonderful job in designing the woodwork, as they always do in this building. They just do beautiful work with the oak. And they've created a committee table that was the one the members of the rules committee wanted, in a modified U-shape, as good as could be done in the narrow room that we're in.

They redesigned the carpet to fit the room because there wasn't enough of one colour, and so it's a beautiful addition by having the border in the darker green. The designers did the paint and wall treatments that are going to make the deliberations in here so calm and peaceful, right?

And then the television crew, Gary and Ihor and Kerry, designed and installed the broadcast, the stand-alone broadcast system. And as you can see it's all here, but it isn't going to interfere at all with the look of the room or the proceedings. The people in the gallery are going to have excellent sound because there is sound amplification. They'll also be able to watch the monitor.

Another addition that we will have for presentations from witnesses is the use of a PowerPoint projector above us and the screen that drops down there. In fact I'm informed that we

could have instant replays, Mr. Speaker, so if you have trouble calling an unparliamentary language, we could put it up on the screen. Although I understand that this body is not typically televised, it will be for the legislative committees.

I do also make sure we thank all the other people involved. The systems people, Guy; Jeremy, and Marc, also were involved in making sure the digital audio recording systems were working and set up well. And they have designed the room for wireless that isn't quite available yet, but within a week or two we'll have that wireless access to the Internet. The system is . . . The room is set up for electrical access at members' places around the table as well.

But I do think we should thank the minister of SPMC and Steve Bata and the excellent woodworkers and carpenters and so on for their co-operation. And it's been a busy time in the last four months to get this done, but I think they've done an excellent job. And I also want to thank Greg Putz and Iris Lang who sort of oversaw the project from the committee perspective on behalf of the members, and Mr. Speaker and Monique Lovatt and Sandra Gardner from my office that worked with the storage units.

If you recall, that wall was all storage cupboards before. Those were removed to give us some extra width, and then they redesigned the pieces that are on the floor. They'll be another one at that end, in the far alcove as well. So we will have lots of storage that is always desperately needed.

So just . . . that's all I wanted to say was thank you for all those groups who worked so well together.

The Chair: — And thank you very much. And I would like to add thank you on behalf of all of the members, to all of the people from the various parts of Legislative Assembly Office, namely from television and from the systems and from the Clerk's office who worked to put this together. And a special thanks goes out to Steve Bata of the SPMC and his crew who coordinated all of the physical arrangements here that were needed. And we look forward to years and years and years of service in this room.

Now ladies and gentlemen, we have an agenda, which has been proposed, before us. It's a very ambitious agenda for today. I would ask that you peruse it, and if there's anything you might want to add, you could do so. And we will need approval of the agenda.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'll move we approve the agenda.

The Chair: — Moved by Mr. D'Autremont that the agenda be approved.

Could I have a seconder? Thank you, Mr. Thomson. And those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? The motion is carried.

The first item on the agenda is the approval of the minutes from meeting no. 1 in the year '04. Minutes have been included with your, with your booklet there.

Mr. Hagel: — So moved.

The Chair: — Moved by Mr. Hagel that the minutes of the meeting no. 1 in the year '04 be approved. A seconder to the motion? Thank you very much. It has been seconded by Mr. McMorris. All in favour? Any opposed?

The motion is carried.

Item no. 1, tabling of items.

The first thing we want to put on the table is the Legislative Assembly third quarter financial and fiscal forecast. I have a comment on that, simply to say that it is . . . We are on target with the budget and it's following the special warrant that was passed at the last meeting. And unless there are questions we will provide an opportunity for questions after I table all of these.

Tabling also the members' accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003. These are also available at the constituency office of every member, for that particular member, and also available to the public through the Clerk's office.

Item c, we hereby table the audited financial statements, the auditor's opinion and schedule of fixed assets for the government and opposition caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003. These are also available at the caucus offices, respective caucus offices and at the Clerk's office.

Item d, we are tabling the financial statements for the offices of the independent members of the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2003. This is for the offices of former members Melnychuk, Osika, and Hillson. And these are available at the Clerk's office.

Item e, tabling the end of term financial statements for the offices of independent members of the Legislative Assembly. And that is for the same MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and also includes Mr. Kasperski's financial statement.

And then f, the audited end. We are tabling the audited end of term statements and schedule of fixed assets for the opposition caucus. These are all due by April 1 and it is the duty of the Speaker to table these immediately upon them being submitted. And the schedule of fixed assets for the opposition caucus is hereby tabled.

Now are there any comments or questions that anybody may want to raise on those items?

If not, we proceed to item 2. Table the report of the Provincial Auditor and the memorandum of his audit observations regarding the board's work.

And then we are ready to proceed then at this time with item 3 which is a review of the 2004-2005 budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I would like to invite Mr. Gerrand to come to the witness table.

Mr. Gerrand, you are making history. You are the first witness before this new table. Welcome, and I don't think it could have been a better choice.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Mr. Gerrand: — Well that's very kind of you to say. This is a very new office and you've got one of the oldest witnesses you're ever going to encounter at this table.

Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, members of the committee, I want to thank Marilyn Borowski for assisting me in putting together the materials that have been distributed to you. There are very few moving parts in the budget of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. There are no significant changes from the previous year or indeed previous years. There are some slight alterations in categories.

I point out to you the actual expenditure under item no. 543200, business expenditures, that is travel, entertainment, purchase of libations, a total of \$22. That sort of indicates the scope of things I do other than the things that I do when I meet with the individual members of the legislature.

I have no other comments to make and of course I'll be pleased to answer any questions or try to answer any questions the members have.

The Chair: — Are there any questions of Mr. Gerrand? Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Gerrand, one question related to the performance of your duties. Members have just filled out a conflict of interest form, their report, based on the last election. Will it be necessary to repeat that for March 31?

Mr. Gerrand: — No. The Act is not specific on that question, Mr. D'Autremont. It calls for the filing of a private disclosure statement within 90 days of being elected and it calls for the filing of a private disclosure statement by March 31 of each calendar year.

I have looked at the Act and I have interpreted that to mean that when there is a requirement to file within a reasonable period of time of March 31, that there's no additional requirement to file another statement in this case some weeks later.

I've reviewed that with officers of the Department of Justice who agree with my interpretation, so the statement that has been filed this year now presently by almost all of the members will suffice.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any further questions or comments? If not, then thank you very much, Mr. Gerrand. We will be voting all of these I think towards the end of the meeting after we've had a chance to look at all of them. And I thank you very much for attending and I wish you the best for your work with us next year.

Mr. Gerrand: — My pleasure. Thank you.

The Chair: — The second item, second decision item is respecting the budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. And I would like to call on Jan Baker, our Chief Electoral Officer, who has gone through just a . . . who has

simply gone through an election period and I think is still in . . . still has to do some of the cleanup work, waiting for everybody to turn their materials in. Ms. Baker.

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Ms. Baker: — Thank you very much. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the board. This is the sixth budget that I have had the privilege of presenting before the board since statutory amendment established the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer as an independent office of the Legislative Assembly.

It is a pleasure to be here before the board today and to have this opportunity to provide background as to the office's 2004-05 expenditure estimates and to allow the board members the opportunity to obtain further clarification regarding the related expenditure figures before you.

As you are all familiar, the office is charged with the mandate of directing and supervising the administrative and financial conduct of provincial electoral events. The office, under The Election Act, is responsible for elections, by-elections, enumerations other than during a writ of election, and provincial election finances under the electoral statute.

We are additionally charged with the administration of the province's political contributions tax credit regime, and we also periodically administer and oversee referendum and plebiscites under The Referendum and Plebiscite Act and time votes under The Time Act.

Our mission is to maintain a state of election readiness. Our goal is to facilitate provincial electors, registered political parties, and candidates in the exercise of their democratic right as entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As you are all also familiar, the environment within which the office is accountable is unique and complex due to the inherent uncertainty of the provincial electoral cycle, the decentralized nature of electoral administration, and the multi-layered interaction among registered political parties, candidates, and the electorate. The integration of this decentralized process among the province's political stakeholders rests with the office and its centralized administration and impartial application of the Act.

As with previous budget submissions, my expenditure estimates are presented in accordance with the office's function in base-year and non-base-year format. Specifically, the base-year estimates comprise expenditure forecasts associated with the office's annual operational activities, administration of the political contributions tax credit system, and for proposed new office initiatives.

The non-base-year estimates include potential annual electoral activities specific to a general election, constituency by-election, non-writ enumeration, referendum and plebiscite, or time vote. If in fact the province were to experience one or more of the non-base-year electoral activities, their associated expenditures would have to be included with the office's base-year estimates.

In addition to the office's 2004-05 budgetary estimates, the office provides the board with detail estimate and actual figures for the fiscal year 2002-03. Specific itemization includes operational and three constituency by-election expenditures.

As you are also aware, funding for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is based on statutory provision.

Should you have any questions, I'd be pleased to address them.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Are there any comments or questions from any members of the board at this time? Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Kowalsky. Welcome today to our deliberations.

I guess my first question would deal with by-elections. Will it be safe to assume that the average by-election costs about \$220,000, or some greater and some considerably smaller? How does that work?

Ms. Baker: — An average by-election in a rural constituency will come in about one fifty and in an urban constituency it's around 120,000. However when providing the budgetary estimates, one has to identify — particular in the 100 codes — that we have six registered political parties. When registering, a political party signs a statement that their primary purpose is to field candidates.

It is anticipated when preparing budgetary estimates that we would have a very minimum of three political parties participating, three candidates. So the budgetary estimates provide for the maximum reimbursement of election expenditures to both party and candidates participating.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So these are not just expenses, they're also the return that the candidates would get for their 50 per cent, if they get 15 per cent of the vote?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's included in this . . .

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

On item no. 18(6) — or 186, I guess it is — severance pay of 20, almost 21,000. Was this employee leaving government entirely or were they moving within government?

Ms. Baker: — The office severed the assistant chief electoral officer. And because it was an executive position, it was felt necessary that a severance package be provided to the individual.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You have no knowledge then of where this individual may or may not have gone to in further employment, just simply that they left the Chief Electoral office?

Ms. Baker: — The office provided outplacement services to

the individual. To my knowledge the individual has returned to Melfort, Saskatchewan to pursue his law career.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

Under item no. 290, general contractual services, this year you're estimating \$10,000, whereas in other . . . in the estimates for 2002-2003, it was 100,000. What's the changes there?

Ms. Baker: — Particular to the estimate and the actual for 2002-03, that was a critical time in our budget. We had a boundary realignment. And the office contracts outside services to prepare the electoral aids used by political parties and the administration during an election. That, the 56,000 ought forty-nine thirty-four, is the second portion of the expenditures related to the boundary realignment that took place, that was adopted by the Assembly December 18, 2003.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay.

Ms. Baker: — Two.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Item no. 423, travel. What do you estimate . . . You're estimating here 15,000, but what travel do you think you'll be needing to do over the next year?

Ms. Baker: — Particular to the code 423, it refers to other travel. Other travel includes or is most particular to election officials participating at the constituency level. If for example we had a by-election in a rural constituency, there is travel involved for the returning officers for training, etc. It is our hope also that — we have not had the opportunity to do so — I would like to meet with the constituency returning officers and do an evaluation of the efforts particular to the November 5, 2003 general election.

It is primarily travel that is associated with the 58 constituency returning officers.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Item no. 300 under new initiatives, you're asking for an increase in the budget there. Just what do you have in mind for that 10,000?

Ms. Baker: — To date the office has not had an opportunity to look at an extensive communications program. It certainly, it certainly is an initiative that I would like to see get off the ground.

We were able, prior to the most recent general election, to establish a Web site to help generate information particular to the electoral process. It is now our hope that we can broaden our program by reaching out to the electorate — generate information particular to the democratic process, try to enhance the participation levels of the Aboriginal community and youth in Saskatchewan.

It would result, the communications development costs, would result in a printing of brochures, informational items, maybe the costs associated with presentations at elementary school level to assist with that generation of information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. I have one question not specifically related to a line item, but enumerations always

seem to be a concern at election times. What would you estimate is that your percentages would be for getting all of the potential voters enumerated? Would it be 90 per cent, 95 per cent, 99 per cent? What would you estimate that you're getting for potential voters enumeration?

Ms. Baker: — Well I have to refer back to the November 5 general election. I would say that we're probably looking at 65 per cent of the electorate enumerated. There is no question the office did not get a good enumeration this particular electoral event, and I believe we're about 18,000 down from what we were in 1999.

And as you are all aware, we are a central electoral administration with regional operational conduct of electoral events being the responsibility of the constituency returning officers. Given that elections are at the discretion of the government of the day, given the method that we currently employ or appoint constituency returning officers, and given the tight timelines that constituency returning officers have to activate and carry on an enumeration in a writ of general election — which is the first 10 days of a writ — I certainly consider that it is an incredibly onerous exercise and gets more difficult as we go forward.

The office recognized this and prepared a memorandum back in the '90s and forwarded it to executive government making a recommendation that a consideration be given to an enumeration outside of the writ period, that it be a three-stage process.

The first stage, being collection of the electoral data either done on a hand-held organizer or other method which would enhance accuracy, etc. We suggested that the office then could consolidate the data and create a computerized database. There would be a cost associated to verification of the data which would be the third step in the process. And that data then would be provided to all political stakeholders for purposes of an election and revision. The tight timelines during the electoral period would result in a revision process which I would deem would enhance enumeration — the gathering of voter data substantively.

I think the other thing that I would like to make mention is, is that in the November 5, 2003 election there were approximately 48,000 people that voted by declaration and the office has had opportunity to review. There were 28,000 that voted by declaration in the advance polls which is a requirement. So there were approximately 20,000 people in the province who did take advantage of the provision in the statute whereby if you are not on a voters list you are able to attend the poll on polling day and complete a declaration and cast your ballot.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Have you had any chance to take a look at the federal government's ongoing enumeration process, their permanent voters' list, to see if they're having any more success doing that than what you're presently doing or what we're presently doing in Saskatchewan with an enumeration during the writ period?

Ms. Baker: — Certainly. The last figures that I have is Jean-Pierre Kingsley's voters' list. The maintenance schedule I think concluded the end of January. He is indicating at this

point that he has approximately 71 per cent of the electors in Saskatchewan registered accurately. I can't speak to that.

The office immediately — because we gather our voter data electronically — provided our secondary list to Elections Canada for purposes of maintenance. They did indicate it to us that they were invaluable, that there were a large number of additions, deletions due to the information that we provided them.

Certainly at this point, particular to the notion of a permanent voter registry rather than adoption of the national registry, I would certainly like to see the board, the province take consideration of an enumeration outside of a writ period, establish a database for purposes of going forward that would be tailored to the needs of the Saskatchewan electorate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Has there been any consideration given to working in conjunction with the federal government's enumeration list?

Ms. Baker: — No, there hasn't.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Have you compared the federal list to the list you prepared to see whether or not how accurate is for your terms the federal one is? Are there some names on one that aren't on the other and vice versa or, you know, what kind of comparison would you get if you have done this?

Ms. Baker: — Our office has not. We have just provided the data to Elections Canada. I think that the other thing that you must recognize is that the information is gathered in a different manner than it is provincially. For example, elector data, the address or resident is by postal location federally. We do by land description so that we are identifying our electors by residence rather than by where they're receiving their mail. There are other concerns particular to the federal . . . adopting the federal list. Our voter qualifications differ from that of Elections Canada. We have a six-month residency requirement.

The other I think that would certainly have to be something that we'd look at — coterminous boundaries. We're looking at 14 federal constituencies, 58 provincial constituencies. To do an overlay, given the prescribed criteria for establishing polling divisions, boundaries — whether they be constituency boundaries or the polling divisions — would certainly have to be looked at and realigned by statute in order for the office to accomplish the kind of, or to provide the kind of data that you are suggesting.

I think the other thing is that the information that is provided federally, the maintenance schedule that the . . . for the national registry may not suit the needs of the Saskatchewan electorate in that the election is at the discretion of the government of the day.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I think the individuals who wish or do not wish to be enumerated is obviously a personal choice. And they have the right to do so, if they do not wish to be enumerated. It would be nice if we could have the most people enumerated that would be interested in being able to exercise their franchise. But obviously not everyone is, and therefore there is not going to be 100 per cent success rate on the

enumeration. And I think at 65 percent you're doing the best job that you can, you know, given some of the difficult circumstances. I think it would be worthwhile perhaps exploring what other avenues would be available to us to try and increase the willingness of citizens to participate in the electoral process.

And, you know, if you have any ideas on that, I think that would be worthwhile for us to know about. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, my first question is to yourself, Mr. Chairman. It's my impression that as we deliberate on the budget for the Chief Electoral Officer, that the board is in a position where we must accept the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer. Or is it amendable?

The Chair: — Mr. Hagel, in response to your question, this item is a statutory item.

Mr. Hagel: — Right.

The Chair: — So we do not vote it. However, the board has in the past given guidance and that is sort of our responsibility, I believe too.

Mr. Hagel: — And in that regard, Mr. Chairman, then are they new initiatives, is that statutory as well, or is that to be considered by the board? On page . . . What page number is that?

The Chair: — Could you identify the new initiatives?

Mr. Hagel: — Page 5, item no. 300. Oh well 5, page 5B I guess it is. It's the page in between 5 and 6 — five and a half.

The Chair: — I believe, Mr. Hagel, that all items in the . . . on her budget would fall under the same conditions, so that would all be statutory. But again it's the Chief Electoral Officer is here to receive comments and to receive advice from the board.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you. Then on that, maybe let me just start there then, Ms. Baker, if I may. You propose the new initiative item as a statutory item, or is that you see it in the category of required approval of the board in order to proceed?

Ms. Baker: — I see it as a statutory item. It is, the hope is, is what the office has attempted to do in preparing their budget was to break it down into categories to keep you informed of the progress of the office. The political contributions tax credit is naturally maintenance; my office provides a printed form of tax receipts to the political organizations.

Certainly I think that, particular to the new initiative that's identified, there is much concerned of the participation rate in electoral events, whether they be elections or by-elections, and that a communications program to enhance participation in future electoral events was in my view deemed something the board would be in favour of the office going forward on.

I think that publication of brochures, lectures, consideration of potential services like satellite television that's available through U of R (University of Regina), speaking engagements. Should you not consider the kind of monies that's identified for a more formal communications program or documented program, the office would continue with such a program but put more of an emphasis on the speaking engagements, etc., and methods that we can employ that would minimize cost.

Mr. Hagel: — Well given that it's statutory, then by way of proceeding, it's not necessary but . . . to have approval of the board. However by way of comment I would concur and would encourage that you undertake initiatives which you believe to be capable of contributing to an increased participation in the electoral process by the citizens of Saskatchewan.

What is your estimate as to the total per cent provincial participation in the '03 election?

Ms. Baker: — Particular to the percentages established through enumeration, I do have the figure with me today. On the official results, the percentage who voted was 70.95 per cent. However as I've made mention, there were close to 20,000 people that voted by declaration that were not on the list. If, and it's not an exercise that we undertake, but if one were to incorporate that 20,000 people into the percentages, we'd be looking at approximately sixty-five point five oh per cent which is the same participation rate we got in 1999.

Mr. Hagel: — Now when you're talking about per cent, you're including those 20,000 in the enumerated . . .

Ms. Baker: — No, I'm not. I'm saying that the official, it is based on the number of electors enumerated which was six oh three, six forty-five; so particular to the official results of the November 5, 2003 election, the percentage who voted would be 70.95 per cent.

Mr. Hagel: — In that six oh three, are the 20 in the six oh three?

Ms. Baker: — No, they're not. But I'm saying that I've identified that the province did not get a good enumeration. There were 25,000 people that exercised their franchise by declaration. Should one incorporate those 20,000 individuals, our percentage who voted would drop down to about 65 per cent, which is what we experienced in 1999.

I would like to make mention of an item that the office has just most recently released, Mr. Hagel, particular more to the communications program and the queries you had on the program. And I have it with me today and it is the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly last week. It is a new provision in the statutes since the office became an independent office. In this particular case, given the volatility of the environment over the last five years, this is the compendium from 1998 to 2002.

The intent . . . This is not an annual report like others or many others. The intent of this annual report was to educate and inform. And I certainly hope that the members will take the opportunity to read through the report and develop a clear understanding of the mandate of the office and the efforts

provincially or interaction — provincially, federally, with the territories — to enhance participation. It is a concern across Canada of enhancing the participation rate in electoral events.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you. Now just to summarize before I move on. Then what you're saying is that if we . . . if you use as your base only those who were enumerated and not those additional 20,000 who were declared, 70.95 per cent voted.

Ms. Baker: — Which is what will be documented.

Mr. Hagel: — Right. But if you include . . . If you increase the base by the 20,000 who actually declared, because the number of people who voted is still the same, then it would be 65.5 per cent of the people who . . .

Ms. Baker: — Approximately.

Mr. Hagel: — . . . at the end of the day were registered voters.

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — O.K. And that was the same percentage as in the election of '99.

Ms. Baker: — Very close.

Mr. Hagel: — It's an interesting coincidence — and I don't know, perhaps it's no more than a coincidence — that we had about 65 per cent enumeration and 65 per cent participation. And I suspect that that's more than just pure coincidence that the act of being enumerated contributes to people's likelihood of exercising their franchise. I think the odds probably go up if they know that they're on the voters' list.

I would ask what, under ideal circumstances — and recognizing that there are criteria that are somewhat dynamic here because six months residency is required in order to be eligible — what would you consider to be an effective, or an acceptable percentage of enumeration of eligible voters? I mean ideally it's 100 per cent. I know that. But realistically that's probably not a realistic objective. What would you suggest is a realistic objective?

Ms. Baker: — I would say 80 per cent or better.

Mr. Hagel: — Eighty per cent?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. As you've looked at other alternatives, it is my impression that British Columbia has a base registration of voters that is tied to the listing under the British Columbia health system, their health cards. Am I understanding that correctly?

Ms. Baker: — I can't address that. Certainly Elections British Columbia has what they consider to be a permanent voter registry. And I believe that information that's used to enhance that registry is they use databases from motor vehicles, but I can't speak to the health information.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Ms. Baker: — It is known as a continuous list of electors.

Mr. Hagel: — Right.

Ms. Baker: — However I also want to make mention that Elections British Columbia oftentimes conducts enumerations to enhance their list.

Mr. Hagel: — It has been my impression that health data was included in theirs. But do you have a sense as to what the enumeration percentage then would be for British Columbia?

Ms. Baker: — No, I don't; I'm sorry.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. I listened carefully to your comments, and they share a number of the same concerns that Mr. D'Autremont raised. I understand some of the complexity of using the federal data because we've got different criteria here, but I wonder if there is . . . I guess I would wonder or would ask what the, what we would consider to be the province that has the best enumeration system because all the provinces will have, I believe, will have criteria for voter eligibility that'll be similar to ours. Do you have an impression as to which province has the most effective enumeration system?

Ms. Baker: — No, I don't.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Ms. Baker: — One of the things that I would like to make mention is, I'm certainly not an advocate of a permanent voter registry. However I certainly would want to encourage and do believe that enumerations are necessary. I think it is the number one way to inform the electorate that an electoral event is in progress.

And most definitely, however, what I've experienced or what we're experiencing now is that with the frequency of elections — whether they be local, provincial, federal — and with the initiatives that have been undertaken by Elections Canada, it gets more difficult to get co-operation from the electorate at the door. By that I mean, for example, Elections Canada uses Canada Customs and Revenue for information to enhance their database. Many individuals feel by ticking the box on their income tax form that it suffices for all electoral events.

That I think it's necessary that there be more effort to inform the electorate that our identity differs from federal; you know, that we want to maintain our identity. That's one of my major concerns that by adopting the federal registry we lose some of the identity of Saskatchewan, and I would hate to see that rich political heritage dissipate.

Mr. Hagel: — If I heard you correctly, I think you said that you're not in favour of a permanent voter registry. If I heard that . . . Can you just explain your view about that?

Ms. Baker: — I'm not in favour of adopting the national registry.

Mr. Hagel: — Oh, the national. Okay.

Ms. Baker: — I certainly am in favour of the provision in the

statute where an enumeration be conducted outside of a writ period, certainly with the notion of establishing a permanent voter registry for Saskatchewan.

And going forward on that basis, particular to the gathering of that data, I think that we could also substantively enhance the number of electors on a voters' list and certainly would take the pressures off of the administration at the constituency level to meet the tight timelines.

Because a revision process would be conducted during a writ of general election, there would have to be a communications program developed to generate information to the electorate to ensure that they are aware or they're cognizant of their need to ensure that their name's on a list.

Mr. Hagel: — I think all of us either experienced or heard some of the horror stories in the enumeration in the last election. I mean I've heard elected members, and I have no reason to believe that they're anything but accurate, refer to things like entire apartment blocks being left off the list. I've heard of a poll being left off the list, streets being left off the list, which seemed to point to either the dedication of the enumerator to get the job done or the training for enumerators to get the job done as a bit of a problem. And I would assume that's certainly a factor in the relatively low enumeration of 65 per cent.

Is there anything that can be done to improve the level of contact? Because under any system, including what you propose — where we have a permanent base which is then updated or verified in the early days of an election — that still requires contact with the electorate. And it becomes simply I think . . . And it should ought to be considered to be unacceptable in our democracy that we would have huge chunks of electors being left off the voters' list.

Can you tell me what's the problem and what can we do to improve that?

Ms. Baker: — Well as I made mention of, elections are at the discretion of the government of the day. They're conducted under very tight timelines, given the nature of our appointment, or the traditional method in which we appoint constituency returning officers, the method in which they establish a roster of election officials.

You may or may not be aware that a writ of election issues, we have 10 days to conduct an enumeration across the province. Particular to our most recent general election, we had the Thanksgiving long weekend on the onset of issuance of writ. The result of that is we require 3,000 individuals who would dedicate their time and efforts to preparing a preliminary voters' list for purposes of voting on election day.

We could not get individuals to provide the . . . or make a commitment as they had previously in past elections. It was very, very difficult to complete the list given the circumstance of the weekend.

Our urban enumerators were finding that two to three callbacks were resulting in negative results, that the electorate is not at home as one . . . we would anticipate they'd be.

In rural efforts, the logistics are such that we want to do a door-to-door and so effort to do callbacks results in telephone calls being made.

I think I spoke to a sitting MLA following the election. And one of the comments during the discussion was, is that the number one way to campaign or the most effective way to campaign is door to door . . . to talk face to face with the electorate. And the MLA that I spoke to made mention that they were receiving 30 to 35 per cent rate at home during their visits, that they were finding it more and more difficult to interact with the electorate using that method.

So I'm not sure what the answer is. I firmly believe that the establishment of a permanent voter registry, without an effective communications program ongoing and more particularly during an election, is going to further diminish the voter participation rates.

So I certainly, as I said, would like to see an enumeration done outside of a writ period; not to have to rely on those individuals that we rely on currently with the current method, but employ individuals, for example given that the time for an enumeration — my suggestion would be in third year — we potentially could use university students to gather that data on a hand-held organizer, which in itself enhances the level of accuracy, download it to a mainframe computer, and then put the onus on the electorate to generate the verification back to us that we indeed have the information accurately.

One of the other things that I see very positive about an enumeration outside of a writ period, it would also give us the opportunity to gather data other than that required for purposes of polling. For example, birth date, telephone numbers — as we do now — gender. Currently on our lists we only have occupation.

And the result of gathering more data would allow us to do maintenance from other databases that would provide not all but one of the information and things that we've collected.

Mr. Hagel: — Is it possible to verify an elector's existence other than face to face? Can telephone be done, for example? I think that's being used. And in the case of apartment blocks, can the manager of the apartment block, for example, provide an accurate listing of tenants who live within the block?

Ms. Baker: — Well I'm certainly referring back to your earlier comment. I was not aware, and having reviewed the voters' lists of the most recent election, I don't believe that there were polls that were missed. However I don't disagree that there certainly were apartment blocks missed, sections of blocks, blocks in their entirety.

Information we have extended rather than face to face. If in fact a neighbour can verify to the enumerator the number of electors living in an adjacent residence, we will take that information included on the list.

We then have to rely very heavily on the revision period for additions, deletions, corrections. And again the onus falls on the elector who was not available to seek out and review the list to ensure that they indeed have been put on in an accurate manner.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. The shortcoming I guess of all of our approaches that we've talked about so far is that it does make it difficult for people who move frequently, and there can be — and that can be for a variety of reasons — to be able to be captured for a reliable voters' list.

Just one other . . . Anyhow, I would encourage that anything and everything that can be done to increase the accuracy of the voters' list should ought to be done. It is I think a very, very basic requirement of our democratic process in the encouragement of people to participate, that we list them.

And as I said earlier, I strongly believe that the level of enumeration does impact on the level of participation as well. I mean, I think we all have our own experiences of talking to people at the door and then realizing they're not on the voters' list and therefore wondering whether you know they want to go through the — even after you explain it to them — well, they want to go through the process of taking the declaration on the election day in order to vote and that sort of thing. And we will all encourage people to do that. But you can certainly recognize that it contributes to a hesitancy at the doorstep that I think is a factor.

One final thing, I know that we introduced two elections in the '99 election. A mail-in ballot, for people who were away from their constituency on election day. I think the mail-in ballot is also eligible to be used for people who are incapable of physically getting out to vote. Am I correct?

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — It is my impression and it has, I think I'm not wildly different from many others on this, that the mail-in ballot process is extremely complicated. And you really, really, really want to have to vote in order to, in order to go through the steps and to get them completed in time for an election, particularly if you're out-of-province, and particularly if you happen to be out of province with the only other person that's with you being somebody from your own family, which unfortunately, all too frequently, is the case.

Have you reviewed that and do you have some recommendations as to how that mail-in ballot process can be improved? I think it's a legitimate and important process in terms of extending franchise to as many citizens as possible. Are you of the view that it's been a raving success; and if not, what do we need to do in order to make it a raving success?

Ms. Baker: — Well I, as you are well aware, that I have been in the office for 25 years, and the provision as it existed under The Election Act, was known as the mail-in ballot. And that provision was to facilitate physically disabled.

With the substantive amendments to The Election Act, 1996, it was enhanced or broadened. It is no longer known as a mail-in ballot, it is known as an absentee ballot. They are very convoluted provisions in the statute and very, very difficult to enact. Certainly I did develop the application in 1997, particular to the amended statute. And following the 1999 election, I stretched the provisions. I looked at the absentee voter provisions and stretched the provisions as far as I could when preparing forms by regulations to broaden or make it easier for

individuals to participate.

I think that there needs to be minor amendment. I guess one might refer to it as a housekeeping amendment, to make the provision . . . to allow us to make the provision a little less convoluted.

As it currently is, you must be on a voters' list prior to being able to participate as an absentee voter. When completing an application you must have a certification by an individual who is also a voter within the constituency. Once receipted, the way the provision currently exists, it requires a ballot be forwarded that contains the name of the candidates versus the write-in ballot that we also have available. So as a result, the time lines for the distribution and retrieval of these ballots is very difficult.

But where the process breaks down substantively is once the individual is in receipt of all of the voting materials, including the ballot, they then have to have a certification of an individual residing in the constituency prior to forwarding . . . of completion of the process prior to forwarding on to the constituency returning officers.

I do not . . .

Mr. Hagel: — In a person who doesn't live in the same household.

Ms. Baker: — Right. So I mean at this point, it's as broadly interpreted as I'm able to do as the regulator of your statute.

I believe that we need to give consideration to amendment. I believe that we should give consideration to not using the ballot containing candidate names, that we be able to use the write-in ballot and . . . which would mean that we would be able to forward the information or the materials to the elector more speedily. Also I believe that the verification program as far as the application is concerned, if you've been verified by an elector on application, that there should be no need on the certificate envelope to have that verification process repeated.

So I believe that we could make some minor amendment and it is certainly a provision that we get much inquiry about, that . . . I do not have the percentages of those that voted by absentee with me. Many people fill out application, take receipt of the materials, and then turn around and go to a poll on polling day and, you know, cast their ballot. And we end up in constituencies having different candidates from those that are participating in that particular riding.

But I think that we could make it much less convoluted with minor amendment.

Mr. Hagel: — Is it possible to use, to vote on, to design a system where you can vote on-line or use fax as a way of transferring voter intention, instead of requiring reliance on the mails? Are those legally possible?

Ms. Baker: — To date, we haven't looked at it. But certainly, going forward, I think that Elections Saskatchewan needs to look at what I refer to as e-democracy.

We need to look at automation at the constituency level

particularly to our constituency returning officers interacting with our returning officers through the Internet, generating some of the 222 forms, booklets, and guides which we generate during an election electronically to our returning officers to minimize distribution retrieval efforts.

We currently interact with the electorate as identified in the statute. We will take applications electronically and . . . However the way the current method that is employed, that we are using mail services for distribution and retrieval of those kinds of materials.

I do know that Elections Canada is looking at voting on the Internet. I do not . . . I'm not familiar at this point of how far their efforts have gone and what the result, the outcome of those efforts may be. But I think in the future it may be something that we will have to give consideration to. Particularly if it was controlled and particularly to a provision such as absentee voting, if it were initiated on small scale and we were able to control it and ensure a fair and free electoral process, then I certainly would encourage going forward to do so.

Mr. Hagel: — And have we made any progress on the ability for somebody who is sight-impaired to be able to cast their own ballot without assistance?

Ms. Baker: — Well certainly under the provisions of the statute, those individuals — if attendance at a poll — can have deputy returning officer, election officials assist. They can currently have a friend assist. We also have a new provision in the statute for curbside voting.

It was an issue this particular election where a family member wanted to assist a visually impaired and the office would not let that occur. What was offered to the individual was the template which is customized to fit our ballot or the assistance of the deputy returning officer or, if on their suggestion, a friend who could be sworn in who could assist. Those are the current provisions for physically disabled in the province.

Mr. Hagel: — Is the template used to assist, laid out using Braille?

Ms. Baker: — No it's not in Braille. The template is just a cardboard cover that slides over the ballot. Upon appearance at a poll, the individual . . . it would be identified to the individual the alphabetical listing of the candidates, their political affiliation, and their occupations. The ballot would be slid into the template and the elector then could go by feel and identify which voter they wished to cast, mark their ballot.

One of the difficulties that you have with a consideration of a Braille ballot is that we are not . . . Unlike local government elections, they're dealing with approximately 10 wards. They're dealing with a multiple ballot that is consistent throughout. And certainly we are not.

We are dealing with 58 constituencies with 235 candidates. Nomination day is fixed at 16 days prior to polling day. We have approximately four days to generate approximately 750 to 800,000 ballots for purposes of commencement of voting in the advanced polls.

That my initial conversation with individuals, where I was attempting to address such concerns, is that it is almost an impossible possibility to generate information in Braille and distribute it at the constituency level and then download it to 3,000-plus polling divisions for purposes of voting.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, that concludes my questions to the Chief Electoral Officer. I would just simply urge that you continue to, and your office continue to; remain extremely focused on the effectiveness of enumeration for elections. I think in terms of the operations of the office by and large it's fairly effective. But there is one significant challenge that requires a great deal of focus and, as you point out, for which the solution won't lie in any single one improvement but probably a combination of things. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Hagel. The Chair recognizes Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, Ms. Baker. I, probably like all members here, are a little surprised and disheartened when you look at only 65 per cent being enumerated and then only 70 per cent of those voting; you know, it doesn't speak well.

I'm interested to know how do you determine then only 65 per cent of the eligible voters were enumerated? How do you get that baseline, that top line, knowing exactly how many should be enumerated?

Ms. Baker: — Voter data from previous elections is our primary source. But our returning officers are responsible for breaking the constituency down into workable units known as polling divisions. The Act states approximately 300 electors per polling division. It is the returning officer's responsibility, and certainly our office relies on their expertise to identify the numbers of voters in particular pockets across the province.

Mr. McMorris: — So there is some interpretation there, then, by the people in the different constituencies as to how many should be enumerated and how many they were able to enumerate? It's their numbers. You're not starting with the number provincially, saying that there are, you know, 560,000 people that should be voting this election and we only enumerated 400,000. I don't know . . . Those may not be even close to the 65 per cent, but I'm surprised . . . I guess what I'm trying to get at, and maybe you answered the question, it's the people on the local level that determine how many eligible voters there are as opposed to how many they enumerated.

Ms. Baker: — Yes.

Mr. McMorris: — So there could be some discrepancy there for sure. I mean, we're going on a 65 per cent but that certainly isn't scientific, is it?

Ms. Baker: — Well but there's . . . I'm not sure how we can make it scientific. I mean, we're relying on human resources here. You know, we have 58 constituencies. It's identified . . . the criteria is identified in the Act how the office proceeds. We're here to accommodate the political entities and to facilitate the electorate. And certainly every effort is to do so.

We've had a boundary realignment. The office immediately

worked with the constituency returning officers, providing them all of the material information on electorates from previous elections, census data, any information that we could generate — hard copy or other — to assist the constituency returning officers to break their individual constituencies down into polling divisions.

You are unable to identify the electorate until such time as you do a door-to-door enumeration.

Mr. McMorris: — I was interested when you were talking about how to increase, you know, the numbers from 65, and you were talking about not just an enumeration during the writ period. But earlier you suggested the third year, and you were suggesting hand-held devices, you know going more electronic, getting up to the year 2000 kind of thing.

How much . . . First of all, what would you think the cost would be to hold another enumeration, you know, pre-writ period? Like how . . . and to get up to speed? What would you be looking, thinking of as costs for that?

Ms. Baker: — I would estimate — as I have, I've done an estimate — that 2,808,393 approximately would be costs associated with an enumeration outside of the writ period.

Mr. McMorris: — Done electronically as well.

Ms. Baker: — Done electronically, as I had suggested in a three-stage process, I would estimate that it would be close to \$3 million.

Mr. McMorris: — I would be interested in your opinion as to . . . If there were set election dates, what do you think that would have to do with . . . How would that impact enumeration rates and the whole job of enumerating when you know three years in advance when the next election date would be?

Ms. Baker: — Well most definitely it could be identified as initially being cost-affected. If we are making distribution of hardware, software to our constituency returning officers, having very defined dates and allowing our returning officers to set up their administrations prior to the onset of a writ being issued, there certainly would be advantages. Certainly the efforts . . . the office relies heavily on the efforts of the constituency returning officers that prior, any time after we hit year three in an electoral cycle, that they establish rosters of election officials to participate in an election . . . in the election process.

I think it might be easier if one had a fixed date to get people to commit. That's one of the most difficult areas that we have because elections are at the discretion of the government of the day. People will go onto our roster and identify that they would love to participate; a writ issues, they're contacted, our returning officers are scrambling because in a majority of cases as high as 50 per cent of the people on roster are not available.

So it certainly would assist with the human resource aspect of getting the electoral process underway immediately should we have fixed dates.

Mr. McMorris: — Yes, and it was interesting because you

identified that as one of the problems, some consistency from election year to election year, and, you know, to have brand new enumerators learn the process, never have been through it and not maybe knowing the area. So that would definitely help in the consistency of staffing of individuals during that enumeration period. Not only that but it would . . . I mean I would think that set election dates would then give the returning officers more time to do a, for lack of a better word, a proper enumeration, you know, an enumeration that we wouldn't be able to pick holes in because they've missed blocks or chunks. So it would really help in those two different areas alone and maybe even a third area would be some cost savings.

Ms. Baker: — While certainly I don't disagree that, you know, we could activate much more speedily than we're able to certainly get enumerators on the street. But particular to the period of time allotted for enumeration it is an incredibly tight timeline.

Whether you have fixed election dates or at discretion of the government of the day, on the onset the returning officer has 10 days to produce a preliminary list. So we are establishing — as we currently are — we're establishing offices, contacting enumerators, getting them in for a school of instruction, distributing, and having enumerators get on the street.

What is becoming recognizably more and more difficult is that electors are not at home during day hours, that a majority of our enumeration is accomplished between 4 and 8 p.m. in the evenings.

We have 10 days. We've used two; we're now down to eight, and our enumerators are expected to prepare a preliminary list — and that's in hand, by hand — and provide to the returning officer. So fixed election dates would certainly enhance the administration; I'm not sure it would enhance the enumeration.

It is just an extremely tight timeline. It matters not whether we have a 34-day writ down to a 28-day writ. Ten days to conduct an enumeration across the province in my view is very difficult.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess just one last statement. There would be nothing saying though that with a fixed election date that you couldn't start enumeration earlier if, you know, if the elections Act allowed that.

Ms. Baker: — I think what we could do — and I have been around for six elections — what we potentially could do is that our returning officers would have office space, all of their materials, etc. in place.

There is the potential of having school of instruction for enumerators outside of a writ of election. Our costs may be enhanced should we not go forward. However it would give the full 10-day period to the enumerators for purposes of preparation of the list.

Mr. McMorris: — One last question. But there would be no problem if The Election Act was changed to start enumeration seven days prior to the writ being dropped.

Ms. Baker: — It would require an amendment to the statute.

Mr. McMorris: — Which would really then give them instead of what you were saying, eight days, it would give them at least 15 to do that preliminary which would certainly, I would think, help the percentage of enumeration.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. McMorris. I believe there aren't any other questions so I want to take a moment here to express a thank-you for the thought processes that you have gone through and the advice that you have given the committee.

As we all know, elections are really very fundamental to our democratic process and maintaining the integrity of our electoral system is of great interest, not only to yourself as a chief executive officer but to all of us as elected members.

And so to that extent I want to thank all members for their comments and questions and your responses because I think it will go a long way to help us maintain a system with integrity. Thank you very much then for coming before this committee, Ms. Baker.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

The Chair: — At this time I would just want to poll the members. Would they like to take, would you like to take a 10-minute break or shall we just carry on? I see a couple of heads knocking and a couple not. Two or three knocking. Let's just take 10 minutes and reassemble here. A quarter to I want to be able to call it to order. We are recessed.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Next agenda item is the review of the 2004-2005 budget for the offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate. I would like to welcome at this time the Provincial Ombudsman, Barbara Tomkins, to make her remarks. And perhaps before that I would ask Barbara, if you wouldn't . . . Ms. Tomkins, if you wouldn't mind just to introduce your officials who are with you.

Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the Children's Advocate

Ms. Tomkins: — Certainly will. Good morning. To my right is Lynne Fraser, who's our human resource and financial administrator, and to my left Joni Sereda, who is the deputy ombudsman from Saskatoon.

The Chair: — And welcome to both of you as well.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'd like to start . . . oh dear, I've just lost my page. If you'll refer to page 7 of our submission, there's a typographical error there. Some of you may have noticed the inconsistency in numbers. Near the bottom, about two-thirds of the way down, there's a heading, 2004-2005 expenditure estimates. In the second line of the . . . Or I'm sorry, the third line of the text under point no. 1, there's a reference to \$99,000. That should read \$87,000.

The Chair: — Could you repeat that once again, please.

Ms. Tomkins: — On page 7, under point no. 1, near the bottom of the page in the third line, at the end of the line, there's a

reference to \$99,000.

The Chair: — That would be in the sentence which reads, the request is an increase of.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes. Instead of 99,000, it should read 87,000.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Ms. Tomkins: — This is for me a sort of parting. This is the last time I will appear before this board. My term as Ombudsman expires in July of this year and this is therefore my final budget submission.

In determining my budget request in past years, I have attempted to balance my obligations as an officer of the Legislative Assembly against the province's financial challenges. I attempted to be candid about our accomplishments and about pressures that the office faces. I have attempted to find creative ways to avoid those and to deal with them.

Considering that balance, I have not requested funding to enable expanded or enhanced services for a number of years. I have not received funding for expanded or enhanced services in many years. In the face of this, the office did progress in many aspects of its work. I think that this year, being my final year and my final budget request, tips the balance at a somewhat different angle.

My office faces challenges of its own and I think it is incumbent on me that they be identified. One cannot do more with less indefinitely. Eventually one does status quo with less and after that one simply does less. I think my office has reached the latter stage.

Having said that, I do not discount the financial concern shared by members of this board. Instead I think it is appropriate that I provide details of the office's circumstances and leave it to the members of the board to find an appropriate balance between our needs and the province's capability of meeting them at this time.

The Office of the Ombudsman is essentially charged to promote fairness in the provision of services by the provincial government. We do that primarily through four powers that the Act gives to us. The first and the one best known is to receive, review, investigate, and resolve public complaints. Another is to conduct investigations on my own motion. Another is to resolve complaints through alternative case resolution. And finally, to conduct public education about the office and its role. To achieve our mandate we operate two offices — one in Regina, one in Saskatoon.

In terms of public complaints, in year 2003 we received a total of 4,856 complaints; of those, 2,998 were against government within the jurisdiction of our office. This is a 13 per cent increase over the year 2002. And in the last five years, and this was disclosed on the chart on page 4 of our submission, our complaints have increased by 30 per cent.

During that time the resources to investigate those complaints have not been increased and the inevitable impact is a loss of timeliness in the investigation of those complaints. And the

impact of that can be a loss of effectiveness in the work that the office does.

I'm going to give you a little bit of history here for those who aren't familiar with the office. In 1978 the office received a total of 1,049 complaints against government. At that time a second investigator position was added to the Saskatoon office to help manage the then increasing caseloads. That brought the number of investigators in the province in total to five — three in Regina and two in Saskatoon. That remains in 2004 the number of investigators that the office has, although it now faces 2,988 complaints.

There have been some changes that affect the workload however. In 1978 when the fifth investigator was added, the investigators also did the intake function on a rotating basis.

In 1978 intake . . . I'm sorry. In 1980 an intake position was created in Regina which removed that aspect of the work from the investigators, and in 1981 a similar position was added in Saskatoon.

In addition, through the generosity of this board two positions were added — one in each office in 1998 — to deal with alternative case resolution for certain kinds of complaints. And those positions had some impact on the caseload for the investigators although their greater impact is on the workload of the complaints analyst.

I think saying that there were five investigators in 1980 and that there are five now is not a direct apples and apples comparison. But I think the numbers will indicate that even with the changes, with the creation of the intake positions and the impact that the complaints . . . I'm sorry . . . the alternative case resolution positions have had, the situation with five investigators in total in the office doesn't balance the almost threefold increase in complaints during that time.

The situation has been becoming increasingly critical to our office. And eventually this year by reallocating money and being particularly careful with our expenditures, we have been able to hire a temporary investigator to bring the Saskatoon investigator total to three. That position commenced work on a part-time basis in December — I'm sorry, in November — and became full-time in January, and is set on a temporary basis until the end of March. It is my intention to maintain that position into the coming fiscal year, on a full-time basis through the fiscal year.

Part of how the funding was secured to do that temporary appointment was by leaving an investigator position dedicated to major investigations vacant. It was left vacant for all of the last fiscal year and a portion of the funds that were saved by doing that were used to fund the position in this year. You will see from the numbers at the end, and I'll go through those, that I'm seeking as part of a status quo budget, in the sense of maintaining services at their current level, funding for the position that currently sits as a temporary position. Failing that funding, I expect that the major investigations position will remain vacant for the next fiscal year.

The alternative to doing that, and it has been discussed, is to simply decline certain kinds of complaints, as has been done in

other jurisdictions where these kinds of pressures are faced by an ombudsman's office, or continuing in the manner that we are, in falling farther and farther behind. I'm not prepared to do the latter. I might have been prepared to do the former if it weren't the end of my term. But I don't think that's a decision that it's wise or appropriate for me to make three or four months before leaving.

In terms of own motion investigations, as I alluded, we have one position dedicated to own motion investigations. I'd like to see, in my world of my dreams, a unit for this purpose which would have two investigators and some research capability. I'm certainly not suggesting that that's an appropriate request at this time and I'm not making that request, but I would like to point out our work on the corrections review which was received in all quarters within and outside of government as a thorough and thoughtful report.

I think I can say immodestly that I haven't heard any criticism of the work that we did or the report that came out of it. That was done by that one position over a period of three years. It's unfortunate that it took three years but with one position available to undertake work that extensive, it's inevitable. And an inevitable consequence of that is that over the period of time, when it takes such an extended period of time to do such detailed work, things change. Corrections is an evolving institution. And a good portion of that three years was spent going back to update from things that had happened the year previously. If we had a unit, as I suggested earlier, there would be far less of that and we'd actually work more effectively.

We certainly have no shortage of areas in which we would conduct those kinds of investigations if we had resources to do it. And even with the one position, we will have no difficulty finding work for that position to do.

I mention that . . . And I'm not asking for additional resources for that purpose at this time. I don't believe it would appropriate to do so in the current climate. However I mention that only because I believe that the major investigations position is important.

I believe that those systemic reviews we do, in a broad sense, are probably more valuable and more effective to the government, to the legislators, and to the public in some senses than the individual complaints on which virtually all of our resources are focused.

And I mention it only because, as I mentioned earlier, that position will remain vacant in order to enable us to maintain the third position in Saskatoon in order to meet our obligations for the investigation of public complaints, unless that new position can be extended as part of our base budget.

In terms of alternative case resolution, as we have for the last six years, we have two positions: one in Saskatoon, one in Regina. Even after six years, or maybe especially after six years, it's still an evolving area in our office, one that we have no doubt was a wise move. It is helpful to complainants, to government, and in an indirect way to legislators. It is an effective way of resolving certain kinds of complaints. And we're asking for no additional resources to continue that work in the coming year.

In terms of public education and communications, at one time we had a public education/communications position three-quarter time. That position was lost; it was abolished three years ago when there was a budget shortfall.

Since that time we've continued public education work, but on an ad hoc basis. And I regret that it is becoming . . . we are doing less and less as the years go by, partly because other work requires the attention of staff, partly because we lack the expertise within the office to do the kind of work that we think is required.

I would ask the board, even in these difficult financial times, to seriously consider allowing us adequate funding to replace that position. We're falling farther and farther behind in terms of public education. We're expending a great deal of resources, an inordinate amount of resources, to do the public education work that we do because people who have other obligations and other work and lack the expertise are the ones who are doing it. It's, in dollars, perhaps effective. In terms of using the real resources and skills of our staff, it's not as effective.

The budget proposal, therefore, is divided into three parts. The first is what we've referred to as a status quo budget. This includes funding required to maintain all current positions and our unencumbered level of service.

There is an estimate included for personal services and for non-personal services. Those are not finite amounts. Those are estimates because we don't know at this time exactly what those amounts will be. We're confident that the estimates are fairly close to accurate. We've made similar estimates in past years and I think they have been accurate in every case.

The second part of our funding request sets out a request that would enable us to enhance the service we require, we offer.

And finally, part three involves a joint request and I'm not going to speak to that. We last year presented in the same manner. And I hope, this year, that I'll present the Ombudsman side of the budget. Dr. Parker-Loewen will present the advocate side. And then, together, we'll present the third part.

Therefore, in terms of status quo, we're requesting an increase of \$87,000, calculated by including an allowance to address increases in salaries that are anticipated July 1, 2004 for out-of-scope staff. That increase is expected to be about 1 per cent. In-scope staff, as of April 1, 2004, will be given a 1 per cent increase in salary.

We also project in-range increments for out-of-scope staff effective July 1, 2004 and we estimate that the total of those or project that the total of those will increase our budget by \$14,700.

As I've discussed, the sixth investigator position, being the third in the Saskatoon office, would be maintained annually, set an additional \$55,800 into our total budget.

And finally, we have an unanticipated expense in that a senior member of our support staff has been on sick leave for some months and is not anticipated to return before September 1. We have therefore been carrying the salary or paying the salary, in

effect, of that staff member twice; once to the staff member and once to the replacement. We have no allocation for these duplicate costs and would request the sum of \$12,200 in that regard.

There is a statutory expenditure of \$1,300 relating to a projected increase to my salary. And those together total \$87,000.

In terms of non-personal services, we're projecting a 1 per cent increase to the non-personnel related expenditures. That's \$3,000 and, I'm sorry, that's included in the \$87,000.

I have some concern, in regard especially to public education and also in regard to own motion and major investigations, that we are not meeting the legislated mandate. The Act which governs our office specifically speaks to our doing that work. We are not doing that work in a significant manner that I believe would meet what the legislators must have intended. Therefore I have included a piece which I have headed, meeting legislated requirements, and it's a sum of money which would be necessary to create a dedicated communications and public education position estimated at \$56,000.

If we are able to do that, there are other costs associated with it in the sense that there would be costs required for publications, reports, electronic work, and so on that that communications position might be involved in. We're asking for no additional funding to enable that but will, through budgeting carefully, reallocating from other places, find the work . . . I'm sorry, find the money to enable that work to go ahead. Despite two years of effort, we have not been able within existing, the existing allocation to reallocate funds to enable us to hire the kind of expertise though that the request is contemplating.

In total then, we're requesting a budgetary increase of \$82,700 for anticipated salary adjustments and the sick leave duplication payment. We're requesting an anticipated \$1,300 in statutory salary adjustment and 56,000 for what I've titled meeting legislated requirements. The total request then is \$1.378 million.

I'm sorry. I've missed something here. I'm sorry, and I've missed a fairly major chunk here — the non-personnel related expenses. The expenditure increase anticipated is the 1 per cent for administrative costs of \$3,000 which would be then \$329,000, bringing the total budget request for this year to \$1.707 million.

Those would be my comments and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: — Thank you very much for your comments, Ms. Tomkins, and at this time I would ask, turn to members if they have any comments or questions.

I recognize, the Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Ms. Tomkins, just moving back to page 8 in this presentation. Under A budgetary, the first paragraph there, the 14,700. Is that accommodating incremental increases that people are entitled to or is it only an assumed 1 per cent increase or is it both?

Ms. Tomkins: — It's the in-scope 1 per cent is negotiated and fixed — 1 per cent effective April 1, I believe. I'd say that's projected as well. I'm not positive, but I believe it's all projected.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay, but it's projected based on a 1 per cent increase. None of that amount includes incremental increases based on people moving within their scales, or is it both?

Ms. Tomkins: — The fourteen seven includes increments as well.

Mr. Hagel: — . . . includes increments. How much of the fourteen seven . . . Can you just break that down into the two for me then? How much is the 1 per cent assumed, and how much is incremental increase?

Ms. Tomkins: — I think we have that if you'll just give us a minute.

Mr. Hagel: — I'm sorry. Do we have that already? Oh okay, so I guess on page 9 there the 1 per cent is nine seven. Okay, that answers my question then, and then the incremental is 5,000. All right. Good.

Ms. Tomkins: — I should note though that the incremental is compulsory as well. We have some discretion in terms of the out-of-scope increment effective July 1 as to the percentage of that in some cases, but not as to whether or not it's given.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. I'd like to start by thanking the Ombudsman for her work over the many years that she has had the opportunity to serve the Assembly. I can say, as the former minister of Corrections and Public Safety, we did indeed welcome the very thorough and thoughtful report entitled *Locked out* that was I think very helpful in terms of us taking a look at what is happening in the correctional system. It speaks very well to what the work of the Ombudsman's office does do.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I want to ask a question that pertains to the fact that we have a relatively small office that operates out of two locations. What is the non-salary cost of operating a second office?

Ms. Tomkins: — Unfortunately I have a breakdown by salaries and by rent but not by office. But I can . . . The rental for the two offices annually is \$132,000 — and I would be estimating — but I would estimate that approximately one-third of that relates to the Saskatoon office.

In terms of other costs associated with the two offices, I'm not sure that there's a substantial differential, for the reason that our Saskatoon office shares space with the Children's Advocate office. So there's a sharing of office equipment, a cover-off for support staff, that sort of thing.

It's an interesting question. We've had the second office for over 25 years. Calculating without that office is not something

that we've probably done in 20 years.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would assume that if you were to consolidate to one office you would see, of course, an offset on the travel costs.

Ms. Sereda: — Absolutely.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes, absolutely we would. And in fact, I think if we were able to break it out, that the Saskatoon office's travel costs from Saskatoon are greater than the Regina office's travel costs. So I think that the offset would be disproportionate, if I can explain it that way.

The other possibility, which certainly isn't something that we're proposing at this time, is the opposite of I think the direction your questions are considering, which is some kind of a presence in the northern part of the province.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Concerning the position that is covered off with the sick leave, the long-term sick leave cover-off, I take it you have hired somebody on contract to fill in.

Ms. Tomkins: — We've hired somebody until August 31 to fill in and we expect by then to have a decision from the permanent staff member as to whether they will be able to come back or not. And at that point either that person will refill the position or we'll then advertise it as a permanent position. It's our only support position in Saskatoon, so it will definitely be filled.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'd like to welcome Ms. Tomkins and her staff here today.

On page no. 12 under capital assets, I noticed that again this year you have requested \$10,100 for capital assets. Yet when I look back at the 2002-2003, 2001-2002, 2000-2001, you've requested 9,000, 6,000, and 9,000, and yet those costs have been considerably more.

You have come in under budget overall, but the capital budgets have been considerably out of line compared to the requests. I wonder if you can explain that. And will this be a continuing trend?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes. First I might indicate that in the breakdown on page 12, the columns reference budget, that's our internal budget, our internal allocation of the global sum at the beginning of the fiscal year. It's not a sum that ever came before this board as a request for X thousand dollars for capital assets.

In any event, the major, quote, "overspending" in 2000-2001 related to our moving office in Saskatoon. And in 2002-2003, there was a major expenditure relating to . . . I think you may recall last year, we advised the board that we were in a relative crisis in regards to the hardware for both our office and the Children's Advocate office. And we were able to do the work regarding the new server during the last fiscal year and thereby alleviate the pressure for this fiscal year. And that's why the larger sum in '03-04.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So on page 10 then, under expenditure comparisons, code no. 6 for 2004-2005, that 10,000 is simply lumped in as part of your administration request. It isn't actually broke down as to . . . for our perusal for where the money is going to be spent?

Ms. Tomkins: — No, I . . . Or yes, I believe you're correct that no, it's not put there for your approval. It's basically saying, based on what we request, this is how as a starting point, we would apportion it. As with any operation, things will occur during the year — as last year when we had an expense from the employee being away that was an unbudgeted expense — and funds have to be found and reallocated from somewhere within that initial projected allocation. This is a starting point for us for our work for '04-05.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I do note that in all of the years involved that you have not gone over your budget but you've reallocated within your organization.

Ms. Tomkins: — I appreciate the thought, but I believe there's one year that we had a special warrant for \$11,000. But only one.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But only one.

On page 15 you have your . . . the director of communications listed in there as a point seven five position. You say that position was eliminated in 2001, that you would like to . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm sorry, on page 15 you're looking at the Children's Advocate organization which I . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, sorry.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think you'll find there is no communications position on ours, but we would dearly love to put one on there.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Yes, I was just going through the book with my notes so . . . I guess those are my questions.

The Chair: — There being no further questions then, I wish to thank Ms. Tomkins and her staff for attending here today and to mention as well, echo something that's been mentioned here today, is that the years of service that you have dedicated to this office certainly is recognized. And it's work that you do as an independent officer which requires tremendous dedication, and we've certainly seen that in the years that you have been here. And thank you very much for coming here today.

I recognize Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to join with Mr. Speaker in acknowledging Ms. Tomkins here, the excellence that you've demonstrated in the office. I remember a decade ago when you came to the office, and it doesn't seem all that long ago. But I know, having had contact with you over the years, that it's been an exercise in professional dedication. And I want to say thank you to you and wish you well in your career as you move to other positions or challenges in your professional career. Thank you.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you. In response, I would say it has been, and I say with absolute sincerity, an honour to serve in this position. I would also like to thank the members of this board. We haven't always agreed, probably haven't always been very happy with each other, but I've always been treated with courtesy and respect by this board and I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I would like to concur with my colleagues about the excellent job that you have done on behalf of the province in looking after the issues that come before the Ombudsman's office. And for our part we'd like to thank you as well.

The Chair: — Thank you. Then we will proceed to the next portion of item 5 and that is to ask the Children's Advocate to come to the table. I want to welcome you to the table, Ms. Parker-Loewen, and I would ask you if you would introduce your official.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I have with me today Bernie Rodier, who is our director of human resources and financial management in the Children's Advocate office. And when I don't know the answer, hopefully she will.

And good morning to all of you. It's always a pleasure to come before you and it's always my privilege to have this opportunity to present our budget request on behalf of the Children's Advocate office for your consideration.

I know you've reviewed the written submission that we provided to you and so therefore I'm just going to present a few key points by way of preface to your questions.

As you know, this office was created in November, 1994. This year we're going to celebrate our 10th anniversary so it's a pretty exciting year from the perspective of our office. It seems like just a short time ago that I was appointed Children's Advocate and it really is 10 years in November.

We have a very specific legislative authority as defined in The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act and we work to ensure that the interests and well-being of children are respected and valued, both in community and in government practice, policy, and legislation.

We have 13 full-time equivalent positions in our office. We're about 16 hard-working people right now and once again want to just say thank you to my staff for all the work that they continue to do.

We base our work on our strategic plan along with our legislation, and our budget request this year reflects our legislated responsibilities.

You get an annual report from us, and I'm not going to go into a lot of detail. Periodically we also produce other reports with findings and recommendations which we release either through tabling in the House or in some other manner in accordance with our legislation.

For example, in 2003-2004 the provincial youth delegation, which is a group of young people advisory to the Children's Advocate office, released a report on . . . called *Blueprints for Change* which included youths' opinions and ideas about the school system for secondary school students in Saskatchewan, and we were pretty excited about that.

We released a report on child death reviews that we had concluded and we're currently finalizing another report on mental health services for children which we'll be releasing within the next month or so.

Just very briefly, this budget, we've tried to present to you in a responsible manner, taking into account the economic situation of our province and we've really presented what we see as a status quo budget.

We anticipate that this request will allow us sufficient resources to complete the work that we have ahead of us, in a timely manner. We've done some revision to the child death review process in consultation with the departments affected and we're hoping to have that under control in the upcoming year.

We have utilized the funds we have available to us to do some of the modifications to the computer technology that Ms. Tomkins already spoke to you about. We completed the Baby Andy Review in 2003 and we also have done work on the mental health review without asking for additional resources.

So we have been working diligently to work within the funding available to us to complete some fairly major projects that — they've challenged us — but we've really struggled to do that in a responsible manner within the existing allocation.

So our 2004-2005 expenditures, both for the personal and non-personal services, are based on our assumptions of . . . that we believe. We're not requesting funds for any special projects or investigations. We know that there are going to be pressures in the upcoming year and we do want to do some kind of an anniversary celebration. But we're pretty hopeful that we can manage all of that within the request that we've put before you.

So with that, we've asked for status quo expenditures. We're anticipating, in terms of the budgetary portion, a 1 per cent cost-of-living adjustment to the salaries along with other salary-based items.

We've also requested funds to maintain one position at a point seven five level that we've . . . We've been funding that position. We have in our budget now, funds to fund it at half time, point five zero. And we've been utilizing funds from an extended leave of absence that we've had from one of our other employees to top up that position. And that is a person who we have assigned to do the ongoing child death review work. So right now we don't have those funds in our line budget and we are requesting those. So those personnel expenditures are a total of \$34,218.

We also have a statutory expenditure anticipated. And we last year received a one-time expenditure of \$63,000 to hire one full-time equivalent to help us with the child death review backlog, and we've reflected that on page 18 of the document that we presented to you. We have shown that as a . . . We had

received it. We realized it was a one-time expenditure and we recognize that . . . And we have made adjustments in this past year that we don't believe we require it on an ongoing basis. We think we can manage with the changes we've made to how we're going to conduct those child death reviews.

So with all of that we have . . . The overall effect, based on our last year's appropriation, is about a 3 per cent decrease over the 2003-2004 personnel services expenditure. In terms of the non-personal services, again we're anticipating approximately 1 per cent increase overall on the non-personal services expenditures, totalling about \$3,000.

So overall my request respectfully is that the Board recommend to the Legislative Assembly an appropriation of \$1,178,500 for '04-05 which represents an overall decrease of 2.36 per cent over our '03-04 appropriation. And of that there would be \$878,000 as personnel, of which \$129,000 are statutory and \$300,000 is non-personal services.

So with those remarks I'd welcome your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Now are there any comments or questions from the members of the Board? The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you. I guess I'll ask you the question I was going . . . I tried to ask the Ombudsman about the director of communications. You have a director of communications in place for .75 FTE (full-time equivalent). Would it be possible to share that director of communications with the Ombudsman's office? You know, I don't know how closely you work together in that sense. Would that be possible?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well, our legislative direction with regards to public education is somewhat different in the Act than the Ombudsman. Our Act says that we shall engage in public education respecting the interests and well-being of children. So we have in our Act a direction to do public education around children's issues, and we've taken that very seriously.

Our communications director is already very stretched in terms of the work that she does. We prepare, and this is very cost effective, but every report you see coming out of our office is prepared in-house, print ready by our communications director. So we do not hire that out. And at this point in time we're very stretched. And so legislatively, yes it's possible in terms of time and commitment. From my perspective, it's not something I'd be really keen to explore. And she's not . . . At this point in time .75 hours is also satisfactory to her.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What I was wondering, if it would be possible, if that was a full-time position, if it was shared with the Ombudsman?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well I think those arrangements would certainly be possible. I think in terms of that particular employee, I don't think that's something that would be her desire at this point in time. I don't want to speak for her.

The Chair: — Thank you. The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Dr. Parker-Loewen, thank you for your ongoing good work on behalf of vulnerable kids, particularly here in Saskatchewan.

When I look at your proposal on page, top of page 18, and I see the request related to continue — as I understand it — continue to extend the .5 advocate position to .75, with an implied cost of 15 . . . 15,552. Can you tell me what's the consequence of that not, that funding, that fifteen five, not being extended or not being approved, and therefore returning to the base of the half of a position instead of three-quarters.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right now in our office we have allocated 1.75 FTEs, 1.75 people, to do the child death review work. And so the implication for us of going to 1.5 is that it would just take longer. And we're already feeling really stretched. I'm trying to be as responsible as possible about that, but right now we're just about done the review of deaths from 2000, we're starting the 2001s, and we're in 2004.

So for me to reduce that again to .15 . . . 1.5 people, it just takes longer. So our reporting back becomes less impactful for the department, for the public, as we reduce resources in that area. So it's a choice and it has to do with balancing priorities.

At this point we've, you know, been able to utilize the one-time funding from last year to top up her salary and to also have another part-time person.

The issue with that particular kind of work is that it takes time to train the individual to do that. It's detailed work; it's complex work; it requires a certain knowledge base to prepare those kind of reports and do the work. So each time we change staff we get set back. So my guess with her is if we can't retain her at that level, we would be starting over again with another employee.

Mr. Hagel: — Are there any other alternatives to addressing the death review requirements? And I'm thinking specifically of criteria that are, that activate an inquiry. As I understand it, currently an inquiry is required — if I remember correctly — whenever a child passes away who has had any contact with the Department of Community Resource Employment including if they were in the daycare.

It would seem that it may be appropriate to look at a criteria where there would be some reason to be, to suspect that there was something that was not obvious or easily understood, but that as I understand it, you don't have the choice currently. Can you just explain that to me? Is there a way of addressing the child death review without jeopardizing the purpose for the child death review? That's really the question I want to ask.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we have done some of that, and thanks for your question. Because when we released the report that we did on the deaths in December 2003, we asked government to do a couple of things. One is that rather than looking at service to children through deaths, would government look at service to children through other quality assurance mechanisms? And the Minister Crofford has agreed to provide publicly the results of the quality assurance reviews.

So based on that we now have an agreement with the department, and we've also agreed to backdate this to the 2000

reports. So the Children's Advocate is now going to only review those deaths where the child was actually in care at the time of the death or in custody at the time of the death; or where the department itself has identified the need for an external review because they're uncomfortable with some aspect of it; or where a member of the public has raised an issue or a complaint. And that we now have about a third of the number to review that we would have, that would have been sitting here had we not come to that agreement with the department.

I believe this meets our criteria of public accountability because even though some of those deaths of children in care were perhaps expected deaths of medically fragile children, we believe that the public wants to know that someone outside of the government as parent is looking at the deaths. So even though often we find that the government has provided excellent care to those children, we think that we still need to see those files just from the perspective of public accountability.

But in terms of the service delivery questions that continue to come up, we're asking that that gets looked at in terms of good practice for children who are in the service system now, not necessarily who have died. So we don't think death is the best way of looking at service delivery. And it's too long. At the best scenario we're going to be looking at deaths that were two years old, just because it takes a long time for the pathology reports, the coroner's report, any legal matters to get cleared up. So it's not a good window.

So I think, in terms of your question, I think we've already addressed those issues. We've got a new policy agreement with the department, actually with two departments — Corrections and Public Safety and Community Resources and Employment — and we're satisfied that with our existing resources, that we can manage. We're not on top of it yet but I'm pretty confident that within this year we will be, with that agreement and with the agreement to kind of backdate, if you will, and begin that process from the 2000 deaths forward. It's not ideal but, you know, our other call to government in December was that there should be an educated eye on all child deaths.

And we're working now with a multidisciplinary group headed by Saskatchewan Health to look at how we could have some kind of eye on all deaths, possibly phased in, because about half of child deaths in Saskatchewan are children under the age of one. Some of those deaths could be looked at differently through a medical review or something like that. So we're actually, with the Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, hosting a discussion forum in March to try to sort that out and get a better recommendation to Saskatchewan Health about how an educated eye could go onto all of the deaths, not just those children who happen to die and are also receiving services from Community Resources and Employment or Corrections and Public Safety.

So no, in terms of the day care deaths, unless we got a complaint, we wouldn't be looking at them now. There haven't been any, by the way.

Mr. Hagel: — I just want to commend you and your office for looking responsibly at the issue and working to make the best use of the resources you have available, in the most timely,

useful way possible, to undertake reviews that I think we all want to see to have the comfort about the appropriateness of legislated care for vulnerable kids in the province. So I thank you for assuming some significant initiative in that regard.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It's been an interesting discussion to come to different changes in policy while also not losing the public accountability part that's so important to all of us.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My questions relate to how these two offices fit together, how the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman's office work at a functional level. Now I understand from the Ombudsman that there is a sharing of office space. Is there . . . And I see from your report that you share a general counsel. My question is, are there other opportunities to share resources, recognizing that the prime objective of these two offices is obviously investigative services and advocacy?

I note that as the Children's Advocate office has come into being over the last 10 years that for every two advocates, we've added one administrative position. The question I have is whether there is an opportunity here for additional saving. And I was hoping you could share with the committee some of your views on why, for an office of 12.1 people, we need a separate and discrete human resource and financial officer when there is already one in the Ombudsman's office; why we need an additional 2.6 administrative support when we already have these positions established in the Ombudsman's office. Could you maybe share with the committee some of your thoughts as to whether or where there would be additional opportunity for sharing of resources?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well I think that's a useful question and one that the Ombudsman and I talk about every now and then. I think it's really important from my perspective to consider how the Children's Advocate office became . . . came into being. There was a large public consultation and there was a lot of public pressure to create a separate and independent officer of the legislature who would report to the legislature on issues regarding children, particularly children who received service from government. And I think at the time when our office was created, there were a number of models explored, including creating a sort of deputy Ombudsman for children office within the existing Ombudsman's office. And there were a range of ideas explored ten years ago.

The decision was, after that public consultation, to appoint a separate officer who reported directly to you with regards to issues regarding children and who wasn't going to be sort of imbedded into the Ombudsman process specifically.

In addition though, I think there was a desire to have some joint administrative accommodation and so that's how we've built up, is by sharing office space, sharing some other resources.

Are there opportunities? There may be. But from my perspective, the staff that I have currently working with me are all fully employed and working very hard on the strategic plan

and the goals at the office as we have envisioned them right now. The administrative staff I have are very involved in, for example, the public education work that we do, the outreach work that we do.

Each year in my office, we do over 100 public presentations a year. We release a number of reports. We do two annual mailouts. This past year, we visited every regional office of the Department of Community Resources and Employment and Corrections and Public Safety, every facility. We go to all of the group homes. So we're very busy and the administrative staff are very busy managing all of that for the front-line advocate staff.

So there may be opportunities but, right now, we feel stretched. We feel that we're accommodating a number of demands on our office within the resources that we have allocated to us. And there's lots of people doing many multi-tasking activities. Where we have been able to share funds and responsibilities, we have done that. But there are also some divisions and separateness that we've maintained.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As we on the executive government side have attempted to deal with streamlining and restructuring, we have looked primarily at the area of shared services. Those usually focus in two areas. One, where we can share human resource experts and administration function. And secondly, where we can share communications services.

As I look at the overall structure of the Legislative Assembly and its officers, I do wonder why we have set up . . . every time we have set up a new office, we set up a new infrastructure with it rather than borrowing the expertise which is clearly already in-house in the legislature's operations.

Is it my understanding then that we have two separate people filling these FTEs for the human resource and financial administrator, that there is one for the Children's Advocate of an office of 12 people and there is one for the 18-person Office of the Ombudsman?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes, that's true. And I don't want to speak for the Ombudsman but we both also utilize the support of the Legislative Assembly Office daily and we can't operate without them; all of our financial work goes through the Legislative Assembly Office and we consult with them on human resources questions, that kind of thing as well. So we utilize them as our backup because we only have one person in each office doing that work. It's not that we have a team of people, it's that we have a person who does that work in consultation with the Legislative Assembly Office staff.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — So perhaps then I'm not understanding clearly what this person does. Could you maybe articulate for me. Is this a payroll clerk, is this a . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well in my office it's Bernie who is sitting right here beside me and she is a part of our senior management team. She's a part of the strategic planning in our office and she also does do a lot of the work. It's a full-service job; when you're only one person, you do everything. She does everything from troubleshooting at the front end with a computer problem to assisting with reviews of performance

appraisals and job descriptions and any performance problems we may encounter, although they're quite rare in our office.

So all of those things in terms of human resources and financial management all get vetted through her as a member of our management team, and she's the only one in the office who does any of that work.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — And there is no opportunity to share these resources between the two offices like you share the general counsel function?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well the Children's Advocate involvement with the general counsel is one or two days a month and we ask him very specific questions. He's not a part of our management team; he's not a part of our day-to-day operations. We ask him very specific legal questions and he does sit with us to review the child death reports, but other than that, his involvement with us is fairly minimal.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I guess I could have asked the same question of the Ombudsman when she appeared before us regarding the director of communications as to why we couldn't seek a sharing of resources there or a sharing of the human resource function. But in terms of communication, would there be a reason why we need to staff — it's a request — 1.75 communications people for an office of 30.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I just want to come back to the legislation for the Children's Advocate which clearly states that one of our key four functions is public education respecting the interests and well-being of children. This isn't a communications position in a traditional sense, not in the Children's Advocate office.

Part of our job, part of what the legislation has asked us to do, is speak publicly about issues regarding children. That means that her job is to do research on those issues, to prepare the materials, and to get information out to the public, including to children.

In this past year, we put together a child part on our Web site. We've done a number of mailouts to young people. We've put together a number of reports. We bring young people together for focus groups. And all of that is a key part of our role which we see as a part of our legislative authority.

So we're not only communicating about our decisions or our work in that way. It's not . . . It is a public education and communications position in our office.

The Chair: — Excuse me. I just want to invite Ms. Tomkins to the table as well because these questions may require answers from both advocates. Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — That's fine. I would defer to the Ombudsman, if she wanted to comment on it.

Ms. Tomkins: — I just wanted to comment that this is . . . There are distinctions of various sorts between what my office does and what the advocate does. As you alluded in your comments, ours is an ombudsman's office. Dr. Parker-Loewen's is an advocate's office. There's a difference in

the way we work, the purposes of our work. One of the similarities is that we work by persuasion, publicly and privately.

When I alluded earlier to our dearth of communications and public education work, which I believe is an essential piece of achieving what we do, we would like to do a mailout or two a year. We would like to publish public reports. We would like to do a lot of things and I believe we should. But I certainly don't want to do it at the expense of the Children's Advocate.

As things currently sit, we do virtually none of those things. But I will not secure them at the expense of the Children's Advocate being able to achieve its mandate. And in that sense, I don't think there is a great deal of room for sharing of communication resources.

These are in a sense communication-driven offices and I appreciate you and the Speaker allowing me to speak to this at this point because I'm becoming disturbed by the direction that the question is taking because I don't . . . These are offices that exist side by side doing different things co-operatively, not competitively.

And I hear a possibility of one being harmed at the expense of the other and I think, in our smallish offices, that would be a very difficult thing to manage — I'm sorry, to manage.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well I'm a big believer that government is here to carry out good works on behalf of the people through all of its function. And of course what we deal with now is a trade-off between where the resources are. I know that as we dealt with the amalgamation of Corrections and Public Safety out of four different divisions, we continued to use the shared services of the Department of Justice to carry out its function.

The question I have — and I will address it later in the Legislative Assembly estimates — is, have we looked at establishing greater efficiency in the human resource and financial administration side that would allow us to free up resources, or not have to pare back resources that are otherwise dealing with the investigative or advocacy services of the two offices? For 30 people we have now, I see, two human resource and financial administrators. Have we looked at that question?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we haven't. At this point in time for the most part we are functioning as two separate statutory officers of the Assembly, and our legislation provides that we each appoint our own staff, that our staff report to us, and that we have responsibilities in our legislation separately. While we have one piece of legislation, we are two officers.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's interesting that historically when the legislation was amended to create the Children's Advocate office it always provided two statutory or two legislative officers, each administering their own programs, each with their own staff and so on.

But it included at the outset a provision relating in effect to the joint administration of an office. An amendment four years ago, was it . . . anyway, an amendment about four years ago removed that. There is now statutorily no link between the

offices other than that we share the statute, and in terms of the differences in what we do, which I don't think is well understood, we refer to ourselves as roommates and this is what we are. There is virtually no connection between what the Ombudsman office does and what the advocate's office does, and frankly very little similarity between what the Ombudsman's office does and the advocate's office does. And I don't think most people understand that.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It should be very clear, Mr. Chairman, that I'm not speaking to an amalgamation of the advocate and the Ombudsman position. Nor am I suggesting that the investigators in the Ombudsman office would take up children advocacy work.

What I would appreciate hearing, though, is an articulation as to how fundamentally different the human resource and financial administrator position is in the advocate's office versus the human resource and financial administrator position in the Ombudsman's office, and why we cannot seek a shared services model.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I think, I think . . . no I think you've made an important observation and I think that their jobs are virtually the same . . .

A Member: — They are.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — . . . except that in my office this individual reports to me, and in the Ombudsman's office reports to the Ombudsman. But, you know, I think it's a fair observation and it's one that we haven't really explored.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes I think that's a fair observation about those two positions. But I also would echo what Deb said. Both of those positions are working full-time and have no shortage of work. So I'm not sure it's a simple amalgamating, if we were to do it, is going to achieve any financial efficiencies in any event . . . those two positions

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — This is the difficult conundrum we're in with government is that obviously all the people who are employed are fully employed. The question is how we balance that out with our ability to afford the work that we do.

And as this is in large part where I am asking about the shared services. I don't think I need to belabour the question. If we haven't looked at the shared services model in the two offices, then there's probably not much more sense in pursuing it. Although I do think, as we take a look at other operations, particularly as we move into the Legislative Assembly Office, we should think more about how we deal with shared services.

This is a model government itself is moving into, and I see no reason for the Legislative Assembly to be exempt from that approach. Indeed I think it has great merit. So I will leave my questions at this point and I appreciate the response of both the Ombudsman and the advocate.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I had an question that I had

intended to ask the Ombudsman as well, but I think you may be in the position to answer it.

Both yourself, Dr. Parker-Loewen, and the Ombudsman have used the term, in the current climate or the current fiscal situation. I wonder if you can describe what you mean by that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well from the information that every Saskatchewan citizen has available to them in the public, it would appear that we're not moving into a climate where there's going to be an excess in public funds. And so it's in my understanding of the, of the need to be respectful and responsible that we're not undertaking new initiatives in our office. We're not requesting to have large new funds for projects that we would, and have presented to you in the past, think would be important to fulfill our broad mandate.

For example, we're not asking you for funds this year for expansion into northern Saskatchewan where there's huge issues regarding children and youth. And I believe, you know, and if I thought that there was an opportunity for that I would be putting that forward. I just don't think at this point, in what I understand to be our fiscal climate, which is quite limited in what's available to the public, that it would be responsible for me to put that forward to you, so I haven't.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So the information that you are using, this reference to is simply the public information through the media outlets that you have heard in the last little while, is that correct?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's correct. And listening and looking at the financial statements that have been made public, anything that any citizen in Saskatchewan could get. We don't have access to anything different.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The comments that were made here last fall prior to the November election seemed to indicate that the financial position of the province was strong, that there was room to do various and sundry items. There was money available for different programs. I can think of a \$5 million program in Regina here for an indoor soccer stadium. So do . . . from your interpretation that situation has changed now in the public information that monies are no longer available for programming?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'm putting my budget to you with the information I have today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much, Ms. Parker-Loewen, for attending here and as our witness from the person responsible for the Children's Advocate office. And thank you very much as well, Ms. Rodier, for attending. We'll be voting these later today, I believe, some time later today.

Oh, pardon me. I understand that there is a phase 2 request here that has not been presented yet and that's a joint request, is it?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's right.

The Chair: — Let's proceed with that then and we invite Ms.

Tomkins back to the table. And who is going to lead here?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It's going to be me. As we presented to you last year, those of you that are still here from the board last year, we do jointly manage our information technology. And our information management resources is a joint . . . jointly funded and jointly managed responsibility between the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate office. And we, for example, share a computer server and that kind of thing.

We do try to pool our resources and have joint problem solving when new issues arise about our information technology. And we're continually challenged with a computer system that is quite dated and an information management system that hasn't been refreshed or changed for 10 years.

In fact the Children's Advocate portion of the information management system is one that was developed by the Ombudsman and adapted when I was appointed 10 years ago, and we're just still piggybacking on this old information management system that was created specifically for the Ombudsman. So we never did spend money to create our own. We included as part of our budget a joint request for specific funds to rectify this ongoing problem.

Last year we identified the pressures, and we outlined how we were going to deal with those. Because of the funding decision you made, we had to proceed with a minimal level of information technology change. And we — as you saw in our budget — we undertook to realign some of our year-end resources to do that, and we managed that.

We also undertook a needs assessment with regards to the information management portion of the work because this continues to be a significant problem to us. We tendered and completed a detailed information management system needs assessment, a copy of which we could make available to you if you're interested. But in summary, we are putting forward to you a request for funds, one-time implementation costs for us to undertake this information management project.

We're continuing to manage with our current information management system. But we have ongoing, very serious problems on a weekly basis, sometimes are costly because we have to bring in consultants who help us patch it over. We're now working with a system — and I'm not a computer expert — but we're working with a system where the support to the system is now outdated because the system itself is so old. And we're having trouble getting support to the system.

We recognize the request adds an additional pressure, but we are requesting this based on our interest to proactively deal with this problem. So therefore we're respectfully requesting funds to implement this phase of our information management project in the total of \$199,000 which we would divide between the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate office. The Ombudsman has typically been paying 60 per cent of the funds, and our office 40 just based on our resource allocation.

So I don't know if the Ombudsman has anything else she wants to add, but with that we'd welcome your questions on this particular portion of our budget request.

Ms. Tomkins: — I would like to add just one thing, that prior to undertaking this work — the needs assessment or the assessment that Dr. Parker-Loewen referred to — we did have an assessment of the software itself done which was a piece of what was submitted last year, and are advised that the software is failing, will continue to fail. Even with the ongoing patching that we're doing, it cannot be brought back to what it was or should be.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Your current system, software system, is it a custom application?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So it's one that was built specifically for your services, and it's not a commercial, off-the-shelf application.

Ms. Tomkins: — The one we have was built for us at what was surprisingly low cost, and now amazingly low cost when we look at what custom is now. But yes, it was custom built for the Ombudsman's office as Dr. Parker-Loewen alluded. And then when the Children's Advocate office was created, a few relatively minor modifications were made. And that runs as a separate . . . runs off the same server but, for example, when I look at my computer in the morning, I can't look at advocate's files, and the advocate staff can't look at Ombudsman files. The proposed IM (information management) solution is a shelf system modified.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Well if you get a commercial, off-the-shelf system you can build your application on it. But then it's not a problem of getting customer service. It's just how it's applied in your particular cases.

I think that would be . . . It's been my experience that if you have a custom package you would eventually run into trouble whenever the person who built it for you leaves and then there's nobody left to fix it.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And that's sort of where we are now. It's 10 years old. It was a custom package, and it's getting increasingly difficult to get any kind of repair work or updated work done on it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Your \$20,000 cost package for 35 users, that would be for the commercial package for each work station. Licensing, I see, would be perhaps separate to that, would it?

Ms. Rodier: — That's actually the cost of the software, so for the initial 35 users to get up and running, so it's a software cost.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So what I was wondering, there's no hardware cost built into this at all.

Ms. Rodier: — No. No, there isn't.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So your current hardware system will handle the application.

Ms. Rodier: — That's right. When we did the upgrade at the end of last fiscal year and went . . . (inaudible) . . . with that, it was done with the intention if we upgraded this system, it would facilitate that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The cost of consultants at 110,000 is the major cost in this program if it was to be implemented. What are these consultant costs? How do they break down? And I guess at the end of the day, would they all be necessary?

Ms. Rodier: — Well I guess one of the issues we've had ongoingly is we don't have any expertise in-house for IT (information technology) or IM, so we rely heavily on consultants, and this would rely on getting outside consultants to help us bring this right to production.

And this is based on the recommendation from the needs assessment. This was a third party consultant that did the needs assessment and based it on previous implementations in other jurisdictions. This is actually coming out of the British Columbia model. So that was their best guess.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, the cost of a consultant is always a major item in these kind of things and one that really needs to be worked on as much as possible to minimize it.

Now the changes, if this change takes place, you say your old program you're losing information. You're losing data. In what is it . . . in what sense are you losing it that you simply can't retrieve it, but it's still there? Or is the data gone off of your servers?

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't know if it's technically gone. The consultants refer to the system will crash, and I'm also not a computer person in asking what that means.

I was advised that it won't crash in the sense that one day you turn it on and it doesn't work. What crashing is, is what we're already seeing . . . is you ask it to print a report of how many of something you've had, or breaking in my case complaints into certain categories, and the information it gives you is not correct. I don't know that anything — and again, I'm not an expert — but I don't know that anything is lost. I gather what's happening is that things are not being compiled. We're in recently completed statistics for 2003 for annual report purposes, and to a person whose skills don't go much past arithmetic it's clear that things don't add up. And that's an indication of apparently not just the beginning but well into the failure of the system.

And what the crashing is, is it's becoming increasingly unreliable in the literal sense that when it prints you reports, numbers, or calculations or statistics, you cannot be confident that they are correct. And in fact as time goes by, you become less and less confident until we'll reach a point where we're certain they're not correct. And they'll get more uncorrect as time goes by.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, your system is becoming corrupted is . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — That's probably a better word.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Are there any other comments or questions? I recognize Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Yes, I have a number of questions. Dealing with the costs of lost productivity and cost of training staff, is that an assumption then that you would replace people? Or why is that an additional cost?

Ms. Rodier: — The way that the consultants had, you know, advised on these costs would be yes, exactly that. I mean if you had to pull somebody off their desk to, you know, work on the project for a while, that would be lost productivity to that individual for that particular period of time. Or once the system is being put in place and the other, the existing system may have to be put aside for a while. I mean there's some time lapse there in terms of productivity.

So you know, they base that on their previous experience in implementing similar systems and . . .

Mr. Yates: — My question is, would you replace those people? Is that your intention, to replace those people for that cost? Or else it's not really a cost.

Ms. Rodier: — Correct. Yes. I mean we would replace it, for example, if it was our front-line intake person . . . had to be pulled off and just help facilitate a part of the process. I mean we would need somebody to answer that phone. So that calculation was put in there.

Or if it was a front-line administrative assistant person, you know, they would have to be backfilled because the phone would have to be answered. I mean it's something we could work around. But this was their probably best guess, most robust answer to our question, what would that look like, I mean, you know, what should we plan for.

Mr. Yates: — So those are costs that are difficult to say today are going to be actual costs because you don't know whether or not somebody would be away from their desk for a prolonged period of time or whether or not staff within the office, because of the shortness of the time, could in fact cover off? So they're . . . At this point we're not sure whether they're going to be real costs. Would that be fair?

Ms. Rodier: — In fact I would say that under the design and implementation costs, those first three — the cost of training staff and the loss of productivity, the next two — are somewhat unknown. And what the consultant gave us for numbers would have been sort of the, I suspect, a generous idea of what it could cost us.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. My next question has to do with the cost of consultants in general. Have you explored the idea of one of the . . . for the Legislative Assembly or perhaps a government department providing those services of modification for you? Or have you looked only at services being provided by third party, outside consultants?

Ms. Rodier: — Well when we put the number down — and the number's pulled right out of the needs assessment report — that

was projecting someone being an implementation partner, so a third party. I mean the way they framed it to us, whether it was the Legislative Assembly to help us do it or whether we were to third-party it, it was going to cost about that to somebody. I mean if we pulled somebody from Legislative Assembly to help us really bring this to production stage, potentially they would have to backfill for that person. So somebody would have to realize a cost I think . . . is how they presented it to us. So that's how they came up with that number.

Mr. Yates: — All right. My final question has to do with the cost of ongoing support. My final question has to do with the cost of ongoing system support. Has . . . When you looked at that cost, did you look at all with the Legislative Assembly and its IT division here supplying that support?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We already receive quite a lot of support from the Legislative Assembly Office. We have some money in our budgets already for ongoing support, and we've explored that with the Legislative Assembly Office on . . . and that. And we haven't asked for funds here for ongoing support because we already feel that we have funds in our existing budget to manage that.

Mr. Yates: — So you're not asking for the \$8,000.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Sorry, I misunderstood. The funds we have is to support the ongoing support, but this 8,000 was in addition.

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

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Yates. The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the idea of utilizing IT services from either the Legislative Assembly or another government agency, if I look at other budgets and see that other government agencies charge, you know . . . SPMC for example charges all government, other government agencies for the services they provide, rents, all those sorts of things. So would you anticipate that if you were to get services from another agency — say the office for information technology — that they would be charging you a fee as well, sort of along the line that SPMC currently charges you for rent for a government office?

Ms. Tomkins: — I believe we spoke to the office of information technology and this isn't the kind of thing they do. So sharing with an office like that wouldn't be a possibility. On the other hand, on the other hand, the work that's involved that we're referring to in here for the consults is the modification of the shelf package to specifically suit our needs — the implementation, the training, consultation with our staffs in various positions who use the system, and so on. This isn't a few hours here and there, this is months of somebody's time.

So yes, I certainly imagine if we asked one of, for example, the Legislative Assembly's IT people to do this for us, then the Legislative Assembly's going to be missing an IT person for three or four or six months. And they're either going to want us to pay for the backfill. . . but someone's going to have to pay for it at one end or the other. If it were simply a matter of

saying, could we borrow someone for 15 minutes once a week, it would be different. But this is a significant piece of work.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So basically, the question then comes down to if another department was to pass their cost on to you for supporting you in IT, the question would come down to then where would the most efficient use of your dollars be, whether it would be utilizing another . . . an IT person from another department, or whether it would be utilizing someone third party from outside. It's not really a question then that if you utilized someone from within a department there would be no cost to you. It's simply a matter of where the most efficient cost would be. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think the question that we're trying to get around is not so much whether there would be a billing back and forth. The question is, are we able to accomplish this without incurring the \$110,000 worth of consultant cost? Is there another way to deal with this? Are there departments already seeking these kinds of changes? My understanding is DCRE (Department of Community Resources and Development) is looking at a change in terms of their internal systems to deal with many of the same problems. Have we explored those options, as to whether we can piggyback on that kind of a system, or are there inherent reasons that we would want to keep those systems separate?

Ms. Tomkins: — Do I misunderstand . . . Are we asking whether we could piggyback on to the DCRE system to then create a system that would be workable for us, or are we talking what the consultant that we hired last year for us was assessed existing systems, shelf systems, customs systems and so on, what might work. I don't know that we could say which. He didn't obviously look at every developed computer system that there was, but certainly concluded that for financial and effectiveness reasons that a shelf system, modified to suit our needs, was financially the best way to go. I'm not sure what the similarities between the DCRE system and ours might be.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I don't know.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I don't know. We had a conversation with individuals in the IT office. They thought that this proposal is reasonable and straightforward, meets our needs, that they didn't have suggestions like that to offer to us at this point in time. So . . . And we did consult with them, so if there are other options or ideas, we would rely on their expertise to give us that advice.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And the consultants that we hired did consult with the government people at the IT office about this as well. So part of our advice has come from government.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It is my experience as Minister Responsible for IT, that if you ask consultants whether you need to consult, the answer is going to come back, yes.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. Well, we don't have in our shop anyone who can do this work. So one way or another someone is going to have to do it for us. And one way or another we are going to have to pay for it.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — That's my own understanding as minister of IT.

Ms. Tomkins: — We are also aware that we opened . . . that there is that risk, but we have no one else to ask. That we've consulted the IT office, and they've certainly provided advice, but they don't provide the service that we need beyond suggesting we get a consultant to do it.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. And I just want to mention that it's as important, I think for this committee to understand, that you are advocating for your office in the same way that you advocate for the people who you serve through your office and we expect that to happen at this table. So thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Now members of the Assembly I believe what we have here is a time of a quarter after twelve and we have next independent officer, I believe, being available at 1. Should we set . . . come back at quarter after 1 or 1? Or what time do we . . . 1 o'clock? And now . . . so we'll resume at 1 o'clock.

And we do have some lunch available here and I would ask and invite the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate and their staffs to stay and have a sandwich with us. And then we will then be adjourned until 1 p.m.

Mr. Hagel: — And do item 6 or item 7?

The Chair: — Now my suggestion would be that we proceed with item 7 first in order to accommodate personnel coming in, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And then proceed to Item 6 and then back to 8.

Thank you.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Well good afternoon, everyone. I believe we are now ready to proceed with item 7, the review of the 2004-2005 budget of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, which has been distributed previously. And then once we're done that item, we'll revert back to item 6 regarding the recruitment process for Ombudsman and Chief Electoral Officer.

So it's my pleasure at this time to welcome Gary Dickson, who is serving as the commissioner for newly expanded Saskatchewan information and privacy office. And with him is Pam Scott, who many of you will recognize from . . . in her new position from previous position as Journals clerk in the Legislative Assembly. So welcome to both. And, Gary, I ask you to make your presentation.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Mr. Dickson: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, members. I'm delighted to appear in front of you this afternoon as the new Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner and to be able to tell you a little bit about our budget request for 2004-2005 and about the plans we have for the office.

Pam's already been introduced. I might just start, if I could, Mr. Speaker, and formally acknowledge and thank my predecessor, Richard Rendek, who has just been invaluable in terms of us getting the office up and staffed. He found the office location for us, has provided a great deal of continuing advice since I started November 1. And I think we wouldn't have been able to accomplish those things we have done had it not been for his assistance.

And I might also just acknowledge the terrific support we've received from the Legislative Assembly Office. We've been able to piggyback on their human resources section, on their information technology section. And I'd hate to think what sort of costs we'd be looking at if we had to go out and find some of those resources independently in the market. So in any event, we're grateful for that support.

I might say that the mission of our office, I might describe it simply as this: it's to ensure that the people of this province receive the full measure of the information rights that they're guaranteed by three different provincial statutes: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act that I'll refer to simply as FOIP because it'll take less time; the local authority FOIP Act; and the third one is the new health information protection Act.

And our office, when all is said and done, is responsible for providing oversight of those three legislative instruments.

The challenge our office has is influenced by actually a number of major factors over which we really have no control but it's important, I think, you know this context.

The first one is The Health Information Protection Act. September 1 of last year we became only the third province in Canada that has a stand-alone health information law. Manitoba's had one for five years and Alberta for three. And what we found in those other provinces is this is a tricky, complex, challenging piece of legislation. I fully expect that anywhere from 40 to 60 per cent of my time and our office resources are going to be spent assisting health information trustees — and there are thousands of them — getting up to it to be compliant with what that legislation requires in assisting patients and individuals with access requests.

The second development which is . . . has a big impact on our office is the federal law, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act — not to bury you under acronyms, but I just refer to this as PIPEDA. And you probably know already that January 1 of this year the scope of PIPEDA has been dramatically expanded so it now captures almost all businesses in the province, and that's everybody from your dry cleaner to the video store to the local grocer. All of those people are subject to that. And what we're finding is a lot of businesses

and a lot of organizations in the province are needing help figuring out whether that law applies to them or whether they're under provincial legislation and what the interface is and, in any event, that's a major part of the context that we're dealing with.

The third item is the Deloitte Touche privacy assessment that's now a year old. You recall that Deloitte Touche did an analysis of the 17 provincial departments and determined there were a lot of areas where work had to be done in terms of ensuring a higher level of compliance with legislative requirements so that's part of the background too.

And then the last thing is just . . . There has been an explosion as you'll all appreciate in new technologies and — whether it's video surveillance or different kinds of information technologies — there's an expectation that our office can provide some advice and support to, whether it's public bodies or local authorities, in terms of wrestling with those things.

The legislative mandate, there are really four elements to it. The first one is that we investigate breach-of-privacy complaints that come to our attention and try and resolve them.

The second thing we do is that people are denied access to records. They can ask our office to review the records and their request to determine whether the legislation's been properly applied.

The third thing we can do, are mandated to do, is offer advice to you folks and the Assembly, as well as health trustees and local authorities on privacy implications of programs, legislation, and that sort of thing.

And then the fourth part of our mandate is public education. And this is something that my predecessors — all, I think, brave people — worked very hard in meeting the mandate but didn't have the time or the resources to do any of the public education work that's routine in most other provinces.

The specific initiatives that we've been undertaking, I'll just highlight them because these were commitments I made to the selection panel that interviewed me last August. The first one was we've set up a Web site which is hosted by the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office), which is a way of providing information to people — no matter how far they live from Regina — on best practices accessing the statutes, finding out rulings, decisions, recommendations our office makes in the course of our work. And we're thinking that will be a useful way for people to be able to find out more about information rights.

We've produced an e-newsletter on a monthly basis called the *Saskatchewan FOIP Folio* and we now have over 700 subscribers, and some of those are health trustees, many are working in provincial government departments, institutions, also in local authorities, that also includes all MLA constituency offices. And so hopefully your offices have found that e-newsletter of some value.

The third thing we've done is we've developed a thing called a privacy impact assessment. This is a self-diagnostic tool so that if, for example, Sask Health was going to roll out a new program that was going to impact privacy/confidentiality,

they'd be able to go through this 113 question questionnaire and it would sort of require them to address the key issues to make sure they're meeting the privacy requirements of the legislation in the province.

The last thing I'd just say in terms of initiative is the focus on public education. And we will have done, I think by the end of this month, a little over 30 presentations to groups and organizations around the province in different communities about what this legislation's all about and how to sort out which law applies to what kind of activity. And that's been a big focus.

In terms of the budget itself you will see a 35 per cent increase over the dollars voted last year. The reason for it is this: I've described it as a status quo budget, not status quo in terms of the numbers but status quo in terms of the size of our office.

When Mr. Rendek was in front of you a year ago, the plan that was laid out then was that there be an office with a full-time commissioner and two full-time staff. And the budget that I'm putting in front of you now also contemplates the same configuration, a full-time commissioner and two staff. Last year the expectation was that my position wouldn't be filled until somewhere between November and December, and of course then the dollars were reduced to reflect you weren't going to have . . . it wouldn't be staffed up for the full year.

Now looking forward, 2004-2005 we're still going to have three people but obviously for a full 12 months. That's the biggest single difference. You will notice we've provided for a point seven five, which is additional. I want to be clear. That wasn't discussed at all with the committee a year ago.

But our view is this, that we're going to be challenged to meet the mandate. And in terms of somebody being away on vacation, that sort of time we thought it was useful to be able to bring in part-time help. We have been bringing in some part-time help to, just to meet the load we've got.

And I might just, I might just say in that respect, Mr. D'Autremont, I notice a year ago, had asked how our office stacks up against other offices. And I might just mention that there's only two other provinces that have this health information law which, as I say, is going to be a big part of our mandate. Alberta, 32 people and \$4 million to do the same work. Manitoba though I think is closer; they've got about 1.2 million people and their budget allows 12 people in the information and privacy unit in the Ombudsman's office and they have a budget a little over \$1 million. So that's sort of the closest we would have to our situation here. Other Canadian provinces have the FOIP type legislation, but not the health information component.

Major difference in personal services, there are decreases in contractual service, advertising, and equipment. The travel is significantly up and the reason for that is what I'd undertaken to the selection committee, was it's important that we get out of Regina as much as possible. And so we're budgeting to have a number of trips to parts of the province on a monthly basis to be able to meet with trustees and local authorities and encourage and support them in terms of legislative compliance.

So I could natter on, but I know you have a busy agenda this afternoon and maybe better that I respond to questions, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Dickson. So we are open now for comments and questions. I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well hello, and welcome.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much.

Mr. D'Autremont: — It's the first time you've been before this committee and I think you carry out an important function in providing access to information for both legislators and the public at large. The protection of privacy is very important. We've seen in the past where computer hard drives have disappeared with information on that may have shown up some place inappropriately, and I think it's very important that that not happen.

Also changes that have happened with the federal legislation dealing with privacy are going to be very important, are going to be affecting everyone who deals with personal information, and that includes MLA offices. We need to be able to ensure that the information we have about citizens, who may have contacted us for whatever reason, that that information is protected as well. And I think your job will be to help us make sure that we are dealing with that properly.

I do have one question though dealing with page 4, and it goes to the classifications of personnel. You have commissioner, assistant to the commissioner, and office manager. And that is in the middle of the page. Then on the next sentence it says, under the Public Service Commission, the assistant commissioner. Is that a typo or is that a change in the role and what does that mean?

Mr. Dickson: — Your sharp eye has caught something my eye hadn't noticed before. It's supposed to be assistant to the commissioner. It's misdescribed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, so that isn't actually assistant commissioner, it's the assistant to the commissioner.

Mr. Dickson: — Right. And I should say, I think when Mr. Rendek was in front of you a year ago there was . . . he probably described it as an investigator. We've styled it as assistant because we need this person to be flexible enough to do really all the same kinds of things I'm doing. But it should be described as assistant to the commissioner.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, my concern was that assistant commissioner applies some authority, and I was just concerned whether or not that person would actually have the authority to fill in as the commissioner.

Mr. Dickson: — No. One of the things . . . interesting you raise that. I'm going to take up the call from both my last two predecessors encouraging the legislature to embrace a review of our FOIP legislation, and that would be one of the things to consider that in most provinces the power to delegate at least some of the commissioner's functions. And that would be

something that I hope I'd be able to explore at some point with the committee or with the Assembly.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question has to do with the anticipated 1 per cent economic adjustment. Could you tell me what that comes to in dollars as part of your personal services budget?

Mr. Dickson: — I'll ask for some help. The aggregate of that would be \$1,772.10.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. I'd just like to comment that we appreciate the use of services that you are using from the Legislative Assembly, their human resource services, rather than having to duplicate some of those services within your office. We do appreciate that. Those types of efficiencies help us to meet our overall mandate. So we do appreciate that.

Mr. Dickson: — I appreciate the feedback. And I might say, I think that . . . I've had some experience in other provinces where actually legislative officers find ways of pooling some resources too. I think we, all the legislative officers have that same issue of independence of course. And I think there are always some opportunities to look at things that can be shared between those different offices that still respect their independence, but can provide some efficiency there also.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome the commissioner to the . . . for his appearance before the board and in his new role. Certainly the protection of privacy and the freedom of information is an important . . . both are important aspects of what government needs to deal with.

As I read the report that he's presented in terms of some of the future challenges, I am mindful of two things. One is that we have a tendency, as I think all government organizations do, to look for ways to become more and more relevant.

The problem is that often means seeking to undertake projects that really we can't afford or shouldn't be involved in. And I think for a good example — while I note on page two you indicate the federal PIPEDA legislation will have an impact on Saskatchewan businesses and organizations — I would again note that that is a federal Act and must be dealt with using federal resources.

I trust that the commissioner is not asking for funds to go and start dealing with federal legislation.

Mr. Dickson: — No, I'm certainly not and I'm very mindful of the division of powers.

But I am, I think, mindful of this, that we have a lot of Saskatchewan businesses, many of them in fact it turns out are subject to provincial legislation, not federal legislation at all. But our experience just in the short three-odd months I've been

here, is those businesses in some cases are not able to access through the federal Privacy Commissioner office or Industry Canada, information they need, and often it's a question we're able to give them some general direction and in a surprising number of cases it turns out they're under the local authority FOIP Act for example, and not under PIPEDA at all.

Clearly if it's, if something presents as exclusively federal jurisdiction, then our response is to refer them to our federal counterpart, the federal Privacy Commissioner in Industry Canada. But it's sometimes hard for those organizations and even us, without looking more closely at their activity, to sort out where one ends and the other starts. And I'll give you an example.

The Health Information Protection Act actually encroaches substantially on the private sector because every doctor's office is treated under PIPEDA as a private business. If HIPA, our Health Information Protection Act, is not found to be substantially similar, then you're going to have both the federal legislation and HIPA applying to those physicians' offices at exactly the same time.

So I give that just as an example where sometimes the line between the federal and provincial legislation isn't as clear as we would hope it would be. But I'm certainly mindful of the . . . and I heed the admonition to make sure we're not spending provincial dollars doing what Industry Canada and the federal commissioner should be undertaking.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think it's fair to say it's been Saskatchewan's experience for many years that any time we end up in some area of shared jurisdiction that means Ottawa sets the rules and we bear the cost. The provincial Assembly is not in a position to fund work that should be carried out by the Parliament of Canada and we need to be very clear in drawing a line, particularly on these privacy issues.

We have too much of a tendency to be boy scouts in this operation and it's nice to go and help everybody, but there are certain very specific things, and I think you've identified around HIPA and certainly around the . . . where I understand your interest is in expanding this office into dealing less with freedom of information and more with the protection of privacy issues to make sure that we are focusing our resources on where those truly provincial priorities are, because the cost implications are significant otherwise.

And I would hate to see us next year have to come back and see a demand for an additional two or three positions, really to recognize what's already been covered off in, or could easily be covered off with the existing workload.

Mr. Dickson: — I take that advice, and I can assure you we're very focused on making sure our mandate is focused on the three provincial statutes that I oversee, or my office oversees.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dickson, first of all congratulations on your appointment.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much.

Mr. Hagel: — This is the first opportunity I've had to meet you in person since we set the process in motion a year ago. And I certainly want to acknowledge your strong background and qualifications to serve the office well, and wish you every success.

I just want to ask a couple of questions here by way of seeking clarification. The way the budget proposal is laid out it leaves it a little difficult for me to compare apples to apples here. And I understand your reference to proposing a status quo budget in the context that the office is a larger office today than it was a year ago when we were dealing with the budget. And this was intended to ramp up partway through the year, which it's done.

A couple of questions. First of all, can you tell me what is the dollar figure that represents a status quo operation without the additional three-quarters of a position that's proposed in your first bullet on personal services, page 4. So if you take that position out, and remove the assumption on the second-last bullet of the 1 per cent economic adjustment, or . . . Let me rephrase this. You've already told Mr. Yates that the 1 per cent salary increase was assumed to be seventeen seventy-two; that's included here. That's a different figure I assume from the 1 per cent economic adjustment in the second-last bullet on page 4. What is the assumption of that 1 per cent economic adjustment?

And then when you remove also the three-quarters of a position, what is the dollar figure? It will be something less than four fourteen.

Mr. Dickson: — Sorry for the delay. We'll have it for you in just a moment here.

Mr. Hagel: — That's okay. No, that's fine.

Mr. Dickson: — I think we have . . . I think we have a number. It looks like 238,052.

Yes, that's less the 1 per cent economic adjustment and less the cost that we had attributed to part-time staff, and we contemplate as part of that an articling student also. So taking those items out, takes it down to 230.

Mr. Hagel: — Can you just give me each of those individually so that I . . .

Mr. Dickson: — Sure.

Mr. Hagel: — The 1 per cent salary . . .

Mr. Dickson: — Okay.

Mr. Hagel: — . . . was seventeen seventy-two.

Mr. Dickson: — That was the 1,772.10. And then in terms of the staff, in addition to the three positions that are clear, we tied up a permanent part-time staff. And that would be \$14,344.11.

Mr. Hagel: — 14,344?

Mr. Dickson: — Yes. And then part of that also was an articling student for four months which was . . . we attributed \$11,518.

Mr. Hagel: — This is included in the 14 or this is in addition?

Mr. Dickson: — No. Net of the 14. So it would be the . . .

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Eleven thousand . . .

Mr. Dickson: — Five eighteen.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. So they would be 20 . . . just about 26,000 in total.

Mr. Dickson: — That's right. That's right.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. And then the 1 per cent economic adjustment? Or was that reference, when you say economic . . .

Mr. Dickson: — That's the one seven . . .

Mr. Hagel: — . . . that's reference to the salary?

Mr. Dickson: — Yes, it is. Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. All right. And then . . . So subtracting the roughly 20 . . . nearly 28,000, gives us a grand total of what again? Three . . . I'm sorry, just give me the figure again, the total for here.

Mr. Dickson: — \$238,052.

Mr. Hagel: — 238,052?

Mr. Dickson: — Right. I have a calculator here.

Mr. Hagel: — You've lost me here because you propose four fourteen and you're subtracting approximately 28, I think.

Mr. Dickson: — I'm focused on the one element. I see, you're looking for the aggregate. What I haven't done, I've not . . .

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. So the 238,052 is down from the 267,500 . . .

Mr. Dickson: — Exactly. And so . . .

Mr. Hagel: — And everything else would remain as is.

Mr. Dickson: — Yes. Yes, it would.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. That answers my question then.

Mr. Dickson: — I'm sorry.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. No, thank you very much. Maybe just while you're popping numbers on your calculator then, what does it make the 414,573?

Mr. Dickson: — It looks like 388,573.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you. Appreciate that.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much then. There appear to be no further questions or comments. Oh I recognize Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — One question. When we look at the budget and it's increasing, and I know this is . . . you're just talking on this 2004-2005. I'd be very interested if you could ever kind of crystal ball it. I mean there's more responsibility certainly over the . . . you know, with some of the new legislation.

But looking into the future, you know, three and four years, are you . . . What does the budget look like then? I mean can you see this expanding, expanding, expanding, in light that maybe there'd be no more legislation put forward but just the workload? And I mean when you look at how it's gone over the last two or three years and it's expanded and wrapping up, and that's fine — but what does it look like into the future?

Mr. Dickson: — I should tell you that at the beginning of the budget process I'd thought . . . I'm a big believer in three-year budget plans, so that you have the opportunity so to do some charting and, you know, get away from that big surprise from one year to the next. What I end up doing here though is just . . . Because we're so early on and we're still . . . I mean we look at what's going on in other provinces but we don't have enough experience yet to, I felt to be able to accurately get a sense of that. I think that the Manitoba experience, I mean I look at that and are we going to have the same volume of complaints, requests, and so on? But they have 12.5 people doing exactly the same work that we have three people doing.

I don't know what I can, I don't know what I can tell you. In some respects it's going to be a reflection of how much energy and resources are put by Sask Health, for example, into supporting trustees. And it gets back I guess in some ways to Mr. Thomson's comment. He was talking about us not filling in gaps left by the feds. Well I suppose we also have to be mindful of not necessarily rushing in to fill gaps left by departments that have mandates and responsibilities. Yet there's a tension there between also wanting to make sure people in the province aren't prejudiced or . . . because somebody hasn't picked up the ball and run with it.

This is a meandering response to a simple question. I think what I'm saying is that I don't have enough experience in this jurisdiction with any confidence to chart out and tell you where we're going to be two years, three years from now. All I can tell you is that if you look at Manitoba, which is our closest sort of most reliable indicator, it suggests we're going to have lot more work than we are going to be able to do, but I'd want to try for a full year to do everything we can to squeeze every ounce of output we can from our small office before I came back and told you that we couldn't do the job.

And I might just say, you know, one of the things that we are trying hard to do is do some leveraging. I think in a little office it makes sense to partner and in this case with SIPP (Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy) to put on a series of workshops. We're partnering with the Public Legal Education Association out of Saskatoon to help us. We're doing some . . . we designed the brochure and they produced it and so on. So I think, you know, I can't speak for other provinces but I think there is always some potential for us maybe coming up with some of the content and seeing if we can't get partners who can pick up the cost of producing material and things like that.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one point of clarification. You've

mentioned Manitoba a couple of times and the staffing level of 12.5.

Mr. Dickson: — Right.

Mr. McMorris: — That consists the Ombudsman's office as well?

Mr. Dickson: — No, no. That's just . . .

Mr. McMorris: — That's just the Privacy Commissioner which is part of . . .

Mr. Dickson: — Yes. In Manitoba in the Ombudsman's office they have what's called the access and privacy division within the office and there are 12.5 people in the access and privacy division. And actually the number I gave you of 1 million plus, that doesn't even include the Ombudsman. Part of his time is spent doing what I do but that hasn't been included in the number I've given you. So it's 12.5 staff exclusive of the Ombudsman.

Mr. McMorris: — Thanks.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Your workload since you've come on board, since the office has expanded from part-time information, conflict of information officer and to today, how much has that workload changed? How much has that workload increased?

Mr. Dickson: — Well I can give you a couple of indicators. When my predecessor, Mr. Rendek, was totting up, you know, calls, inquiries for information coming into the office, he'd get about 33 calls a month. That would be what they'd chart. We're closer to 60 just looking . . . November was a slow month because nobody knew how to reach us, but looking forward from December 1 on, we're probably getting at least 60 phone calls a month, and then over and above that people were getting a lot of e-mail inquiries and things like that so, you know, pretty substantial increase. We're opening more files; we've got more reviews underway — The Health Information Protection Act driving a good piece of the additional work.

PIPEDA and the federal legislation is making more people privacy aware, and the privacy framework is making more people privacy aware. And so I guess, not surprisingly, that translates into more people phoning with inquiries and looking for information. Am I being responsive to your question?

Mr. D'Autremont: — So from 33 contacts when Mr. Rendek was in place a month to 60 by telephone. But how many contacts would either be by letter or e-mail that are requesting some service rather than . . . or requesting a response rather than just information that they're giving you sort of?

Mr. Dickson: — Well I'd say the vast majority of contacts to our office are looking for some kind of information one way or another. Sometimes it's a specific problem. For example, we have a number of health . . . Some of the smaller health regions that don't have a lot of resources and don't have a lawyer

available and things like that are having a lot of problems with HIPA. And so we're getting calls from their privacy officer phoning in and saying look, how does this square with the statute and that sort of thing. In addition to the phone calls I'd mentioned, I mean I typically get I suppose six to eight e-mail inquiries a day, and almost all are looking for advice, information, that sort of thing.

So the hope is if we can get more material up on our Web site . . . I mean I think that's a way we can even sort of chart the kinds of questions people have, the kinds of information people most often look for. And it makes sense to try and put that up on the Web site so people can, you know, access it on their own. And hopefully that doesn't always translate into a need to respond and that sort of thing on a one-off basis. But early days yet, so we don't know exactly how that's going to work.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You need an FAQ (frequently asked questions) page on there.

Mr. Dickson: — Absolutely. We'll have an FAQ page for health care and one for education and one for universities. That's been done by other provinces and it's quite successful. And hopefully it'll address many of the what would otherwise be one-off inquiries that will need one-off responses.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So basically what you're saying is that the services you're providing are about eight times more than what Mr. Rendek . . . He had 33 and you're up around 250.

Mr. Dickson: — Yes, but once again The Health Information Protection Act being responsible for a good part of that which Mr. Rendek . . . I mean it only was proclaimed effective September 1. And it took a while for people to find out what that was all about. Thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes. Thanks again, Mr. Dickson. I want to come back to the numbers, because I've got different numbers here than you gave me in response to my questions, and I may very well have miscalculated here. I just want to make sure I've got accurate numbers.

First of all, before we go to the numbers, if the additional permanent part-time administrative support and the part-time student are not in place, can you tell me what would be the consequences of the operation, the office, without those?

Mr. Dickson: — Oh well, in a small office what happens when somebody's off on vacation it's got a bigger impact than if you had a bigger critical mass of workers and that sort of thing. I assume what it means is degradation response time to complaints. It just takes longer to try and get back to people. We're trying to set some targets now in terms of response within 24 hours to all inquiries that come in that can be answered, with summary advice and things like that. And obviously if you only have two people in the office still doing the same volume of work it's just going to take longer to get that done. So it impacts service that way.

I think the other thing is we've taken . . . for example, we're doing a . . . taking a look at Saskatchewan Cancer Agency's cervical cancer screening program. A major program, this is a thing involves notices to 300,000 women in the province and accessing their health information. And so we're doing a review and it's . . . what happens is it's tough to find time to immerse yourself in what could be a 40-, 60-hour project and still be able to do all of the adequate turnaround on inquiries and reviews and things like that. And so you have an overall, I think, degradation turnaround of responses and it really impairs your ability to be able to do those bigger kinds of projects.

But once again we're early on and so it's hard to be pretty conclusive because this cancer agency thing is sort of the first big project we've taken on. And all I know is I'm predicting 40, 60 hours for me to do the kind of analysis and check with other provinces and look at how other cancer screening programs operate, and go through all of the detail of a pretty comprehensive program.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Mr. Dickson: — Sorry, I'm roaming a little bit. I'm . . .

Mr. Hagel: — No, no, and I appreciate that. And I appreciate also, given the timing we're at . . . where you're at in the office, and the expanded office, that it's difficult to be precise. And I appreciate your response.

Can I just go back to the numbers then. We don't have a huge difference between us, but there is a difference. And when I asked the question about the reduction of the 1 per cent plus the two positions, what you told me was seventeen seventy-two for the 1 per cent; the two positions, it's fourteen three forty-four and eleven five eighteen, which I get totalling twenty-seven six thirty-four.

Mr. Dickson: — Right.

Mr. Hagel: — And taking that off of the two sixty-seven five, leaves me two thirty-nine eight sixty-six. But you had said two thirty-eight oh five two. So I think I've missed something here.

Mr. Dickson: — Well it's really just a question of taking the . . . It looks like our total here is 237,280. So let me . . . Actually will you just go back. If you take the 414,573, which is our aggregate number, we take off the 14,344 for the office . . . the part-time position, the 11,518, and take off the \$1,772.10.

Mr. Hagel: — Right.

Mr. Dickson: — Those three items, let's just . . . So I'm showing, Mr. Hagel, \$386,939.

Mr. Hagel: — Right, that's what I get.

Mr. Dickson: — Doing that, yes.

Mr. Hagel: — All right, yes, because you said three eighty-eight five seventy-three before. So the three eight-six nine thirty-nine is the accurate . . . Okay. I just wanted to make sure I wasn't missing something here.

Mr. Dickson: — No, no, no — you're absolutely bang on.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Good. Thanks for that clarification.

Mr. Dickson: — Sorry it took us so long to confirm it.

Mr. Hagel: — Not a problem, not a problem.

Mr. Dickson: — I'll bring a calculator next time.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Are there any further comments or questions? If not, thank you very much Mr. Dickson for coming, and Pam for coming along.

And I notice by looking at the last page here of your proposal, schedule 3, that you've hit the ground running, or maybe hit the ground driving, having visited and made 33 presentations in your short . . . in your brief time. And it's nice to see that kind of enthusiasm and wish you the best in your work.

Mr. Dickson: — Good. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members.

Recruitment Process for the Provincial Ombudsman and Chief Electoral Officer

The Chair: — Members of the board, we proceed now to item no. 6, decision item recruitment process for Ombudsman and Chief Electoral Officer.

By way of background I'd like to mention that, as we heard earlier today, the incumbent Ombudsman completes her second five-year term effective July 18, 2004. And pursuant to The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act, this appointment is made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. Executive Council has suggested that the board undertake recruitment, the recruitment process for this position.

As with respect to the Chief Electoral Officer, the incumbent, Jan Baker, completes her term as provided for in The Election Act on November 28, 2004, that date being one year following the return of the writ for the second general election for which she was responsible.

This appointment is made by resolution of the Legislative Assembly which is, if not sitting, is the responsibility is given to the Board of Internal Economy. Now following the usual channels and doing some consulting, come up with a recommendation for how this should be done. And I wish to present this recommendation to the board right now.

We've had the relatively good experience with the selection process that we went through selecting our freedom of information officer. And so my recommendation is that we follow a process very similar, and that is that the board appoint a panel similar in composition to that which was used for the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And that panel would be composed of the Chair of the Public Service Commission, the Chair of the . . . pardon me, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, a representative selected by the government, and a

representative selected by the opposition.

Last, the previous panel which was very . . . the one that selected the Information and Privacy Commissioner, was made up of those four people plus an additional representative. And in this case it was the previous . . . it was Mr. Rendek, who was the previous officer for that position. That is also an option for you. My personal recommendation would be that the four would probably do it but it's open to the board to what they wish.

And further, the recommendation is that the panel have the following mandate, to hold an open, national competition, that they develop the selection criteria, that they screen and interview applicants, and then make the following . . . which they make a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy, and they complete the process for such a position as close to the vacancy date as possible.

And I think it would be understood as well that they would . . . should feel free to contact the offices for information should they feel it necessary.

The floor is open for discussion. The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I would move the recommendation:

That the board appointment selection panel be comprised of the Chair of the PSC, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, one representative selected by the government, and one selected by the opposition, with the mandate as outlined.

The Chair: — Mr. Thomson, did you just . . . I just wanted to double check about the option. You're accepting the recommendation of the first four people mentioned?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The first four without the option.

A Member: — First four without the option.

The Chair: — It has been moved by Mr. Thomson:

That the board appoint a selection panel similar in composition to that used for the Information and Privacy Commissioner panel as follows:

That the board appoint a selection panel composed of, Chair of the Public Service Commission, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, representatives selected by the government or representatives selected by the opposition.

And further, that the panel have the following mandate: (1) hold an open, national competition; (2) develop selection criteria; (3) screen and interview applicants; (4) make a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy; and (5) complete the process for each position as close to the vacancy date as possible.

Is there a seconder for the motion? Mr. D'Autremont.

Any discussion? The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I endorse and support the motion as I think it's intended. I just want to draw our attention to the — and I certainly concur with the four positions — the fifth bullet on the mandate, that the process be completed as close to the vacancy date as possible. I'm assuming by the way that this is written that it's, that it's assumed that this couldn't be completed prior to the vacancy date.

And so I'm not sure . . . And I'm also not quite sure what is referred to when we say to complete the process. When is the process completed? Is that when the new person has taken the office?

Anyhow I recognize the two officers have expiry dates at substantially different times and I would just simply want to see us doing them both . . . having them both completed as soon as possible, which is not necessarily as close to the vacancy date as possible.

Can somebody explain to me why this particular wording is thought to be most appropriate?

The Chair: — Excuse me. My recommendation, Mr. Hagel, would be that, is that the intent of no. 5 is that the process be such that the people be in place to assume the jobs as close to the vacancy date as possible. That's the intention. And if you wish, we can reword that.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Well if what's meant is that they're in place, okay. No, if that's the intention, that's fine.

The Chair: — Perhaps I could just ask for a wording amendment here. So no. 5 would read:

complete the process for each position to be in place as close to the vacancy date as possible.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, I think that's clear.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — I guess my question on that would be, why do you need the as possible at the end, simply that the process be completed prior to the vacancy?

The Chair: — I think the intent here would be to have it done for the vacancy date. It's just sometimes that these things can take quite a lot of time in terms of setting up interviews and getting the person that you exactly want. And quite often that person might need to be . . . give notice to get away from a position. And you might choose a person that needs just that extra bit of time one way or the other, and that's just why I wanted to allow that flexibility.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And I think probably what it is, is the, each as close to the vacancy, is what the confusion comes in; as if you . . . the person may have been available a month prior to that but you didn't want them to come in until, let's say the July 17 in the case of the Ombudsman.

The Chair: — That's a possibility but it's I think rather unlikely. The likelihood is it would, it would take longer. That would be just from previous experience.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well then perhaps we don't need a . . . it needs to be something like, this process be completed as soon as is practical, rather than, you know . . .

The Chair: — We'll agree. Then we'll change the word as possible to as practical . . . practicable. Mr. Thomson?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — That's fine.

The Chair: — That's fine.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, I suspect we'll have a difficult time having the Ombudsman, new Ombudsman in place by July 18. That would be fairly challenging I suspect. But I think the Chief Electoral Officer should be not a difficult task to have that filled and in place by November 28. Let's do it.

The Chair: — Is the board ready for the question? Those is favour of the motion? Any opposed? Motion is carried unanimously.

Proceeding to item 8. This is a decision item reviewing the 2004 and 2005 budget for the office of the Legislative Assembly.

And before we start on that, I would like to take a moment then to welcome all of the department heads from the Legislative Assembly Office and take a moment here to introduce them, introduce everyone and get that on record.

Legislative Assembly Office

First of all as we've been here all morning, but I think everyone is familiar with, but I want to re-introduce Margaret Tulloch, who is sitting to my left, and she's the assistant to the Speaker. To the right of me is Gwenn Ronyk, who is Clerk and Marilyn Borowski, who is the department head for financial services.

And then we have in our new gallery in our new committee room here, the people from various departments, and I would just ask you to wave when I introduce you.

We have from the legal end of it, the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, Ken Ring. And seated behind him is Lorraine deMontigny, visitor services; and beside her is Margaret Woods, clerk for committees. And in front of her is seated, there is Marian Powell, who is Legislative Librarian; beside her is Pat Kolesar, assistant Legislative Library; and beside her is Linda Kaminski, human resources . . . human resource and administrative services for the Legislative Assembly Office.

We have Guy Barnabe, who is the head of information services. And in front of him is Jeremy Phillips from information services; from *Hansard*, director of *Hansard*, Judy Brennan and with her is Lenni Frohman.

And in front of Lenni is Greg Putz, the clerk assistant. Seated beside him is Patrick Shaw, who is in charge of Sergeant-at-Arms, charge of security in the building.

And then behind there is Iris Lang, newly appointed and congratulations on your recent appointment, Iris, to the Clerk's office.

And seated beside him and carefully monitoring the systems today is Gary Ward, who has done a tremendous job with his assistants, Ihor and Gary . . . no, no, and Kerry, pardon me . . . Ihor and Kerry, in setting up the entire television monitoring system in here and camera system in the room just behind the wall where everyone is seated, and saved . . . at considerable saving to the Legislative Assembly, as compared to what it may have cost us if we had to contract all of this out.

So first of all I would like all us . . . I'd like to extend a welcome to the entire LAO staff that is here today.

Now we will proceed with the information items. The first item is a report on 2003 members survey results as you've been given, and I would ask if the Clerk may want to make a comment on this item before we go any further. Ms. Ronyk.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the document is this one. And what this is, is the analyzed and compiled results of the satisfaction, members' satisfaction survey that we did at the end of the last term. This is something we've done over . . . this was the third time I think that we've done it, and we do it about once a term. And what it does is give us a lot of direction and assistance in knowing whether the services and the direction we're going with those services is what members want, and if it's what they need.

The first few pages are the highlights and executive summary, and that is maybe all that you will want to look at at this point. The survey was quite a lengthy one. It was handed out to members and to caucus staff and to constituency staff. The results may not be totally accurate if we were doing a formal statistical survey here because the numbers that filled it out were not great, I think 16 members. But we do encourage members to give us their feedback when we do these surveys because it really does help in terms of our planning.

In this . . . samples here, you can see that, overall, members are fairly satisfied with the quality of services that they receive, and that the members are growing . . . in a growing degree wishing to communicate electronically with many of the service areas. And that's a value and use to us to know that, and I think it's a value to the board to know that the resources that you've been providing in various fields are meeting the needs and to know what members see down the road as their needs.

The technology area, you can see that there's sort of a large number that aren't satisfied with the quality of sound in the galleries, for example, where most are satisfied with the level of light on the floor of the Chamber. So that sort of shows us where we need to apply our resources in the future.

On systems you can see the increasing use of the Internet in the Chamber where we know that the direction we're going with providing the hardware for your constituency office is the direction that members want to go.

The board also may be interested in some of the member response to the various allowances that they're entitled to. It

gives you an indication where there's needs for more training, for example, with constituency assistants and more services like a standardized, standardized services for constituency assistants.

The bulk of the respondents seem to be satisfied with their library services and they do indicate that they've saved time by using the electronic services. They appreciate the background kits that are prepared for conferences. And it looks like the one-day turnaround in *Hansard* is certainly meeting members' needs and is what members need.

Outreach. The members strongly supported the Speaker's outreach in both the social sciences, Social Sciences Teachers' Institute and the journalists' institute and the Speaker's visits; 80 per cent agreeing that the internship program was useful. And the rest of that is just a bit about the methodology that was used.

But for us to get some idea of a performance measure for the services that we provide, one of the things we need to do is ask the people for whom we provide the services whether they are satisfied. And this survey does give us the means of doing that, a means of making a benchmark so that we know whether we're going up or we're going down in terms of satisfaction in future years.

You might want to have a look at the detail because it's really, really pretty, and hopefully next time around we'll get more responses. Likely in the meantime, in the first few years of a term, we might just target some smaller specific areas with a survey, and we only do the big one once a term.

Thank you. Any questions?

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — One of the concerns members raise with me in this exercise is, given the small pool of people that we're dealing with and the segmentation that is done, it's not hard to figure out who's answering how. And members were concerned and I think the lack of participation reflected this. The members felt uncomfortable answering a survey in as much detail and on as many sensitive issues as were asked without some sense of complete confidentiality.

I think we're going to need to find a different method of going and asking people about satisfaction of services. For instance, it's not hard to figure out urban opposition member one, two, or three; rural NDP (New Democratic Party) cabinet minister one, two. It's not hard to figure these pieces out.

Ms. Ronyk: — That part you didn't have to fill out though. That was sort of optional at the end. You know, you could have answered the questions without sort of giving . . . and I think some did. But yes I understand your concern there. But I'm not sure how we access the information without . . . in a different way.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I appreciate that this was an interesting exercise. I'm not convinced it is one that we should pursue because . . . I can appreciate what we're attempting to do is find a level of comfort in terms of members with the services they're

using. My sense is that a lot of members who had concerns simply did not raise them. Hence why we have such an overwhelming support of things like the internship program which, I can tell you my own experience talking to members, there is not 80 per cent support for.

So we need to find a new way of gauging this. And I'm not sure what that is, whether that is a case of picking a small group of members to deal in some detail, whether we file them as caucuses, whether we engage the caucus leadership perhaps, or perhaps find some other mechanism to have that input.

But I know members are particularly sensitive about stating their mind on many of these issues. I also think it's inappropriate to have asked members about their pay and constituency allowances in this kind of a survey.

Ms. Ronyk: — This is for the board's information. That's why the survey is done. It's to provide the board with the information you need to make decisions and judgments.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I appreciate that.

Ms. Ronyk: — It is, you know, confidential to the internal management and the board. And I can understand your concerns. And I'm certainly pleased to hear your response because we wouldn't have known, we wouldn't have thought about that without you having raised that. And we certainly can try to look at some other ways to get the information.

I guess we'd always hope that individual members, you know, might have, need the freedom to express their selves, you know, different from what their caucus might say, that kind of thing. But we'll have to look at your concerns.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I don't mean to be prescriptive in terms of the solution. I think overall I would say that members — and I think all of us would agree — are generally satisfied with the service we receive from the Legislative Assembly Office in all of its parts. But as we start dealing with specific issues, we may want to find a more appropriate way to qualify some of the comments that are made. I know some of them look fairly stark as I read them in the comments and I figure, well these must be from departing members.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I do agree in some parts with Mr. Thomson's comments that perhaps the questions that could be used as identifiers need to be removed.

I think you would have also got perhaps a better response if this was to come out sometime during session. It's my belief that this came out at the end of session and so the members are looking to do those things in their constituencies, get together with their families after a long session, and weren't particularly interested in sitting and answering a long questionnaire. So if it was to . . . this was to be carried on, if this was to be provided during the session when members are here, then you'd likely get a better response out of it.

The Chair: — Thank you. Then we'll proceed to the next item

and that is the call for estimates letter from the Minister of Finance. In your materials you will have received a copy of a letter that I received from the Minister of Finance, Harry Van Mulligen. I think there's two things of significance here that I'd like to bring to the board's attention.

First of all that Finance does — on the first page — Finance does not provide financial targets or budget development directives to offices of the legislative branch of government. The Board of Internal Economy has that responsibility. This perhaps stating the obvious, but should be stated once again.

I think of the other aspect that I'd like to bring to members attention is in keeping with best practices, it would be the intention of this department of the Legislative Assembly Office to adopt accrual accounting system for capital assets in the coming year, which will change a bit the way our, our financial statements will be reading. And we do have an example here of how it would change and I thought it worthwhile for us to just take a minute and take a look at that example. And Marilyn would . . . you've got the copies and maybe you could get them around. And I would as Marilyn Borowski just to take a minute and explain this.

Ms. Borowski: — Gwenn is passing around an appendix document that came out when . . . to explain the change that is happening. Basically it's a move to accrual accounting from . . . to full accrual accounting from what would have been kind of a modified accrual accounting. The document explains why the changes are occurring and generally it's recommendations from the Public Sector Auditing Board of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

There's also . . . At the last page of the document that's being handed out, there's a mini financial statement that shows you what the difference will be by moving to accrual accounting from the way we've currently been doing things.

And as you can see from reading the document, all of the provinces are going this way. Some have already adopted full accrual accounting and some still have to do it. The recommendation from PSAP is that this happens by the 2005-06 fiscal year. And in Saskatchewan, we'll be adopting it starting with the 2004-05 fiscal year.

And one of the main changes they're showing you there is that capital assets will now be capitalized as opposed to being expensed in the financial statements.

What Margaret's handing out is a page . . . Of course the numbers aren't going to be the correct numbers for our budget approval but it shows the way the estimate pages will be a little bit different from the way they've been shown in previous years. And the main difference is that now there will have to be a line to back out capital assets and then to add back amortization so that there is a number that can be reconciled to the summary financial statements of the province. And that . . . She didn't give me one. And this page just shows you the difference that there will be.

Previous years, we would have had total appropriation and we would have had 18,770 and that would have been the end of that page for the Legislative Assembly. Now the board will also

have to approve ... They'll have to approve the total appropriation, but they'll also have to approve the amortization amount.

I don't know if there's any question specifically about the change to ...

The Chair: — Well let's provide a little time for clarification or questions and answers anybody has on this example page. So my understanding is then that right up until this time the bottom three, bottom two lines, would simply not be on this page.

Ms. Borowski: — That's correct.

The Chair: — Now going to accrual accounting, everything, almost everything remains the same but then you have this additional bit of information that comes into play.

Ms. Borowski: — Just to explain a little bit. The 2003-04, the numbers that are shown there were the estimates that were approved by the Board of Internal Economy last year for 2003-04.

What is new there, and what the board will need to approve this year, kind of go back and approve, last year's 2003-04 amortization amount. If I can just explain the capital acquisitions that were backed out from last year's, what consisted of two major capital acquisitions. And for purposes of accrual accounting in the province's summary financial statements, a capital acquisition is only one that is more than \$10,000 per item. So we're not counting all the calculators and PCs (personal computer) and various things like that ... chairs. The capital acquisitions are just if an item costs more than \$10,000.

So in last year's budget we had two items. One was a router switcher in broadcasting, and one was a server for IT. So those would be the capital acquisitions that we're backing out that total the 25. And then the 105 is the accumulated amortization that we have right now. And that's based on expenditures going back 10 years. And there were some major ones. There was library shelving; there was some major computer acquisitions; there was a security system in the Sergeant-at-Arms' office; and there was broadcasting equipment — cameras, I believe ... air-conditioning units, something like that.

And then of course what we'll do with this year's 2004-05 estimates is that we'll back out the capital acquisitions that have been identified if they're still ... if the board approves them. And right now there's only one that meets the criteria, which is a IT server. And then we will add back amortization. The actual amortization is not 105; it's lower than that. It's 97. But that will be part of the motions that the board approves, as well as approving the total expenditure.

The Chair: — So we're not asking you to approve this page. We're just giving, distributing it as a sample.

The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Okay, under your sample here for this year, what is the capital purchase value of the item that you would be purchasing?

Ms. Borowski: — \$20,000.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Twenty thousand. And so if that capital acquisition line wasn't there below the eighteen seven seven zero, where would that show up in the budget had we not, if we were not moving to the new accrual system?

Ms. Borowski: — It would have showed up under administration. In fact, it is still there. It is there. What we're doing is backing it out in order to reconcile to the ...

Mr. D'Autremont: — So any new capital purchases will still be shown under, in this case, administration, then they'll be shown again to back them out of the total, and then they'll be partially put back in again as amortization.

Ms. Borowski: — That's correct.

The Chair: — There. It's all clear now. The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Well it may be helpful just to run this by me one more time. Now the 105 is not actually 105, it's 97 you said, on '04-05?

Ms. Borowski: — '04-05 it's going to 97, yes. Well it'll depend ... yes, it'll depend on again what the board finally approves. Because if, for example, that 20 doesn't get approved then the amortization would be a little bit lower.

Mr. Hagel: — Would be 77 then?

Ms. Borowski: — No, it would only be ... information technology equipment is depreciated on a five-year basis so it would be 4,000 less 93.

Mr. Hagel: — 93, okay. So what we are now ... The 97, as we've got it here now, is down by eight from the 105?

Ms. Borowski: — That's right.

Mr. Hagel: — And that's simply because there have been \$8,000 worth of depreciation that have occurred?

Ms. Borowski: — Yes, that would be because compared to 2003-04 there would have been ... Most of the assets that we have, other than computer equipment, is depreciated over 10 years.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Ms. Borowski: — So what would have happened between ...

Mr. Hagel: — At 10 per cent per year?

Ms. Borowski: — Right. What would have happened between 2003 and '04 is that one of the 10-year items has basically been fully depreciated, and so we wouldn't be taking depreciation on it the next year.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. And what does this help us do that we can't do now?

Ms. Borowski: — Well it's a . . .

Mr. Hagel: — Now that we're so much smarter, what are we going to do with all this intelligence, is what I'm wondering.

Ms. Borowski: — If you take a look at the financial statement that's on the back of the appendix document that I handed out, it actually does provide the same information but in a different way.

If you notice, it has accumulated deficit under the previous standard – which was the net debt model – it's got accumulated deficit of seven million nine. And if you look under the new model, you also have net debt end of the year, which is also seven million nine.

So the same information is presented; I mean you still have the same number. But it's now showing that when the government purchases assets, rather than expensing them in the whole year, in other words trying to say that when that expenditure was made there was no other future value for that asset, it was made in the year it was done. Even though it may have had future value, what this method is doing is saying, if you do purchase something like a computer server it is going to last five, maybe ten years, so why should you just recognize the expense in the year you purchased it. You should recognize the expense over the time of its value too, which for computer equipment is considered to be five years.

So what it does is in terms of the General Revenue Fund, your expenditures . . . I guess the bottom line on your expenditures will be different in that you won't fully, it won't be looking . . . If you can see there, under the one method there was a surplus of 56; under the previous method, the method we were using prior to this coming year, there was a surplus of 1. The second method basically is saying, out of everything you purchased, the 1,421,000, there's value that can be moved to future years and so therefore you should not be saying that you're in a deficit position just because of your capital purchase, because that purchase does have value that extends over more time.

Mr. Hagel: — Believe it or not, I think I understood that but don't ask me to explain it. Now, so the . . . it's actually the obligation, not the proposal but the obligation that we begin this methodology starting with this fiscal year.

Ms. Borowski: — We're starting with the 2004-05 fiscal year, yes. And so what we're . . . But because we have to restate last year's for comparative purposes, that's why we need to do, the board will need to approve some of the numbers from last year.

Mr. Hagel: — Right.

Ms. Borowski: — The amortization basically, because the rest was approved. They approved the capital acquisitions when they approved the budget last year.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. In determining the amortization amount, the first year you have an item valued at

100 and you amortize it at . . . over 10 years so you would reduce the value of that by 10 per cent, or 100. What do you do the second year? Do you take that amortization based on the full purchase value, or now on the reassessed value which would be 90?

Ms. Borowski: — It's straight line amortization, so it's 10 per cent every year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, a better deal than farmers get. On the . . . when you report the value of assets, will you be reporting the full purchase value, or would you be reporting it at the depreciated values?

Ms. Borowski: — Now specifically . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if an item in government is purchased for \$100 and you have to report it, up until now it's been carried on the books at \$100. Will it now be carried at 90, 80, 70, 60, depending on what year it's in, or will it still be reported as the full \$100 value?

Ms. Borowski: — With the move to accrual accounting and the summary financial statements, you will have . . . the assets will go down as they're depreciated, I believe. Wait now, I have to think about that.

There would be an offsetting, there would be an amortization expense that would be reported as well, so that you would see the net book value.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But your server, let's say it's a 10-year value. You paid \$100 for it. Five years later somebody asks you, what's the value of the assets in your office? Do you report that at \$50 or do you continue to report it at \$100?

Ms. Borowski: — Oh gosh now, you've . . . I'm not quite . . . It's reported at its net book value.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So okay, at depreciated value. Okay.

Mr. McMorris: — I just have one quick question. So then just for amortization's sake, whether it's over five years or ten years, how is that determined? I mean because as you said, we're going to have to go back and look at last year's numbers and amortize all that. Who determines what each article is amortized at?

Ms. Borowski: — Okay. With this move . . . We always did have in the government financial reporting. There always was fixed assets reported and there always was depreciation, but it was done as a note to the financial statement. It wasn't presented in the major part of the financial statements.

With this move, what they did is basically the finance management council, all the finance management people looked at, they did studies across the . . . they compared across Canada to see what other provinces use for standards. And then they went through and looked at all the different assets that we have, put them into classes, and arrived at a value. And for the most part it's 10 years for office furniture and equipment, five years for a computer. Then you can get into buildings and things like that, which of course will have longer times. But it was

standards that were arrived at by studying the types of assets.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, I'm assuming that something that's amortized over 10 years can go down to zero, but it would be not uncommon for something to last longer than 10 years even though it's amortized. I assume once it gets to zero it stays at zero.

Ms. Borowski: — Oh, that's correct. It's not given a value as such. It's still considered to be on the books and it still would be if you were taking an inventory, you would still have that piece of equipment. But you would . . . For financial reporting purposes, it would be considered to have a zero value.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Now does the . . . I assume too that it's not an implication then . . . Assuming that the majority of stuff that is at the Legislative Assembly will be 10 year, this doesn't imply that there's greater pressure or lesser pressure to replace it after 10 years than currently would be the circumstance?

Ms. Borowski: — No, no. This is for financial reporting purposes only.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay, thank you.

Ms. Borowski: — The pressure might be there but it shouldn't be because of the depreciation schedule.

Mr. Hagel: — But it's no more nor less than it is now.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much for your questions, and thanks for that explanation.

We will now go to a decision item, decision item (b)(1), review the budget document, which has been previously distributed, and referring then to the Legislative Assembly estimates for 2004-2005. Compiling this booklet is a big job. It requires the co-operation and the coordination of every subvote and every particular role that leaders play in the Legislative Assembly office, and what we've done here with this document is the document is subdivided into three parts.

The very first part, the first tab labelled highlights is exactly that. It gives the legislative . . . describes the legislative services and the goals of the financial plan and it shows the amount requested and what the per cent of change is from previous estimates.

The part two of this document is an analysis by subvote category and it provides a detail on the different branches within the Legislative Assembly, the actual and estimated expenditures from previous years as well, and some explanations of changes that have occurred in this year's current estimates.

And following that is part 3. And part 3 serves a bit of a, as a bit of a guide in terms of history, some of the achievements that have been . . . and accomplishments and duties that have been undertaken by each of the various departments. It also has in it some of the objectives set out for the following year. So even though the board has not undertaken and has not authorized a

formal strategic plan, we do have sort of an ongoing working copy of a strategy and a plan. And it's probably best described in print right here in this third portion of the booklet.

And as we're going in through this process of strategic planning, I'm thinking that it's almost a . . . probably a very valuable thing to do is that, that is to extend the period of time that you are involved in the planning process rather than just doing it all once, and because it . . . Through that process more and more people get a ownership of the plan and a feel for how, what the strategic plan involves. So this third part is currently serving as our . . . can serve as our guide as we go into the new year.

The vision. On page 6 of the first part, the outlines are vision and the mission and the values for the Legislative Assembly Office.

The risks are itemized on page 7, or what risks or factors which could affect our operating environment for the coming year.

And then starting on page 9 we've identified our priorities. And now these are priorities for the year 2004-2005 that are over and above the routine things that you see being done by people in their various positions and in their offices.

I'm going to now ask Gwenn Ronyk to take us through the budgetary estimate itself and some comments on how these were arrived at. Let's see. The place I do want . . . I guess when we're doing this you might want to have a couple of pages in hand. And I want to find that summary page which is page . . . Page 13 is the overall summary page. And then on page 34 you have a more detailed page of the estimate summary. So you might want to be flipping from one to the other as you go through there.

I do want to make mention also that this budget here is comprised of two portions. There's the budgetary aspect of it, which is made by a decision of this board, and it represents about 34 per cent of the Legislative Assembly's expenditures. In addition to that, there are the statutory expenditures, which are authorized by law, and they comprise about 66 per cent of the Legislative Assembly's expenditures and statutory expenditures.

And with that then I would just turn it over to our Clerk and our assistant, then to Marilyn for additional and more detailed comment.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think if we start on pages 12 and 13, because this is where we develop the base budget that we're proposing here in this document.

On page 12 we outline the assumptions that underlie this document, that there will be a new collective agreement providing 1 per cent wage growth that will go back to October '03 and it will be 1 per cent in October '04, and these are for the in-scope aligned positions. It assumes 1 per cent also for the out-of-scope aligned in July of '04.

Other expenses are adjusted by a 1 per cent inflation factor. And if there are any things that have an index applied to them — for example, the members' allowances and some of the rates there

— the CPI (Consumer Price Index) that we are using is 2.3 per cent. And that is what the CPI is for this period.

These are the directions that we understood from government, and the Speaker identified for us the target for our final budget proposals to be in the range of 1 per cent above to 5 per cent below the status quo.

The other things that are similar — I'm trying to share this with Marilyn, sorry — we budget again for 76 sitting days, as is usual. And so far that's been pretty reasonable, and it's the same basis as in the past.

Page 13 outlines how we came up with our status quo numbers, and that is the number that we need to provide the same level of services as in the past year. And I don't know whether I need to . . . Do I need to work through that compilation? I certainly can.

Just note that we did not put the special warrant numbers in there because those were of sort of a one-time nature. We did not put in the one-time expenditures in last year's budget. There were some computer and broadcast services expenses that were one-time and so those are taken out of the calculations for the status quo.

Close to the bottom of that page you'll see what we added in in addition to the 1 per cent that I mentioned earlier. Additional costs to maintain current services, Corps of Commissionaires, 17,000. That was partly due to a cost-of-living there. And it's a contract. These are not in the personal services but it's a contract. And there was a miscalculation in replacing the commissionaire at the barrier-free entrance, so it just had to be put up to the appropriate number in order to maintain our current level of service there.

And the committee support numbers are the additional costs that will be explained in detail here a little later — that it's going to cost to operate the new committee system to the best of our guess at this current time. That's a hundred and fifteen seven.

So the total there that is our status quo is the 6,377,060. And total of status quo plus one is adding another 1 per cent to that. And that is our total dollars that we have proposed for you in this budget then is the status quo plus one.

And we had to cut in order to get there. And that is explained in the top of page 14. We did have to — in order to get to the status quo plus one — we had to cut about \$68,000 out of the budget. And I have a list of that if you're curious about what we did cut to achieve that.

Now on page 14, are we okay to look at 14? Because now we've developed our status quo but we still have to compare these numbers to our last year's approved estimates. And you can see that in our numbers there, our budgetary estimates that we're requesting — which is the status quo plus one — is the top line, approved last year is the six million two sixty-one. And the percentage increase there is 2.87 per cent over last year's numbers. The statutory ends up being 1.02 per cent increase over last year's numbers. That's after applying the indexing and so on.

Our bottom line, with combining both budgetary and statutory,

leaves us with a 1.65 per cent increase over last year. That's the equivalent of \$305,000. And of course our revenue estimates are there, a small amount for our remaining subscription and other things.

The next section, page 15, starts the analysis of the highlights, the things that are increases and the things that are decreases. This first page is a good summary of the areas that have increased and the offsets in the decreases. And on the right-hand column, under each factor there's a page number. And that page number gives you the explanation of how those particular dollars are composed.

And so we start first with the increases. Pages 16 and 17 outlines the changes in the statutory expenditures and the bullets just describe why there are changes in each category and what they are. And we can come back to statutory later if you have questions.

The statutory expenditures are those that deal with members' remuneration and the allowances, the operation of the constituency offices, constituency staff, the caucuses, and that kind of thing.

Page 18 is the analysis of the budgetary expenditures and the increases are the first ones put forward. The increases in personal services, there we outline that we basically follow government's personnel policies and salary type policies. That's page 18. And the \$72,600 increase that is shown there is composed of the 1 per cent increase and the part of that that's for increments is 34,600. So 38,000 of that seventy-two six is the 1 per cent and thirty-four six is the increments that staff are still eligible — those who are not at the top of their range — are eligible to receive at some point during the year.

Mr. Hagel: — The 1 per cent, sorry, was 38?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — On the staff classification plan, the adjustments, how many of the staff members in the previous year were at the top of their range?

Ms. Ronyk: — I'll just ask Linda Kaminski to come to the table if that's okay, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Yes.

Ms. Ronyk: — And I'm sure Linda will be able to answer these questions. The Legislative Assembly has a lot of long-serving staff so that means that there are a good many at the top. But we also have people leave and promotions and whatnot, and hopefully when someone is promoted they end up with a little bit of room to move for a few years in their range, so it fluctuates from year to year.

Ms. Kaminski: — If I could just clarify, Mr. D'Autremont, your question was last year or this year?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Last year.

Ms. Kaminski: — In terms of last year 2003-2004, I had reported to the board what I had estimated we would see in terms of increments or performance pay. There are a total . . . or were a total of 48 out of a total of 124 employees, which was . . . and you represent that in a percentage; that's equal to 39 per cent of the employees were entitled to some sort of movement within their range. If you break that down there were 13 permanent employees who were eligible for performance pay and there were 35 non-permanent employees.

When we're talking about the non-permanent employees, that's where we have the greatest bulk of our employees, and that would include primarily our sessional *Hansard* employees, our security staff, visitor services — the guides — and library students.

So that was last year. Did you want this year's numbers?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Sure.

Ms. Kaminski: — In terms of 2004-2005, there will be a total of 15 permanent employees eligible for performance adjustments or increments. And there will be a total of 33 non-permanent employees. If I add the 33 and the 15, that's 48, so 38 per cent of our overall staff complement are entitled to performance adjustments. The remaining are not because they are at the top of their ranges. And therefore the only thing that they would be entitled to receive is if there were any cost-of-living adjustments applied, either for the in-scope linked people with the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union) collective agreement or the out-of-scope, the July 1 performance pay.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. How many would have gone from not eligible last year to eligible this year, the same employees? So how many basically received a change in category or classification so that allowed them to . . .

Ms. Kaminski: — I hear your question, and I would have to do some tabulating. I have the information here, just you would need to give me a few minutes to do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — No problem.

The Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — I didn't realize that we were asking questions. Are we asking questions as we go along, or not really?

The Chair: — Well I just recognized you because I thought it was a follow-up to his question.

Mr. Hagel: — No.

The Chair: — But let's just finish this off then, and we'll go into the questions.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes. I'm actually back in statutory, but if we're going back to it, that's fine.

The Chair: — We'll have time to go back.

Ms. Ronyk: — Okay, we'll just finish presenting then. The next sections under the personnel here are for the additional

FTE requests, and these all relate to committee reform, and so we'll see them again under the committee reform section. But because they are personnel, they're shown here as well. That's one FTE in *Hansard*; two part-time in the broadcast services, to man the television here in the second committee room when we have simultaneous committees; conversion of two contracts in broadcast services to permanent; and a point two of an FTE increase in the Law Clerk's office. Those altogether come to a total of 93,680.

Page 21 shows you the Legislative Assembly staff complement, compares it this year with last year, both on the permanent column and the non-permanent column. If the board approves the proposals that we're bringing forward, you'll see our permanent FTEs go up from 57 to 58 and the non-permanent will go up from 18.82 full-time equivalents to 19.18 full-time equivalents. And those are just reflecting those increases that I mentioned to you related to committee reform.

Pages 22, 23, and part of 24 do outline the increases that are due to committee reform for a total of 115,700. The first one is the personal services that I've just mentioned to you — that 93,680. And that is the bulk of the cost for committee reform is the two part-time technicians in broadcast services, the conversion of their two long-serving technicians from contractual to permanent, and the *Hansard* support additional person and the legal research and editing in the Law Clerk's office.

You'll note in the bottom of page 22 that we are not asking at this time for additional resources for research, for the Legislative Library, the demands that committees will have on the reference staff, nor for the procedural administrative support to the new committees. It's probably not a wise thing for us to not be asking, because when this decision was basically made it was on the assumption that the committees were going to be phased in and it was going to be difficult to know just what the support resources were going to need to be.

However the committees now are being launched on a full-scale basis. And as I've said in the top of page 23, the need for additional resources may have to be revisited — depends how busy the committees are going to be and whether they're going to do work in a different way and to a different degree than the House did in the past.

The other materials that are part of committee reform increase are the printing and associated materials of 8,820. That's for committee reports and binding and printing of Bills, *Hansard* printing, and additional space in the Walter Scott Building because we've had to expand the number of *Hansard* staff that we'll be housing over there.

And I just would add that I think one other item probably should have been added to the cost of committee reform and that appears at the bottom of page 25, broadcast services repair and maintenance costs. It's actually here in your document under miscellaneous expenditures, but it is really related to the requirement to maintain two broadcasting systems. So we've had to add a little bit for maintenance and repair parts, and so on there, that could easily have gone under committee reform.

The other major increases now, once we leave committee reform, the middle of page 24, we are expecting a higher level

of use uptake on directive 24 purchases, particularly with new members' offices, and with the new resources available to all members at the beginning of a term. We expect a little higher uptake on that so there's an increase there.

On top of page 25, we start with the miscellaneous expenditures, the Corps of Commissionaires, 17,000 that I mentioned earlier, correcting a budget shortfall. In the library, periodical subscriptions are going to be up 8 per cent, even though this isn't the full 10 per cent that the industry average is estimating.

We have had an increase in rent from the Walter Scott Building for the library. Part of it is an increase in the rentable existing space, and 3,100 is the increase for a small additional space that's been acquired for the library services over there.

Some changes in the Speaker's office relating to the educational outreach: travel costs for these bookings, and just an attempt to more accurately reflect the cost of some of the events that the Speaker's office hosts — teas and receptions for protocol events and some of the outreach programs.

This year we did put back into the budget a small amount for china and silverware for the Legislative Building that was removed last year. Silverware has a way of walking away and it needs to be replaced every now and then and kept up, as well as the silver tea services and tablecloths and that kind of thing do need to be upgraded now and then.

On top of page 26, you'll see an increase overall in employment development expenditures. We do attempt to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for our staff and some technical . . . specialized technical training. This year the cost of some of the professional development conferences that our staff attend vary from year to year depending on what province of the country that they're in. Like members' professional development, the provinces each take turns hosting these events. And so if it's in Alberta it doesn't cost nearly as much as if it's in Newfoundland.

This year we've added back in \$1,000 for our staff retreat facilitator which was removed from last year's budget.

And we do have a long-service recognition program for legislative employees. And this happens to be a year when a larger number of employees are reaching a landmark year in terms of their record of service, so there will be an increase in the costs of that because last year we had eight recipients of awards; this year there will be 17.

Now we get to the decreases. And under information technology the poor IT systems guys — they're always taking the hit — and this year there's another decrease there of \$23,000; partly savings from our telecommunications cost savings to connect with the government central systems and a reduction in hardware estimates again.

The next items are B-budget items. These are requests for . . . These are new initiatives or requests for additional funding. Partly, we propose them partly . . . we'd like some direction with respect to some of them, particularly for the 2005 centenary celebrations. And I sort of propose maybe we won't

go into that right now but we'll go back and deal with your detailed questions.

The Chair: — Before we go into the questions I just want to make one observation with respect to full-time equivalents and temporary people. This is on page 21. Because after this document had gone to print there was a final decision made, and you'll be receiving a request today for a conversion to a permanent position within the Office of the Speaker from the non-permanent. So that's the very first line on page 21 which will . . . The full-time equivalent requested will be three and the non-permanent employee full-time will go down to zero. Simply a transfer. The totals then will change accordingly.

Now we are, I think after that presentation, perhaps in a good position to look at an examination of this. Any questions or comments the members may have, members of the board?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — May I just ask, are you proposing that we go through this, kind of section by section so that we can each kind of comment on them, or is the thought that we would just kind of each go through as we see fit?

The Chair: — Well I'm ready to go either way on the direction of the committee, but my assumption was that you would have questions as individuals, and we would just try to respond to them the best we can. And then if, perhaps maybe we should do that first, and then if you want to go through it item by item, we can do that as well so that you can have the . . . So I had a question I think from Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. All right. Well in the jumping all over category here, Mr. Speaker, just on the page 16 on the statutory expenditures, second bullet, the assumption used to be calculating MLA constituency allowances based on 604,000 voters on the list. I think the Chief Electoral Officer told us this morning that with the additional numbers of people who swore in on the election day, that the total moved up to 623,000, if I remember it correctly . . . 628. My question is why was the 604 used, and why was the actual number not used?

Ms. Borowski: — We use the number that the Chief Electoral Officer's office gives us as to the number of registered voters, and that conforms with the way the directive is worded. And the number she gave us was 604,000, and I don't know as part of that definition then whether she doesn't include people who registered at the polls as being registered. She then actually just not too long ago gave us another list, a revised list, and it went down even a little bit more. But we have to . . . That's the information she gives us, and, you know, as much as she said there was another 20,000, we don't know which constituencies they belong to. You know we're not . . .

Mr. Hagel: — I didn't from my notes this morning write down what she said was the total with those who were registered on voting day, but it was . . .

Ms. Borowski: — I believe another 20.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, she said there were 20,000 more. And I thought it was six twenty-three, but we've got two officers of the Assembly reporting different . . . I mean dealing with different numbers, now granted for different purposes, but this

is fairly significant for our members in terms of their function.

One of the consequences of a poor enumeration is that it significantly impairs the ability of members to serve their constituents because that's a factor in the formula. And I would think that at the very least we would be wanting to be using the number of actual registered voters which, if someone could confirm what that exact number is, but I think it's about 20,000 more than listed here.

Ms. Borowski: — I will ask her too, then, to perhaps give us another list that includes those people.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I have a few questions just to make sure I understand the detail of what we're looking at. I'm now looking in part 2, page 36. And in particular I'm looking at the reinstatement of the provision of the Speaker, section 84.1, parliamentary grants.

Could you let us know what these — I assume they're section 84.1 parliamentary grants — would be .

A Member: — What page?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thirty-six.

The Chair: — The purpose of that has been to, or what it has been used for primarily is to promote Youth Parliament, and we gave a grant to Youth Parliament for that. I think we also . . . I believe we also gave a grant to Saskatchewan youth who visited London at the . . . who were in London and visited London as Canadian representatives from Saskatchewan.

We gave . . . In one year, we gave some money to a French Youth Parliament and there have also been times when that particular \$1,000 was not all used up.

Also part of that has been used to promote Commonwealth Day.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As I look at the line just above that, the \$3,600 increase in travel expenses because of expansion of the outreach programs. Is this an expansion of it? Is it just a case that we pulled back this past year due to the election? What would we be looking . . . This looks to be in a neighbourhood of about what, 10 per cent?

The Chair: — They sat on the demand from, on the backlog that we're building up in terms of requests. And last year I actually had the Deputy Speaker out a couple of times and I would anticipate that what we would do is both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker would be going out during November and in February just to try to catch up with the backlog. And that's what it's for.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As we look at the cost directly below that, the \$3,300 increase in cost of teas and other things. People who know me will know I have little sense of the importance that the teas obviously provide to enjoy to many people.

But is there no way for us to contain the costs of these functions — 3,300 bucks worth of tea is a lot of tea here?

The Chair: — The answer is yes, we could contain the cost of them. But it also, I think, depends on the communication with other parts of the legislature because it could well be that somebody else would have to pick them up. And so I think it would depend on whether if somebody else wanted to do it.

The general view has been that it's better for the Speaker to conduct the tea, for example, for the opening, than to have it conducted from Executive Council or for SPMC. Or for events like volunteer medal, the Volunteer Medal Award or where we would . . . Again, it simply has been the tradition, I guess, that these things be done through the Speaker's office rather than other offices.

And the new one that we're going to have to work on this year, based on that same assumption, is we will have the visit of Her Highness, Princess Anne.

Now the other possibility of course is that protocol could pick these up if they wanted to. The other possibility is for us to decrease the cost by just supplying tea and not expensive, rather expensive condiments . . . well things to eat.

A Member: — We'll only serve relish — no mustard.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Could I ask, moving on to page 43 concerning the subvote (LG03), I note that we are seeking a \$3,000 increase in travel costs for employee staff development because of different locations for conferences. It would seem to me that the Legislative Assembly staff would be mostly here in Regina. What is the anticipated increase in cost due to the different locations for conferences?

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Thomson, these are partly due to different locations, also due to the fact that there are a different number of conferences each year.

For example, in the Clerk's office I think probably some of this cost is from there. Some years we have two conferences, where we'd have one with the American . . . Clerks and secretaries of American legislatures. That's only every two years. On the other years we have only the Canadian Clerks that meet in one of the jurisdictions in Canada. So we're not . . . these are largely out-of-province conferences unless we're hosting it, which then costs us something additional as well.

They are the means, for example, that the Clerks have of ensuring that we're . . . keep up to speed on developments in other legislatures. We can share our experiences, we can . . . Our new Clerks, for example we have a new committee Clerk right now, this is an excellent way for that new person to receive . . . to get the contacts that she needs to be able to deal with issues as they come up, and it's good training as well.

And in this case, the conference this year is in Nunavut and that's one reason that the costs are increasing compared to anywhere else in the country.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I note that we are projecting a \$4,000 decrease in the travel expenses for the internship program. How

much do we spend on travel for the interns?

Ms. Ronyk: — It's about . . . We don't spend a lot, that's why we've been able to cut it. Basically we allocate to each intern about \$1,500 for their two, their two members, serving their two members. And that's to allow the intern to go out to the constituency and get an experience of the constituency role of the member.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Could you maybe . . . Maybe it would be more helpful if you could articulate for me what goes into that \$72,000 expenditure for the internship program.

Ms. Ronyk: — A good part of it is the internship stipends that they receive. They receive \$1,800 a month each for seven months, so there's four of them, so that's a . . . that's 50,000 of the total. So I mean you wouldn't find too many graduates of . . . top-end graduates that you could hire for \$1,800 a month any . . . in any other program.

In addition to that we pay the academic director an honorarium of \$6,000. We pay the caucuses \$2,000 a year to assist them with providing the computer support to the interns. We do cover the costs of the two former members on the selection committee who come in to help with the interviewing and selecting of the new interns. And we do have sort of a . . . intern barbecue and farewell at the end of the term.

You may be aware that the interns do try to get an opportunity to travel to other jurisdictions, one or two other jurisdictions each year where there's an internship program — Ottawa or Ontario usually. But that cost is not covered by the Legislative Assembly. They fund raise for that and that cost is paid for by sponsors to the program and it's through a fund that's situated . . . a trust at the university.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As I look at page 45 then this moves us into another area of, I think, interest for many people . . . is our ongoing commitment to inter-parliamentary associations and in particular to the CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association).

Of the \$190,000 budgeted to the CPA, what amount of this is spent on members' delegations? Is there an ability for us to decrease the . . . either the number of members that we send, to decrease the number of these that we participate in, perhaps eliminate to members' participation only?

Ms. Ronyk: — I will let Mr. Speaker answer that but I would just like to say that it's not only CPA. Saskatchewan now belongs to four different parliamentary associations: the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Midwestern Legislative Conference which is part of the Council of State Governments, an American association. We belong to a German association, the Partnership of Parliaments. And we belong to a French parliamentarians association, the APF (Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie) and in all of those, except MLC, (Midwestern Legislative Conference) we are required to pay an annual membership fee that's part of this funding. You see on page 46, you'll see that under CPA, we pay to the general council a fee of 17,500, we pay to the Canadian region a fee of 4,400 and then the Sask. branch part is really the amount that covers both the cost of sending delegations out to

various conferences and events in all of these parliamentary associations and it also represents the cost of hosting incoming delegations. Mr. Speaker, if you want to.

The Chair: — The actual expenditures of the details of where . . . how this money is spent is actually made by the parliamentary associations, our branch of the CPA, where on an annual basis, they approve the budget and the way the representation from our Assembly to other Assemblies is distributed. So that's where those decisions are made and they first of all get the global budget and the grant from this portion of the budget.

The one thing that I would like to add to that is that we have made a fairly major commitment for the year 2005 to the Midwest Legislative Conference to host a conference here on our centennial year. And we'll be getting representatives from 11 states coming to Regina for a four-day conference. First one ever in Canada I believe — perhaps Quebec may have had something similar previous to this. But that . . . and we've started — the parliamentary association — our branch of it budgeted approximately \$50,000 a year for it for the last two years I believe, these two years and one more next year in order to meet our obligations. And the conference is not fully borne, however, through that. The expenses of that conference are also borne by delegate fees — through delegate fees and also by . . . through fundraising from corporate sponsors. Approximately a third each on that.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — That's for the MLC specifically?

The Chair: — That's for the MLC specifically.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — So am I wrong to understand that this 162,000 grant to the Saskatchewan branch for annual operations is largely used to deal with whatever we want to call it — professional development, outreach, whatever it is — for members to go to various conferences, Canadian regional, to go to the Midwestern Legislative Exchange?

Ms. Ronyk: — Only a part of that. I think you need to take out about 40,000 out of that total; 162 is for MLC, for the upcoming MLC. And another, I think about 12 or 14, is for an incoming German delegation this year.

And then the rest of it is the operations basically for the year of . . . And it not only includes members going out, but it includes the annual dinner of about \$8,000 . . . for our annual dinner. It includes the production of the CPA annual report. It includes pins and small gifts and things that delegations have to take with them, that kind of thing.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Have we explored with the association things like cost recovery for the dinner, that members would actually pay to attend the dinner? Or through things like decreasing the size of the delegations that we send abroad?

Or where there are cases . . . For instance I think of most recent situation where we had a legislative exchange. We were unable to fill all members from the government side but decided nevertheless to send a full delegation of four, whereas we could have economized and only sent three members — two opposition, one government. Do we look actively for ways to

reduce the cost of this budget?

Ms. Ronyk: — Members do pay some funds towards the CPA dinner, particularly through their membership fees. In fact that covers the dinner pretty well.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Okay.

Ms. Ronyk: — And really what we look for are ways to give members opportunities for professional development because there are so few ways to provide that for members. Members are busy. They wouldn't have time — even if they could — go to university for a year to study this. There aren't that type of opportunity.

The parliamentary associations are a way for members to be aware of developments in other jurisdictions in the policy field, to get first-hand contacts that allows them to pursue that. It's a way for members to learn both on the policy side and to look at their role from the perspective of their role in terms of the public service that they're performing.

Members very seldom have an opportunity in their day-to-day work to sort of sit back and look at the parliamentary process and the parliamentary system and to see where that could be improved and to better serve the public. And these opportunities allow members for a brief time to focus on those things and we just think it's very valuable. In fact we've actively looked for ways to expand those opportunities.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I can appreciate that there's value to these. I think of situations though where we may be able to economize by downsizing our delegations. MLC is a good example I think, where many members will use their own travel allowance to participate in these conferences. Is there an opportunity for us to pull back on that?

For instance, if we said that we were no longer paying for spouses to attend, what would be the cost saving on that? If we really limited the participation, pared it back so that this really became a professional development piece, what would this do in terms of our potential cost?

Ms. Ronyk: — Well we would have to look at the numbers. Again the costs do vary from year to year depending on where the events are. And we did . . . Actually the executive committee last year did reduce the costs by ensuring that the per diem claims were based on actual expenditures only, instead of it sort of being an automatic meal per diem. And that has amounted to quite substantial savings.

We look for the cheapest fares and so on. Whether a member's travelling 200 miles or 2,000 miles, they still have to take the cheapest way they can. So we feel that we do manage these programs in a very cost-efficient way. We get a lot of mileage — that's probably not the right word — we get a lot of benefit for what's really a relatively small dollar compared to how travel is conducted in some other jurisdictions.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I'll leave that area alone. I have two other small areas that I would appreciate some information on. I'm looking now at page 47. It notes that there's a general increase to the Crown counsel II pay schedule of \$10,000.

Could you describe for me what that is? Is that a reclassification? Is that . . . I assume, because it's articulated separately, it's not the 4 per cent jump.

Ms. Ronyk: — No, all of our personnel are aligned to some classification in government. And the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk is aligned to the Crown counsel II pay schedule in the Department of Justice. And there was a long-standing review happening in Justice, and the results eventually were this. And it was applied to our lawyer as well as to the ones in Justice.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Turning to page 49, the increase in subscriptions for . . . and periodical expenses, is this simply an increase in the cost or are we looking at expanding the number of subscriptions and periodicals that we subscribe to?

Ms. Ronyk: — I think we'll have the Legislative Librarian respond to you if you would.

The Chair: — Ms. Powell.

Ms. Powell: — Yes, your question is what is the nature of the \$8,000 increase. That's entirely inflation and it's only 4.2 per cent whereas the industry average is 10 per cent so it will not be enough to pay for the existing subscriptions.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — That was the end of my questions. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Are there any further questions? The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I wonder if Linda has the answer to my question from earlier.

Ms. Kaminski: — There would be a total of three permanent employees who would be eligible for performance pay. Of those three, it's the FTEs that are identified as new in the budget: the broadcast services positions, the two contractual positions converted to permanent, and the new assistant director of *Hansard*. So any of the other ones that I report to in terms of numbers, they are eligible as a result of classification decisions that have been made previously.

So you asked us to . . . which new people would be entitled to performance adjustments as a result of the new classifications. Have I answered your question correctly?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. I guess I need to ask another question now on that issue. How many of the staff were reclassified then and became eligible for . . .

Ms. Kaminski: — None.

Mr. D'Autremont: — None. Okay. Okay, thank you. On page 19 the position of a new permanent position of assistant director of *Hansard*, what will that role entail?

The Chair: — To Greg Putz and Judy Brennan.

Mr. Putz: — I'll let Judy speak in a little more detail to this, but I'll just give you a context summary of the background or

the reason for this request. You'll recall that the last couple of occasions when it came forward to the board with issues surrounding the impact to *Hansard* of committee reform, this was one of the things. And the board, in principle, has agreed to increased staffing costs at last year's board meeting.

And part of those increases which we didn't spend — we didn't need to spend them in the last fiscal year because the rules were not implemented — we used the time to do an assessment on what the overall impact would be, and in assessing that, we had a position classified.

And part of the responsibilities would be higher-end editing help because there's no sense in having more transcribers to do transcription when you still have the same one single person, Judy Brennan, at the upper end doing the editing. You're not going to get the verbatim out any faster that way.

And you'll recall that through the special warrant process we came forward with a proposal that on the basis of having the 24-hour turnaround, for *Hansard* to maintain that status quo, that we would need some upper-end help in that regard.

So that's a broad context to it. Part of it also involves having the extra transcribers, which doesn't turn out to be a lot of extra cost to maintain that 24-hour turnaround, but there's just more people to manage, there's more people to interview on an annual basis, more performance assessments to do, that sort of thing as well.

So that's the issue in a nutshell, and I don't know if Judy has anything else she'd like to add to that.

Ms. Brennan: — Just one comment. There have been studies done in British Columbia that would parallel our situation in terms of what it costs you to recruit and train a person. The actual cost in British Columbia, including all the human resources aspect, all the advertising, all the training, all the downtime that you get because you've got new staff, and older and former staff — older staff like myself — have to help the new staff, is \$13,000 a person.

Now when you . . . We've had to add 10 part-time positions this year, that's \$130,000. In order to make that count, we're asking for an assistant director's position so that we don't waste money having to recruit time and time again and train time and time again. So in effect it's a cost-saving initiative to lower the impact of retraining.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You say it's a cost-saving measure to lower the impact of training. But if it . . . How much difference is the cost between having this position, say as a part-time position dealing when the House is in session, rather than a permanent position?

Ms. Brennan: — And that's a very fair question. People think that *Hansard* is just going during session. Well I can tell you for the last five months we've been running like session over there because of the additional recruitment, because of the training, because of the space needs that we've had, because of the needs we've had for retraining with our staff because of the new committee reform. All this has been triggered by committee reform.

And a part-time person would be all right during session because they could help proof. But what about the recruitment, what about the training, what about the retraining of existing staff — and all those other factors are key and they happen all year round, particularly if the House decides to sit, for example, in the spring and then perhaps again in the fall. It would be very difficult for me to recruit an appropriate person at an appropriate level on a part-time basis. This person needs to have adult education training experience, needs to have teaching experience; it's just not easy to go and pick somebody like that up.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How many people are . . . do you currently have employed in *Hansard* in permanent positions?

Ms. Brennan: — Right now there are three and this . . . No, right now there are two and this will be a third.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would the person who — or the position rather than the person, let's say — the other permanent position not be able to carry out this role on the full-time basis and have then your temporary staff come in?

Ms. Brennan: — The other part-time . . . The other full-time position is a production person. Her skill set is getting the document prepared and assembled and out to the members on the Web by 6 o'clock. It's not to edit, to proof, to train. There's some aspect of her job that is training, but not the level. We basically have to educate people about the parliamentary process and that's a job in itself.

Mr. D'Autremont: — True. Is it necessary for this position . . . Okay, the level of the classification level of the position, would it vary if the position was titled something other than assistant director?

Ms. Brennan: — No, because the qualifications set that we're looking for is an honours degree in English and several years experience of teaching, and particularly with an emphasis on adult education. And because our staff is having to expand, there's a fairly significant human resources and support side to this position. So I don't think that the classification is determined by calling it assistant director, although that's certainly the role she fills.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you on that one.

The staffing . . . space changes regarding the additional staff at *Hansard*, you're budgeting \$11,400 for that at the Walter Scott Building, which is paid to SPMC. Is this the space that's going to be needed on a full-time, permanent basis or is this additional space on a part-time, temporary basis?

Ms. Brennan: — This is the annual cost for permanent space. There's no place in Walter Scott for us to take down 12 *Hansard* stations, store all the equipment, and all the costs that are associated with that, and bring them back up. So we've expanded our transcription staff, and the reason . . . We did several scenarios analyzing this and this is the most economical solution that we've prepared for you.

It's just not possible in Walter Scott to grab space; it's basically Agriculture's building and we have to beg to get a little sliver of

space.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The cost, other than the additional, what kind of an increase have you had in your rental costs?

Ms. Brennan: — We've never paid rent before.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Oh, this is all new.

Ms. Brennan: — Yes, yes, this is all new. This little space is all we're paying rent on right now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. I guess that's my questions for *Hansard*. I now have questions for library.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Ms. Marian Powell, questions of the library.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Again on rentals, you have space also at the Walter Scott Building — \$10,400. Is this a \$10,000 increase or is this the full amount that you would pay on an annual basis?

Ms. Powell: — Oh no, it's an increase. The library, unlike the rest of the Legislative Assembly, has been paying rent ever since we moved our stack area with the mobile shelving into the Walter Scott Building. So that's quite a number of years.

What is new is the small office space which accounts for \$3,100 of new rent. And this space we have — as Judy has said, you've got to try and have patience and get the space — this office space is directly adjacent to our existing support services department and was not available when we moved out of the building over there. And we've been very, very patient and very watchful and it became available in the last couple of months.

It was space we needed for the director. Her present office space was carved out of the main area of the floor. There is no privacy, there are not solid walls in the space she occupied, and it's very, very hard to do the work of confidential coaching of staff, interviewing, when everybody on the floor can hear your work.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The increase that you did receive in charges from SPMC, did they explain what they related to?

Ms. Powell: — Yes. They explained that they related to increased utility costs. They're pro-rated and distributed throughout the offices in the building.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So it was only the utility costs that were causing the rent to increase.

Ms. Powell: — Yes. Basically that's what we were informed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. SaskPower makes more money.

Mr. Hagel: — Still the lowest in Canada, though.

Mr. D'Autremont: — SaskPower isn't the lowest in Canada, no.

On the B-budget requests, are we dealing with those yet?

The Chair: — We'll get to that in a minute. Any further comments, questions. The Chair recognizes Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of questions that go to the issue of internal efficiencies, really. Have we looked — and when I say we, I guess I have to say the Clerk looked and other members of her staff looked — at possible recommendations or ways that we could take the services we're delivering and do them more effectively in other manners by changing how we operate in order to save money?

Ms. Ronyk: — We do that on an ongoing basis. We do look to technology to assist us in doing that. And you'll see in, for example, financial services' plans for the next year, that you'll see in the appendix, that they are . . . they've identified a goal of trying to review how things are done to see if there are efficiencies that could be gained in terms of processes and so on.

We have indeed done some extensive work with printing. We no longer send legislative documents out to be printed, and we've saved quite substantial sums of money compared to what we were spending 10 years ago.

In fact we produce almost everything in-house now, and I'll show you — for example, the new rule book, totally produced in-house. And you'll be getting this in the next couple of days. And it is, you know, done for the cost of the binder and, you know, a bit of paper and ink. And it's all, you know, compiled and put together by the staff. So they're doing . . . adding a lot to the time they're spending, but it's saving us money overall.

The new *Guide to Members' Services* again was all done in-house. And this is an example of where we utilize the resources in, for example, *Hansard*, intersessionally because they do a lot of the editing and formatting and making our products look consistent and professional.

And this is also one that was put up on the portal by our systems people — and we've saved extensive . . . a lot of money — this was that little black binder. And to get that, replacement pages printed for that silly little binder, you'd have to send it out and they'd have the cost . . . they'd charge you a whole lot extra to cut it down to that size. And now we're doing it in-house for substantial savings and a lot better service, I might add. We can send out updates very quickly and you can actually print them off the Web site.

Other areas where we look for efficiencies, the library I think is a good example, where they're forever re-engineering their processes and looking for ways to provide you with services in electronic format that will release the costs of the manual processing with staff, staffing, and so on — the time that it takes, for example, to do clippings on electronic format as opposed to the paper versions, that kind of thing. The services that are provided to members on an individual basis by the library, they're moving more to providing those electronically. So I think we're looking . . . I probably missed some good examples. Greg probably has some other examples.

Mr. Putz: — Just to add to what the Clerk has said in conjunction with this printing savings, part of our strategy is also to post these documents on the members' portal — for

instance, the member services guide — and just do updates electronically. And those documents have hyperlinks to other documents. So we don't plan to republish documents like that every time there's a new insert to put in it.

So we hope to save some money over the course of a four-year term by doing the updates electronically, but of course providing them in a format that members can print them if they so desire. If they're comfortable using the electronic document, then there it is. So I just wanted to add that.

Ms. Ronyk: — And the *Hansard*, the votes, and the orders, and the Bills are all available to the public now electronically. We print very few of those any more, and it saves substantially because people either look at it electronically or they print them off, they print off what they need instead of, you know, getting the whole year's volume.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you. On the same line of questioning, have you examined or has it been looked at in regards to the other legislative . . . officers of the legislature, the Ombudsman, the Child's Advocate, in providing more of the services?

We had an example used today. Both the Children's Advocate's office and the Ombudsman have administrative and human resource functions for very small groups of people. And then we have an example used in the province of Manitoba, where those three offices would in essence be in a single office under the Ombudsman and the Privacy and Information Commissioner, as a division of that. Have we done any examination of efficiencies looking in any of those areas?

Ms. Ronyk: — We do provide a lot of central services through the Legislative Assembly's central services to the five of the six independent officers. The Provincial Auditor is self-contained and doesn't come to us for any help. But we do provide services to all of the others, and that's substantial. All of their payments are made through Marilyn's financial services people. All their payroll processing is through . . . except for Chief Electoral office; they do some through Finance still. But we do provide . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, we don't do the Chief Electoral office's processing, but we do the other four.

And for example, this last year we spent a lot of time, various branches of the Assembly, assisting in the set-up of the Information and Privacy Commissioner office. We provide their IT support. We provide their HR (human resources) support. We do their processing of their expenditures and helping with their budget and so on because they are very small.

Now ones like the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate are larger. You're looking at 30, 40 staff there, and that starts to get to be a burden on our systems to be able to manage — our people — to be able to manage doing everything for them.

And we did initially do a lot of the HR for the Children's Advocate when it was starting to get established. And we just found that it was very difficult because they still have people that are part of the public service. So here we were dealing with union and all of these other issues. And it was really a benefit to us when they got a person that could spend part of their time doing the HR that's on the ground there. They still come to us

for advice and assistance on the rare sorts of things that happen, and how we relate to government, and that kind of thing.

But we still do a fair bit of the financial assistance for both of those offices. They also came to us when they were looking at their IT needs. Our IT people assisted them in evaluating the proposals that they had for their new system. While we could probably assist in some sort of day-to-day support in the IT area, we don't have the depth in our staff to be able to design their whole tracking system and develop an application for a tracking system from an off-the-shelf product that is what they're needing to do. They would still have to do that kind of thing through a consultant.

What we do is try to replace a wee bit what they don't have by not having an IT person on staff, somebody from outside who can say, is this, is what our consultant telling us a reasonable thing. We can help to provide that assistance.

In terms of . . . have we looked at ways to sort of amalgamate the support to all of these areas? I think we have done what's reasonable, given the need of these offices for the confidentiality and the independence that their roles require. We have talked in the past about sharing communications persons, that kind of thing. It hasn't developed. We knew we would fight over them, so . . . because we'd each have more demands than a shared person would likely be able to provide.

Mr. Yates: — All right, I have one other question. Would fixed sitting dates or a calendar of any form that put in place a predictable period of time to sit, would those types of things allow for efficiencies and savings in the operation?

Ms. Ronyk: — It certainly would allow us to probably be more efficient in terms of knowing what our targets were for, the dates and so on. It would maybe allow us to do a better job in providing services on time, doing a better job of opening day, that kind of thing, if we had more notice of when it was to occur. We need a certain amount of predictability in some of our areas, for example in broadcasting. And if we're going to be covered by all these little cable companies around the province, they need to know in time to turn us on. And so being extremely flexible is a downside in that area.

But in terms of actually saving dollars, I mean we don't sit around doing nothing because we're waiting for the House to come back or anything. You know we've got a full schedule of work to occupy our time. We could probably budget better; put it that way. We would have a more predictable length of session perhaps so that we could be a little more precise and accurate in what we request for our budget.

Mr. Yates: — Okay, one final question. If a session was split in any way, with a shorter session then a break in the longer session, are there any savings or efficiencies in an operation in that way at all?

Ms. Ronyk: — I don't, I don't think it's . . .

Mr. Yates: — Or are there additional costs . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, yes.

Mr. Yates: — On the other side of the equation?

Ms. Ronyk: — I don't think that there would be any savings particularly that I could identify. Additional costs, I guess only to the extent that our sessional staff or our part-time staff may end up needing pay in lieu of notice twice. Actually a fall session they wouldn't be eligible for it because they wouldn't be working long enough. You have to work about three months — I think it is — before they are eligible for pay in lieu.

I suppose if we didn't work any three months' period, we'd save by not having to pay any pay in lieu of notice, because we don't know when the end will come. Now maybe if we knew when the end date was, we could give notice. And we wouldn't have to pay, pay in lieu of notice to our sessional staff. So that is a potential area.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Those are my questions.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Chair, there have been a lot of good questions here which I think are very relevant. And I think I have to, I can't quit without asking the question that's on everybody's mind, and that's how much china and silverware walked out of the building here. And when you look at page 25, the Office of the Speaker there, how much of that actually is for replacement of china and silverware?

Ms. Ronyk: — I was being a bit facetious. I think we do probably lose a few pieces of . . . yes, it's more breakage than . . . And it's just the use in trying to deal with fine china and dishwashers is not a good combination. And the silver tea services, I'm not sure why they're forever needing repaired, but they do break, and . . .

Mr. Hagel: — So when you look at that \$8,000 figure, how much of that actually — this is a serious question really, you know — how much is china and silverware of that 8,000?

The Chair: — Where are you now?

Mr. Hagel: — Page 25, Office of the Speaker.

Ms. Ronyk: — It's just \$1,000 that we're putting back.

Mr. Hagel: — And if we didn't replace that?

Ms. Ronyk: — Okay. That's right. We only put back 500, 500 into the china and 500 into the grants. So we're reinstating money that was taken out last year, \$1,000 for the . . .

Mr. Hagel: — So it's the china and silverware portion that's \$500 then.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. And are we kind of in a pickle there? Can we live without that?

Ms. Ronyk: — Excuse me. Because we haven't done this for a couple of years, we are in a situation where we've lost a lot of cups, and these china teacups cost \$40 a piece. They're bone

china. They're china and they . . . You know, we're to the extent where we have a lot of saucers and not many cups, and we do need to keep a little bit of money in there to sort of keep up so that we don't have a . . . I mean we do have two royal visits coming in the next two years as well, so we need to keep up.

Mr. Hagel: — Maybe they could bring some of that fine English china along with them and just leave it here. Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — On this point . . . and I know it is a small item, but have we thought about simply having the whole event catered by somebody that would look after this normally? In the Legislative Assembly we maintain an elaborate tea service for 500 or whatever it is we maintain a tea service for. Would it not simply be easier for us to contract with the Hotel Saskatchewan or somebody — I mean for all that it matters to me, the Best Western — to come in and look after it?

Ms. Ronyk: — It is done by the Dome Cafeteria, and they use the china for, you know, any special events that come along. Oh I think if we had to pay the Hotel Saskatchewan to bring in tea service for 600 people at an opening, I think our cost of tea would go up dramatically. I don't feel that it's an efficient way of doing it.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It may be the private sector is more expensive than doing it in-house. That may be the case. I just wonder as we look at these things about the need for . . . Fair enough.

Ms. Ronyk: — We do volunteer. All the staff at these teas are volunteers from staff in the building that we don't have to pay for, I think which is a benefit over bringing people in. And also we do like to support the cafeteria. It provides an important service. And if we weren't able to provide them with some of these events, they likely couldn't continue to give, to provide the service that they do, the quality they do.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. One more thing. Just on the library services, I'm kind of lost here, but there's \$8,000 for publications increase, and Marian, you said that that in fact represents a reduction from current subscriptions. Can you just give me a sense of what the implications would be of . . . let's say it was zero instead of 8,000?

And also can you comment on the impact in the context of some print materials being on-line and being able to draw from them for research purposes . . . I think sometimes newspapers will be. And I guess I'm just not sure when you're talking about publications whether there is any on-line savings to be had for research purposes that we're not currently using because there's convenience by having it in print when on-line might be, might actually enable the staff to do the research that's necessary. Or does that relate to this question at all?

Ms. Powell: — Okay. I think there's about three questions here, and excuse me if I've lost track of some of them. You asked

about the impact of zero per cent increase. That basically means we would have to cut current subscriptions to that value so that we could . . .

Mr. Hagel: — And what would that be?

Ms. Powell: — Well it would be quite substantial; there's no question about it. The most important material that we buy, and we . . . As Gwenn indicated, we're constantly looking for ways to make savings. Things that matter are not cheap. And so the most important periodicals and other kinds of subscriptions — because it isn't just magazines and newspapers; there are electronic subscriptions, there are pay-per-view subscriptions — they all don't go down in price. If they're in trouble, they eventually die, but usually they go up because their subscriber base goes down in difficult times.

In terms of the impact of the electronic, that actually turns out to be in many cases more expensive. We had been subscribing to a paper tool, for example, that was very significant in our own internal use in the library for cataloguing purposes, and it was much more convenient to use on the Internet, but it cost us \$2,000 more a year to subscribe to that electronically than in paper.

So frequently there's not a cost savings to be had; it's actually more expensive. And most publications these days that are moving to Internet subscriptions, they give you a deal if you buy it in paper, they give you a reduced price on the Internet-based, but it isn't smaller. And certainly as more and more members are comfortable with using electronic resources as they get wireless in the Chamber and they want to look things on the Web, we've got to have them there. But frequently you have to buy the paper to get it. So it's quite a mixed bag.

Mr. Hagel: — Can you give me some examples of what would be the, what would be some of the undesirable consequences then if you had to pare that back 8,000?

Ms. Powell: — Well simply the materials that the members need wouldn't all be there.

Mr. Hagel: — Can you give me a for instance?

Ms. Powell: — For example, a very large area of our present subscription is daily newspapers.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes.

Ms. Powell: — And many of them have an electronic version, both a free version that is not complete that you can just get at on the Web and a complete version that's a subscription, and you pay for it. Not all of them do, but most of them do. All of the ones we subscribe to are available in database form and reference librarians can extract individual articles and pay by the second. So that's very cost-effective.

But the print newspapers, they're here when we're open, when the members need it. Sometimes they're not up on the Internet. It could be they've taken it down overnight to upgrade some software. Frequently they don't stay there. They might have the current week only available, and our members may need last month. So that's, that's the kind of impact. And the daily

newspapers are actually quite a good example of that because, put together, it's a large expenditure.

Mr. Hagel: — How much do we spend on daily newspapers for the year and on weekly newspapers?

Ms. Powell: — I don't have that but I can get it. I can, I can come closer to the, to the daily newspapers. The weekly, my guess would be about \$4,000 on the various weekly newspapers, and I know your own local papers are, you know, only \$25 but we get lots of them — about 150.

Mr. Hagel: — Sorry, I . . . So you said the weekly newspapers in total are about . . .

Ms. Powell: — The weekly newspapers, about \$4,000 — 4,000, 5,000. I'd have to confirm.

Mr. Hagel: — Per year.

Ms. Powell: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — And daily newspapers per year, roughly . . .

Ms. Powell: — Daily newspapers, I think — maybe I'll just get Pat to check that for me — but I think we're running more on the line of the 7 or \$8,000 that we're talking about here.

Mr. Hagel: — And the daily are the, what, the four in-province, *Globe and Mail* . . .

Ms. Powell: — This would be out-of-province dailies as well: *Vancouver Sun*, the Alberta papers, the Winnipeg papers, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Toronto Star*.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Ms. Powell: — Oh yes, and *The New York Times* as well which, which we've subscribed to for many years as the paper of record in the United States.

And Pat's just given me a recent quote overall — not fiscal year, but overall — potentially \$15,000 for in-print subscriptions to daily newspapers.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Thank you. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — What I would do, unless there are further questions, I would go to the decision items about the permanent conversion of *Hansard* and broadcast services to permanent positions and also the decision items regarding conversion of a permanent position in the Office of the Speaker. Then we would proceed to the discussion of the B-budget items. Yes?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Office of the Speaker . . . (inaudible) . . . that conversion.

The Chair: — This is on here. Decision item 2 and 3. I'll just go through this in a minute here.

Yes. The 8(b), you have . . . That's right. You have in your packages items 8(b)(ii) which is first a request from *Hansard* and broadcast services, which is that the two contractual

broadcast services technicians be converted to permanent positions and the new permanent position of assistant director of *Hansard* be created.

And there are two bases for the broadcast services position. First of all is the committee reform which changes the job description somewhat. And secondly, there has been a increasingly stringent request on the part of Revenue Canada that these people who have been on contract with us for 21 years be made permanent because they act like permanent employees. And it's necessary for us to treat them like employees with deductions for CPP (Canada Pension Plan), EI (Employment Insurance), and also enrolling them in public services benefits such as life, disability pension, and dental and health plans.

The *Hansard* position, you've discussed quite extensively. The recommendation from the Chair is that:

Effective April 1, 2004 that the two contractual Broadcast Services technicians be converted to permanent positions; the position title of senior broadcast electronics technician be established for each position; and the professional level 5 classification level be assigned to each position.

Any discussion on that? Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Yes. I have two questions. One, would these positions be moving in at the top of the range?

A Member: — No.

The Chair: — The response, I believe, is no.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. And what process would you use to pick the level of pay?

Ms. Ronyk: — We followed our usual classification process. A job description was done by the employees with the help of their supervisor and our HR people. It was sent out to our outside classification consultant who has experience in the government's classification plan that we basically use, and it came back with the PL5 (professional level 5) designation. And it was reasonable.

It was . . . as you can see, the increase is only 4,100 each compared to what we were paying them on contract, so that was, you know, reasonably . . . and basically it was a year-long contract and it's fairly close in terms of their now permanent classification.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Is there a motion? Mr. Hagel. The motion moved by Mr. Hagel would read:

That effective April 2004 that the two contractual broadcast services technicians be converted to permanent positions; the position title of senior broadcast electronics technician be established for each position; and the professional level 5 classification level be assigned to each position.

And I could add this other motion to it with your permission:

A new permanent position of assistant director of *Hansard* be created and the classification level be established at professional level 5.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Could we do those as two separate motions?

The Chair: — That was what I was thinking of originally so let's do that. Mr. Hagel. Moved by Mr. Hagel. A seconder to the motion? For the first motion that is, with respect to broadcast services only. Is there a seconder? Mr. D'Autremont. Any further discussion? Those in favour of the motion?

Some Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Motion is carried.

And we have the second motion — the second half of that proposal, which is a motion:

That a new permanent position of assistant director of *Hansard* be created and the classification level be established as professional level 5.

Is there a mover? Mr. Hagel. Secunder? Mr. Thomson. Those in favour of the motion?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Any opposed? The motion is carried unanimously. Thank you very much.

Now the next item which is on your agenda is 8(b)(iii), the decision item regarding conversion of a permanent position within the Office of the Speaker. And the request here is to convert the full-time, non-permanent position of the, of assistant secretary, Office of the Speaker, to a permanent position effective April 1, 2004. The person we have right now has been on temp staff for, on and off, for about eight years and a matter of recognition of work put in, it is my recommendation that we make this change. Effectively this decreases the cost for this year simply because of the way the holiday pay is to be paid out after this. However I do intend that this position would be, the classification would be reviewed at some later time following this.

So the recommendation is:

Effective April 1, 2004 that the full-time, non-permanent position of assistant secretary, Office of the Speaker, be converted to a permanent position.

Moved by Ms. Higgins. Secunder? Mr. Hagel? Mr. D'Autremont. Question by Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — You had said that you were looking to reclassify this position afterwards. Is there a particular reason we would need to reclassify the position? I guess what I'm asking is, is this \$4,200 worth of savings going to be eaten up by the reclassification.

The Chair: — A portion of it could well be eaten up. The job has changed considerably since the position was in and the workload that the person is doing and the level of responsibilities being taken, so just in keeping with the regular general processes, we want to make . . . I will want to have that job description taken a look at, evaluated, and to see whether or not it would fit into another classification. But I make no other assumptions than that. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, are you saying that as a full-time, non-permanent position the salary was 37,610? Is that what was spent on the position last year, or because it was sometimes a temporary position, a lesser amount was actually, the actual expenditures were a lesser amount than that?

The Chair: — That is true. This person, we've had an arrangement where she comes in more when is needed and at certain times has not worked full-time. So we used almost 82 per cent of that in the last year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So you spent about 26,000 last year?

The Chair: — Pretty close.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So this will actually be an increase of cost then to the Speaker's office?

The Chair: — No, I don't anticipate that it's a . . . The position will be filled. Although it's considered a full-time position, I don't anticipate the person will be doing full time at this stage. And my intention is to staff it only as needed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How do you staff, as needed, a permanent position?

The Chair: — Well you have a good relationship with your staff and . . .

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well I would actually, as the mover of this motion then, I will withdraw because this is very misleading, the way it's worded then. If this isn't an actual usage of the position, or a projected usage of the position, it's extremely misleading. I'm not comfortable with it the way it's laid out then in view of the questions that have been asked.

Ms. Ronyk: — We, like government, do provide flexible hours for our employees when it works for the employer and the employee. And this employee is one that doesn't want, necessarily, to work full hours and likely will adopt a flex time agreement that will, you know, work like 89 per cent of the time or something of that sort.

So it just gives this person the recognition that she's worked here for eight years and intends to want to be a permanent member of the staff. And it's, I don't know, it's an important thing to individuals to be recognized as permanent as opposed to a non-perm.

The Chair: — In this case what is happening is that a relationship that has been developed has really been to the benefit, I believe, of the employee and to the office. It was designated as a full-time position back in '97 and has remained as such but it has never been totally, totally filled because part

of the thing that happened was there was a case of maternity leave. The other thing is that this . . . And as well in the summer time this position is used to hire a part-time student during vacation time, as well. So even though . . . so the allocation from this position is not necessarily used simply for one person.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well then to follow through on this. Is that even possible, to take a permanent position and divide it up that way for a student employment in the summer and a permanent position during . . . and the flex . . . Well yes, I understand work and family and being accommodating, but is that possible, the way you're looking at doing this?

The Chair: — Well I'm not sure of the nature of your question, is it possible? It's been accomplished so to that extent it's possible. I guess you're asking is there some possible breach of regulation or something like that. And I guess the answer to that is not to my knowledge, or else we would have looked at it.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Can you tell me, Mr. Chair, or the Office of the Clerk, is this the practice that is followed by departments of government and their agencies?

Ms. Ronyk: — Perhaps Linda could advise us here.

Ms. Kaminski: — I can add some clarity and some confusion. Within government they have what's called a variable hours of work program. And they have it for both in-scope and out-of-scope employees. And it's self-initiated by the employee; the employee's wanting to work less than full-time in a permanent position.

And indeed we do have a number of examples throughout the Legislative Assembly, as they do within government as well, where we have a number of employees who choose voluntarily to work less than 100 per cent throughout the year.

In the case of the Speaker's office, to convert the position from a full-time non-permanent position into a permanent position, there wouldn't be any difference in really how he's going to staff it because the employee at this point in time is still voluntarily choosing to work less than full time, and therefore then would participate in a variable hours of work program.

What it would do, actually it would . . . Administratively, because there is a pattern to her work, actually it would save us administratively, not only the vacation pay and the stat pay that we're currently processing for the employee, we would also then be able to provide her with paid vacation leave credits. So then she would take time off with pay; it would reduce us from having to process a regular timesheet for her. Every bi-weekly pay period we could regularize her pay into a monthly salary at a 65 per cent or 75, 70 per cent, whatever hours of work pattern she happens to be participating in.

What it does do though in terms of making it a permanent position, currently her children are young but they are growing, and within a few more years I would expect actually that she'd be quite interested in working on a full-time basis in the position as her children then would all be in school, as I said.

So really my point is simply to add comment that indeed within a permanent position you can participate in a variable hours of work program and still be deemed a permanent employee.

It used to be a number of years ago that permanent employees were treated differently than non-permanent employees in terms of benefit plans. But that has changed over the course of a number of years where now the government has allocated the same level of benefits to non-permanent employees as they do to permanent employees. But five years ago it would make quite a difference to classify the position as a permanent position for the sake of benefit administration.

So as I said, some of those things have changed over the course of time. But clearly, administratively, we would handle the situation. So hopefully I've added some clarity.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Well thanks, Mr. Speaker. As I listen carefully to the concern of the members I think it is common that we recognize the individual who's currently serving a position, does a good job, and has been there for some time.

I think as I listen to the concerns being raised it comes back to the principle of assigning status and classifications to positions based on the needs of the office as opposed to based on the desires of a personal working relationship.

And I think there is some wisdom in looking at it that way because after all is said and done, people come and people go. You can never compel someone to have to stay forever where they are.

And what offices will do is function based on the assignment of those positions to serve the needs of the office. And I think probably it would be helpful if we could have a statement of the value to the Speaker's office of the position being made permanent; I think that's the important question that the committee, that the board is wrestling with. Because I don't think there's any of us who are questioning the commitment or the dedication of the person who's serving. That's simply not the issue and should, ought not to be interpreted as that. In the same way that as we look at any of the positions within the Legislative Assembly, we need to look at them always as they . . . in the context of how they relate to the needs of the Assembly for its own function.

And I wonder if, Mr. Speaker, yourself, or Gwenn, if you could describe it to us in that way because that's the . . . it's the long-term implications I think that are important to the board.

The Chair: — Yes. Thank you for the question. When you're looking at staffing any office, what you're trying to do, and what we're certainly trying to do in the Speaker's office, is to obtain staff and recruit staff that are competent, staff that are dedicated to their job, staff that you hope will stick around for a while if both of those are fulfilled. And you want to be able to retain staff as well, rather than having to go through continual recruiting.

So in this particular case I think it's one of the biggest benefits to the Speaker's office, is to be able to send a signal to the staff

member that this job is an important job and that the job service is valued; we see it as a job that will remain within the Speaker's office until such time that perhaps there is some type of reorganization within the whole department, which could happen, although it's not projected at this time.

And so the value, there being no room in terms of increments and the position being quite stable, want to be able to give an opportunity for the person also to continue to take on increasing responsibilities.

Chair recognizes Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one question on making it permanent, and then it's a voluntary basis as to how much she's going to work, and let's say right now she's working at 70 per cent or 75 per cent. What happens if she chooses not to voluntarily work at 75 to 80 per cent but want to work full-time? Is that . . . Does she just automatically move in to that or is there some value in putting a percentage of a permanent position at point seven five, a permanent point seven five position?

The Chair: — She would . . . Under the current conditions she would have the right, I do believe, to come in full time under the description of the job right now.

We haven't seen the need to do that because we've . . . because it has . . . and I don't anticipate it to happen. If it did, we would be making that kind of a recommendation.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I might add too, the Speaker's office I think needs the flexibility. For example, a year where we're hosting the big conference, that position is going to be needed on a full-time basis. Perhaps another year, it will be okay if she didn't want to work the full, the full amount. And it just helps us to deal with the fluctuation in workload that happens in these offices.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think the difficulty here, Mr. Chairman, is that we're attempting to deal with two different issues. One is the position within the budget and then the second is the internal management question you have in terms of the individual.

Really this board needs to think about it I believe from the perspective of the position within the budget, irrespective of who the individual is. And this is where the challenge comes as to how we deal with that. And I think it's important that we separate those two items out, recognizing that obviously, in this particular case, you're attempting to deal with an internal personnel issue. But we need to really be very I think conscious of how we set this up within the budget and its potential implications across other pieces of the civil service.

Perhaps members have a . . . Perhaps it's Mr. McMorris's point seven five solution, that we deal with the permanent . . . maybe it's a permanent part-time, maybe it's simply leaving it as is. But we may want to think about this and return to it.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I just may add that it was mentioned that we also use vacation and relief, using some of those dollars to provide vacation relief when all three of the permanent staff or the regular staff are unavailable. And that happens in small

offices so . . .

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — See, the question I think people are having difficulty understanding is how much we currently spend on this position. How does this get portrayed as a \$4,000 saving by reclassification and what are the potential implications in it? If the argument is coming back that we're using the PY (person-years) for a number of different functions, not the least of which is whatever it's designed for plus vacation coverage, then that's one thing.

But that doesn't necessarily address why we would make it into a permanent position. I think what we need to have is a very clear understanding of how these pieces fit together; how much we're actually spending on it today and what that then gives us in options. Because I sense that there's a reluctance on the part of members to see this end up being an increase in the overall cost of this item.

The Chair: — I think in, just to answer that question, I don't anticipate that this item, this designation, it would have any significant effect on the current budget whatsoever. To put it into the decision items in this case, in this . . . And it perhaps does confuse the issue a little bit. But we've put it into here on the agenda simply because it had to deal with personnel and we did it in one case and now we're dealing with the second case.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I guess the question is, is the PY going to be underspent? Is that the . . . Put it in at the — what is it? A professional level 4 position — and then underspend it?

A Member: — No, in-scope level 4.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — In-scope level 4, okay. And underspend it?

Ms. Ronyk: — . . . just gone to find out what has been spent unless . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, that's what we do. We basically have a full-time . . . It's been funded full time and we backfill, when she's away, by a part-time person to a certain extent.

The Chair: — Okay. The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, I recognize we have lots of stuff before us yet today to move to. It is my sense that there is a flexibility that exists currently which may be jeopardized by moving it to a permanent position. And I think therefore it may be wisest at this point in time to just let the status quo prevail and ask that that be reconsidered, and that if the Speaker sees it as appropriate in the interest of the function of the office to bring it back at a future time.

But as I've listened here, I think there may be some loss in flexibility that concerns the members of the board that we would prefer to see both for the employee involved, as well as the office itself. At the end of the day, it's important to define the needs of the office and the positions that serve it in the most effective way, and have positions approved in that way. And I think that would be the appropriate context to reconsider this at a future time.

The Chair: — The motion which was moved by Ms. Higgins,

who has also requested to withdraw the movement, leaves us in a situation of where there's no motion before the board then and my understanding is we're ready to proceed to the next item.

We are then on item 8(c), decision items regarding the B-budget requests, which are pages 27 and 31 of the book, the first pages being a summary of the B-budget item requests. And I'll ask Gwenn to take us through these three pages.

Ms. Ronyk: — Page 27, the summary shows some of the items that we are putting before you as proposals. The mace has been needing to be repaired for some time. We brought it forward last year and it was not approved. We think it should be repaired and re-gilded in time for the celebrations of the centenary.

The enhanced video streaming is a proposal to get a little better quality of video streaming, give an enhanced service; it costs us a little more to get the band width that we need to do a little better quality. And the picture that's being sent around will show you the comparison, that if we spent this addition 14,500, instead of the small picture that's quite distant that we currently stream, we could stream one that is more parallel to the BC (British Columbia) sample there.

Mr. Hagel: — It would still show people in Saskatchewan . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — I think so, yes. Our Speaker's better looking.

Now Guy and Greg are here if you do have any questions about any of these. There's more detail on the following pages explaining them. We have had requests basically for us to improve the quality of our video streaming service, and this is why we're proposing this enhanced service.

The next items are the Chamber sound replacement. This has been an ongoing issue for some time. Our audio system is 25 years old, and it's probably even older technology; it is analog technology. It's being held together because we have such experienced technicians that are able to track down the glitches and keep making it work.

You recall last session we lost our audio for a time, not a good thing to happen in the midst of debate.

We, if we are going to replace the sound system, we also would like to fix the sound in the galleries. And that would cost an additional, we think, approximately \$20,000, and that is included in that figure. We'd have to alter the desks, and that would mean some more woodworking. And SPMC has estimated that at 16,500 as part of that, and the rest would be the actual sound system itself.

It's going to have to be done at some point, and we've been delaying it for a number of years. So one of these years we're going to have to bite the bullet and do that if we want to continue to have sound in the Chamber.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Recognizing the situation we ran into in May of last year, have we looked at an option which would at least upgrade the microphone system at the Table and allow us

to go to a dispatch box system that other parliaments use, rather than doing a full upgrade of all the desks? So that in case the systems breaks, that at least we can use a dispatch box.

Ms. Ronyk: — I would have Greg and Gary address that. No, we certainly have not considered that. We didn't expect that it would be acceptable to members . . .

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It's not popular.

Ms. Ronyk: — . . . to do that. It's certainly something we could explore.

The trouble with our . . . with the problem that we had here last year was not just a microphone that wasn't working. I mean we couldn't transmit anything. I mean it was a, it was a problem in the racks of equipment that is in the control room. So having one microphone that worked was not . . . wasn't going to work either. I mean it was a deeper problem than that. Unless we had a separate independent system potentially, but I don't know if Gary has any comment to make on that.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Anyway, fair enough.

Ms. Ronyk: — The next item on the list there is the Chamber refurbishment and technology upgrade. The request has been in members' mind for some time about making the Chamber a little more modern, wiring the Chamber with modern communication, information technology.

We have on an interim basis provided wireless Internet, but there certainly are security issues with that. And this is the ideal that the Chamber should be properly modified for modern technology.

In this number we've put in an amount that has been estimated by SPMC for chairs with proper ergonomic standards for members' desks. You know that occasionally, quite regularly in fact, we have members who, who have to ask us for a different chair because they have back problems. And if the members had an occupational health and safety committee, they could probably force us to get new chairs.

The detail on page 29 shows that basically we'd be looking at the electrical upgrades. Right now there's only two electrical outlets in the whole Chamber, and that basically works for the vacuum. It isn't valuable for the members to have their computers plugged in and save their batteries.

And of course it would also include replacement of the carpet, and the galleries, and some sound benefits in the galleries. We put in more sound absorption materials and so on in the galleries in this process.

And the next item is the developing of the fourth floor committee room to replace the Chamber as a second committee room. And I've explained why using the Chamber is not an ideal solution, that it should be seen as an interim and temporary measure only.

The Chamber has a very adversarial ambience. It's not conducive to what we want these committees to achieve, which is generally a more collegial and less partisan approach. And

our committees are small seven-member committees, and having them sitting in the front row of an empty Chamber I don't think presents a very good image to the viewing public.

We also have the practical problems that we have to move those witness tables in and out of the Chamber twice a day — and darn, they're oak and they're heavy — although SPMC say they'll do it, no problem; we just have to call them. But our IT, our technical, our television technicians, are going to have to hook up wires to microphones several times a day to provide microphones for the witnesses because we don't have any other outlets other than at the members' desks. And if we put in a new system, we'd put in some outlets where we need them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Room 255 is wired for sound but not television, is that correct?

Ms. Ronyk: — No. Room 255 we use a mobile sound and recording system in there. We have to take . . . actually go in there and set it up when we want to have a committee in there. So it's not what you'd call wired; it's a mobile unit that we use when we go out on committee hearings. So it's handy for us to have that but . . .

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Okay, thank you.

Ms. Ronyk: — But you're right, it does not have, it does not have television.

We are concerned about allowing staff and spectators and so on, you know, on the floor of the Chamber. Behind the bar even isn't great. If we keep them up in the gallery, the staff aren't going to be of any assistance to members. We can let the staff on the floor, but the public in the gallery — it just gets a little bit messy.

The project that we're bringing forward again is basically recycling the project that we brought forward two years ago where SPMC had agreed to share costs with the Assembly in developing the fourth floor space that is right now wasted space. It's sitting up there empty; it can't be used. It's not Fire Code safe.

I just think it would be a wonderful thing to actually finish this building for the centennial when it's been here almost 100 years. But if not for the centennial then for the 100th birthday of the building which is just a few years later. So we can be patient.

And also this room would be an excellent committee room, and a room for engaging the public and interacting with the public. But it would also be a multi-purpose room and it could be used for many incoming delegations, for conferences that we host, for seminars, receptions, and so on. It would be a valuable use of the building and it would be not for any individual staff or member's benefit, it would be for the public.

The next items are sort of proposals for centennial events. The first one is . . . would require the involvement of all of the members and all of the offices in the building to host at some point during the centennial year a Legislative Building open house for the public. And this would be a way to try to get the

public involved in an event that focuses on celebrating our 100 years, our heritage, that's a legislative one.

There'll be lots of other events going on. There'll be a royal visit and so on, but those have a different focus. And, you know, it might be appropriate to do something relatively simple but just would allow the public to come in, come in to the cabinet room, come in to the Chamber, meet with their members, have another cup of tea, maybe some lemonade.

A Member: — . . . bring your own cup.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes. And we could have, you know, whatever kind of entertainment would be suitable.

The next project there is an idea for . . . We would hit several birds with one stone with this idea of creating a Web site of biographies of former members of the Legislative Assembly. It would involve the schools and students from across the province and get them involved in the legislative history by actually doing a project to research and perhaps interview or do research on their local representatives over the years. Teachers think this would be a great opportunity, and it would be done . . . put up on our Web site with the assistance of our IT staff. But it would take some resources to actually design the program, do the basic research, and prepare the materials and the communication materials that would be needed to set the guidelines and to communicate it through the schools and out to the students, and then interact with them.

Another idea that has been brought forward by a member is to hold a special commemorative session of the Assembly, outside of the Legislative Building, in Saskatoon perhaps, next year as a centennial event.

There are a number of examples of this type of thing being done in Australia, and Yukon, and other places. Sometimes they'll make it a real local event. In addition to the actual sitting, they will have other events and activities going on that you know bring a lot of students to make it a learning process.

This is something that we haven't devoted time yet to, to identifying the costs, because we just haven't got any idea what you would have in mind for the parameters and how much other public involvement you would want to try to initiate at that point.

Another option is, something that's been very, very briefly discussed is some sort of a joint centenary project with Alberta because they share the anniversary with us as well.

And any suggestions or ideas that you might have on these items would be appreciated. And some of them would actually be expenses for next year, so it's just whether you want us to proceed with doing some of the planning and work on them.

The Chair: — Now we're open for comments or questions or discussion on these two items, if any — B-budget request. The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would like ask some questions about the video streaming enhancement.

I guess my question relates to what impact this would have on downloading speed of the proceedings for people who are watching them live. Would this create more or less lag? And would this be for . . . During committee session, would this be both committees?

Mr. Barnabe: — Yes, the answer to the first question is, in the estimates there we have allowed to increase our capacity of the connection to the Internet to handle that extra enhancement.

Answer to the second question is, in our base estimates we've allowed for the two streams — one for the Chamber and then one for this room.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I guess what I'm thinking of, not so much the uploading from here, but the downloading by someone who was sitting at home watching the parliamentary proceedings. With a greater band width, would they have more or less difficulty in downloading?

Mr. Barnabe: — Oh, I'm sorry, I misunderstood the first time around.

In the composition of the video stream we do allow for people who don't have the capacity at home. Today in our stream we offer, it is actually like a 56 kilobit which is to allow a dial-in type user. Although they definitely won't get the same resolution and quality, they'll always get the sound, which has a higher priority. And we will allow for that as well in the new service.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But for those who are running say on a high-speed connection, on the dial-up you're going to . . . If you were downloading graphics at a regular rate, you're going to be in trouble. Obviously you're not going to be able to keep up with what's coming down and you're going to be lagging a lot.

Mr. Barnabe: — Of course their service would not be the same as the person who . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — But for someone on high speed, would they be able to maintain their download rate to get a continuous flow or would it be jagged? Would there be lag in there?

Mr. Barnabe: — The increase is 50 per cent over what it is today so that's a very incremental load on that high-speed connection.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So would this be better for them or would the current system be better for them so that it's a continuous stream.

Mr. Barnabe: — I'm sorry. For which type of users?

Mr. D'Autremont: — For someone on high speed.

Mr. Barnabe: — They probably would not notice the difference.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So it would simply be then that the picture quality would be better.

Mr. Barnabe: — Yes. There's various parameters to

manipulate when you do this. We do actually sacrifice what we call frame rate. Right now we have a fairly high frame rate compared to the other provinces, so we thought, let's look at BC and BC's lowered their frame rate. So the frame rate affects the ability to see something change rapidly. So if you were to film or stream a speeding car, you would need the high frame rate. But given the nature of the . . . what we call talking heads in . . . you know, basically there's very little movement, so we can sacrifice frame rate in order to get a larger window which is what BC and Quebec have done.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you. I guess my next question would relate — unless somebody else wants to talk about the video streaming — the Chamber sound system.

If Gary . . . In your search last year when we had that unfortunate incident where we had to shut the House down because we had no audio, May 26 . . . and I think that's an unacceptable situation for the Assembly that we cannot carry on our proceedings, and it looked at one point in time like it was going to be for a number of days as well. You went through a number of gymnastics to try and find the fault, the flaw, and to find replacement parts.

During your search, what did you find that replacement parts . . . what the availability was, is there very much out there? And of what standard, what reliability would any replacement parts be that might be able to be useable in our current system?

Mr. Ward: — The system is obsolete, and therefore there are no more replacement parts. They're not being manufactured. Whether or not there's any specific part that would be available to us, I think would be by luck if we found it.

The House of Commons is using the same . . . or was using the same system, and I have no idea what they did with their leftovers. But they had the same problem. They were losing their audio, and it wouldn't be reliable to use the used parts anyway. So I think we're pretty well stuck with moving on to a new system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So when did the federal government change their system over?

Mr. Ward: — I believe it . . . just within the last couple of years. I'm just trying to get it straight whether it was the Senate or the most recent one was the Senate or the House that changed over. But I believe they've both changed over to a digital system now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if we run into a comparable circumstance that we had on May 26 last year where we were forced to shut the House down because the audio system wouldn't work, we may be into the situation at that point in time of not being able to repair the system, not having any parts available, and then potentially having to shut down for a number of days or weeks.

Mr. Ward: — Yes, that's my opinion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — I just . . . maybe a question to the Clerk then. If the House is shut down for a day or two days or three days, what is the cost?

Ms. Ronyk: — It saves us money.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess it . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — No, I don't mean to be facetious, but the reality is that the House legally can function without sound systems or television; I mean that's all add-ons. But whether the House would wish to do that of course is the key. I mean if there was a crisis going on, it wouldn't stop the House from solving the problem, passing the Bill, whatever. But the House can legally function without the trappings of modern technology. It's just that it wouldn't be much desire to do that I don't think.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess then what this would cost to operate the House for a day, because you know the session, if it was off . . . If audio was off for three days, and we choose not to sit, those three days would be made up at the end. So really it is extending the House for three days.

Ms. Ronyk: — It wouldn't cost us . . . It wouldn't cost very much additional because basically if we didn't have . . . unless we had staff sitting here you know that we were paying. But there was no work — you know no *Hansard* work for example, to be done — generally what we would do is we wouldn't just call them in that day, you know, the non-perm people. But if we were expecting to get up at any time, we'd have to have staff sitting here on call, and that would cost, cost us.

The permanent staff are here anyway, so that doesn't matter. Members, we no longer pay per diem if you like, so it doesn't add to the bottom line costs there. We wouldn't be printing, so we'd be saving a bit there.

Mr. McMorris: — Well thank you. That's kind of good information when we get late into the session and realize that it doesn't cost a lot more to keep the session going. That has been accused.

But anyway the second question is, you have \$272,000 down here. When was that estimate done, and you know what are we looking at for inflation you know, and maybe even advancements in a system? How much is it going to cost four years from now? It has to be done sooner or later, and we realize it's going to be costing more each year we put this off. Do you have any sort of a guesstimate of how much it's going to cost if we continue to put this off for three or four or five years, which has been done over the last three or four years?

Mr. Ward: — I'm sorry; I would be guessing. I mean my guess at the cost of inflation is, you know, about the same as yours. The cost of the equipment in some cases could actually go down. And of course the last testament we had I think was based on the latest dollar value as opposed to the US (United States), so I think it's fairly accurate right now. But, you know, four years from now we've no way of knowing what the cost would be.

Mr. McMorris: — So the last estimate that you had done though for this, this would be the most recent that's in the

budget here? What would the last . . . do you remember offhand what the estimate was the last time you had it estimated?

Mr. Ward: — Prior to this estimate, I don't . . . that must have been a few years ago that we did an estimate on that. I don't know. Greg's guessing that it's 225,000 but again I don't have the figures in front of me so . . .

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To Mr. Ward, in light of the fact that . . . and I ask the question on the assumption that we're not moving forward with the budget. If that changes, the question's irrelevant.

But on the B-budget proposal, in light of the fact that one of the upper Houses, one of the national Houses has switched from analog to digital, has there been an attempt made — or if not, can there be an attempt made — to determine if there are parts that are warehoused or could be warehoused to draw from if need be?

I guess what I hear you saying is that there are, there are no Houses in . . . maybe I'm misunderstanding, but there are no Houses in Canada that are operating using the same analog system that we have, that we're currently using, that we could draw from for spare replacement parts if we had a problem over the course of the next year.

Mr. Ward: — Not that I know of. As I said, the federal House, I have no idea what they did with their system they took out, that they replaced. I can find out, but again you're facing using equipment that they replaced because they didn't trust it.

Mr. Hagel: — Right.

Mr. Ward: — And if we did get it, then we'd have to determine the viability of it.

Mr. Hagel: — And if ours breaks down, it's not working. It's better than what we got.

Mr. Ward: — Well I suppose.

Mr. Hagel: — No. And again I understand your recommendation for it and take it very seriously. But failing in the circumstance where that's not approved, then we have to live with what we've got and make the best of what we've got available. And that would seem to be a prudent thing to do as soon as possible if our concern is that it in fact may not be available or soon not available — if it still is — simply because other Houses have moved to other systems that no longer would value those kinds of components.

I have some other things but not on this subject. But if . . .

The Chair: — Then the Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The question that I would ask is, as this is a B-budget item, I'm assuming that Legislative Assembly Office has taken a look at this and is assuming that from a risk perspective it is relatively low risk that this is going to break down this year.

Mr. Ward: — I'm sorry, that it's a relatively low risk that it will break down?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Right.

Mr. Ward: — No. I wouldn't suggest that at all. I'm saying that we are running a higher risk than we have been for a number of years.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — So this would then lead me to the question of what we should depriorize instead in dealing with this budget, to deal with the 272, if this is going to move up as a high priority. What expenditures have been recommended that should be deprioritized to trade off?

Mr. Ward: — When the Assembly set up their budget, they looked at the priorities. You see the priorities before you. They are prioritized so that there is an A-budget, and then there is a B-budget. By the virtue of it being in B-budget, it was management's decision that this would be a lower priority. It would of course become a very high priority should something happen. There's a risk with everything I suppose. But it does remain a B item.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you.

The Chair: — If there aren't any other comments or questions on these two items . . . Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, just then if we're finished the sound system, just a couple of other things, Mr. Chair, if I may. On the repair of the mace, is there . . . I'm not sure what the damage to the mace is, if it's — thanks very much Gary — if it's fragile or dented or the current coating is thin. A good bottle of TurtleWax could that solve the problem?

The Chair: — The Chair welcomes Pat Shaw.

Mr. Shaw: — The base at some point in time — and I don't know where it was, prior to my tenure here — has been dropped. It's fallen over, I suspect. And the crowns on the top are damaged; they need to be straightened. And there's something loose inside it, and I suspect that that happened at that time as well.

As well, the mace is very intricate; as you know, you've had a close-up view of it. The gilding is starting to come off. As I carry the mace in practically every day, there is gold on my shoulder from the mace. It requires cleaning, and the cleaning products that are available adhere to the crevices and the finery of the mace. And it really needs to be taken apart, repaired, cleaned. It's almost 100 years old. It's 99 years old and, to my knowledge, has never been repaired and never been cleaned in its life.

And with the centennial year coming up next year, I figured this was a good opportunity to have it repaired properly and regilded.

Mr. Hagel: — Is there any potential to do some repair without doing it all? Is there like a \$2,000 . . .

Mr. Shaw: — Well to do the repair, the mace has to be taken

apart. To regild it, it has to be taken apart. And depending on the number of pieces that it comes apart in and I believe there's three or four . . . I mean, we're going to have to pay that again. And once it's apart and being cleaned and refurbished — when I say refurbished, repaired — that would be the time to regild it.

Mr. Hagel: — So in practical terms, it's all or nothing, really.

Mr. Shaw: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — In practical terms. Okay, thanks.

Mr. Chair, on the centennial . . . oh, sure. Sorry.

The Chair: — Mr. Thomson.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As I look at the expense of this, I do wonder if there's another option here, and that is for us to use the mace only on exceptional ceremonial circumstances and to seek some other instrument of the display of power.

I don't know what our other options are, rather than carrying this thing every day where it obviously increases the risk of it falling apart. Is there another option? Can we simply for the centennial get a Black Rod or something.

Mr. Shaw: — We don't have a Black Rod. Some provinces do. Some jurisdictions do. We don't have an alternate mace. And the mace is the semblance of authority of the Speaker in the House, and I think it's very important to our House. It's a visible symbol, and I think it's something . . . it's a heritage piece, and that to properly maintain it, we should look after it.

It was built by Ryerson and Sons in 1906 in Toronto. And really it came at a price of 400-and-some-odd dollars, and over the last 99 years hasn't cost us anything. And I think it would be terrible not to see that it's looked after. And as I say we don't have a replacement for it, or anything else that's of a similar symbolic nature.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well that would be an option is to seek something of similar symbolic nature.

Mr. Shaw: — But then again we're looking at how much you're going to pay to get something that's . . . to replace it. I think that's putting, you know, good money after . . . where it could be put into the actual artifact itself.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I just find it frustrating, and I've come to understand that this is part of being in government, but there are never alternatives; it's always it must be this or nothing. It's this . . . it's the same with the video-enhanced sound system, we're at all or nothing. Surely there must be some alternatives that come in at a lower cost. Because I think this is how we get ourselves into trouble that it's always then nothing, to the point that we get to a crisis.

Mr. Shaw: — Well I guess the alternative is just to use it the way it is. But, at some point in time it's going to have to be repaired and re-gilded. But the alternative is to use it as it is. So there's always an alternative.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I have no doubt of that Madam Clerk.

Do I understand that the B-budget then is prioritized in terms of its list, or is this in some kind of ascending/descending order?

Mr. Shaw: — It has not been prioritized.

The Chair: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Fair enough.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well Mr. Thomson was looking for alternatives. We do have in the province . . . The government has implemented a centennial celebration program, and perhaps as a centennial celebration project the refurbishing of the mace could be done in that area. Therefore it wouldn't be out of the legislative budget, but would be out of the centennial budget that the province seems to have considerable funds available for.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the centennial celebration, and I don't know if you're looking for just some commentary today or decision, but as I look at the four items that are proposed here, there are three that I would suggest, all of which would fall outside of the '04-05 fiscal year. And I would suggest that there be planning for a centennial event. I think the date that would strike me as being most appropriate would actually be something in the fall, to mark the 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Saskatchewan Legislature. So that would get us substantially into the '05-06 fiscal year.

The centennial project, the student Web site development strikes me as having significant merit and also reinforces the relationship with the learning system that we exhibit through the institute and parliamentary democracy.

And finally, the joint celebration with Alberta would be something that would strike me as being of merit to consider as well. The special commemorative session I think is fairly complex and there would be not just financial implications, but it would be a challenging thing to do. And I think given the fiscal circumstances that we have, it would be, from my point of view, the lowest in terms of value for centennial celebration relative to the cost involved. And I would be happy to discuss that further if you wish.

The Chair: — Thank you for your comments. The Chair recognizes Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. On the idea of a special commemorative session of the legislature outside of the Legislative Building, it was mentioned that Australia does this from time to time. And in discussion with those . . . I can only think of one jurisdiction that was doing it. But it seemed to be very popular with the member into whose jurisdiction it went, but it wasn't very popular with all of the other members who had to travel to whatever jurisdiction this was. So I think this is probably an idea that we should say thank you, but no thank you to.

The centennial project with the students' Web site, 15,000 seems to be a lot to me to develop a Web site. That just seems to me to be out of line with what the project . . . Most schools, if

you're dealing with high schools especially, are into learning how to do Web site development and this would be one of, could be part of that training program so that the . . . there would be very little cost to us. As far as doing research to members past, obviously that would be part of the project. So I don't again see what really we would as a legislature need to be doing that provided them with that information other than perhaps making the information available to them, access to the library, and those kind of things.

So I mean this is probably a worthwhile project. I just don't see that it really needs this much money to do it.

Ms. Ronyk: — This is for a student, summer student, to sort of plan and coordinate the project and develop the communications with the schools and Department of Education and so on. We would be doing the Web site stuff ourselves internally.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I would think though that, I mean the schools could maybe pick up most of this themselves to do it, you know put the idea out there, and let them present them . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — That's it. You put the idea out there you got to write something and that's what we need the help for.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, it doesn't take very long to write a notice to the schools and . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — Are you volunteering? Good.

Mr. D'Autremont: — No, I could write it up real quick. It may not be exactly what you want but they would have some information.

You know it would be interesting to do a joint celebration with Alberta, but again I would want to know more about this project before going ahead. And beef is cheap right now so that would, you know, they could do a barbecue. But I think we need to find out some more about that.

The legislative open house project may have some value, but I agree with Mr. Hagel that this is a project not for this budgetary year but for the next.

The items, the other items in the initiative, the Chamber refurbishing and the fourth floor, I think are all good ideas and are going to have to be done. And I think this becomes part of the prioritizing of expenditures for government. And they have money for many things but obviously not for all things.

And as Mr. Thomson said, that there's only one taxpayer but the taxpayer looks at it as to what benefits there are going to be. In this particular case I think, since it's our centennial year, we may be able to access perhaps some federal funding for assistance, centennial projects for Saskatchewan. And I think maybe that is an area that would be worthwhile pursuing for us. Whether that then becomes a question of would you seek their assistance for a development that would be completed in 2005, the centennial year, or would you seek their assistance for a project which would start in the centennial year for completion at some other point in time.

But I think there's only two provinces here in the near future that are having their 100th anniversary, that's Saskatchewan and Alberta. And I think it would be worthwhile approaching them formally to see if they were prepared to provide any assistance, say a centennial gift, to the province.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I think that concludes the discussion on this particular item. I see that some sandwiches have arrived and perhaps before we go to the decision items, starting with D, that we could just take a break and recess for a while.

Now should we try to get back here for 6 o'clock, shall we say? Do you want . . . need a full hour; 6:30? Fine. Agreed then, we'll recess until 6:30.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Members of the board, having spent several hours in the in camera session, I believe the board is now prepared to make several decisions. And I have before me some motions that have been prepared for us as follows to the decision.

The first decision item is referring back to item 3, and that is consideration of the budget of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And the proposed motion is:

That the 2004-2005 expenditure estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved in the amount of 122,000; and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Is there a mover? Mr. D'Autremont. Second, Mr. Yates.

Those in favour? Any opposed?

The motion is carried.

A Member: — Carried unanimously?

The Chair: — Unanimously. Next item is the item 4, the decision item respecting the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer. The suggested motion would be:

That the 2004-2005 expenditure estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of 761,000 be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Mover, Ms. Higgins; seconder, Mr. McMorris.

All in the favour of the motion. Any opposed?

The motion is carried unanimously.

Item 5, decision item with respect to the Office of Provincial Ombudsman. The motion would read:

That the 2004-2005 estimates for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,581,000 as follows: budget to be voted \$1,453,000; statutory budget \$128,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. McMorris. Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? Discussion on the motion?

Mr. Hagel: — Chairman, I'm sorry, could you just read that figure again?

The Chair: — Yes, that the 2004-2005 estimates for the amount of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved to the total amount of 1,581,000; the budgetary to be voted, 1,453,000; statutory, 128,000.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Mr. McMorris. Those in favour of the motion once again? Any opposed? The motion's carried unanimously.

Item 5, regarding the Children's Advocate's budget. The proposed motion is:

That the 2004-2005 estimates for the Office of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,150,000; the statutory portion of that being 128,000; the budgetary to be voted is 1,022,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Is there a mover? Mr. McMorris. Second, Ms. Higgins. Any comments? Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? The motion is carried unanimously.

The next item is item 7, decision item respecting the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The motion proposed is:

That the 2004-2005 expenditure estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$387,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Is there a mover? Mr. Hagel. Second? Ms. Higgins.

Any comments or questions? Those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Those opposed?

Motion is carried but not unanimously.

The next item, members, refers to item 8, section (d). The item is regarding payments to Chairs and Deputy Chairs and payments for other special duties within the Legislative Assembly.

The proposed motion is being handed out at this moment and it's a little long. I don't know if I need to read it out but I do want to put on record that this motion starts by saying:

That effective upon coming into force of the applicable amendments to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, directive 21, annual indemnity and allowances be amended by deleting section (7) and substituting the following therefore:

(7) Every member with additional duties in the Legislative

Assembly shall be paid an annual allowance for extra duties as follows:

And they are listed. And then:

(b) a sessional allowance for extra duties at the rate in effect at the time that the Assembly prorogues as follows:

And they are listed.

A member may assume any number of the extra duties enumerated above; however, no member shall claim more than one annual or sessional allowance for extra duties pursuant to this clause.

And then, clause (7.1) is authorizing the payment of allowances to the people who are occupying the positions of Chair and Deputy Chair of the policy field committees and of the Public Accounts Committee.

And section (7.2) which details that they shall be . . . these allowances shall be paid out monthly.

Is there a mover? Mr. Thomson. Is there a seconder?

Could we just then take a brief recess in camera.

A Member: — No, not in camera.

The Chair: — No, not in camera. We'll just take a recess then, please.

The board recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — Proceeding with that motion then, I have a mover, Mr. Thomson. Is there a seconder? Mr. D'Autremont.

Any comments or questions? Members ready for the question? Those in favour of the motion? I see everybody voted for it. Any opposed? None.

Motion is carried unanimously.

In order that the previous decision be implemented there is a motion as proposed as follows, members are getting a copy of it:

That Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy write to the minister responsible for The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to communicate the Board's request for amendments to the above Act to authorize the Board to establish certain positions with additional duties and to set allowances for these . . . for those additional duties.

Moved by Mr. Thomson, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont.

Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed?

The motion is carried unanimously.

The next item is a decision item with respect to caucus information technology enhancements. Does everyone have a

copy of the directive 7.3 with them? No? Yes? This motion has in effect the granting of, to each caucus an amount of \$1,000 per member to be used once, following an election, to establish their requirements for technology.

I should mention that caucuses must return any surplus that they would have at the end of . . . after any election so there's really zero start-up money for this type of thing.

So the proposed motion is:

That directive 7.3 as attached, the caucus . . .

Pardon me.

That directive 7.3, caucus information technology resources, be adopted as attached.

Mr. D'Autremont has moved the motion, seconded by Mr. Thomson. All in favour of the motion? Any opposed? The motion is carried unanimously.

Next motion is with respect to MLA travel and living expenses. Motion would read:

That directive 3.1, the MLA travel and living expenses be amended by a series of replacements:

deleting 20,000 km where it appears in subsection (11)(a)(i) and substituting 30,000 km. therefore, and;
deleting 20,000 km where it appears in subsection (11)(b)(i) and substituting 30,000 km therefore, and;
deleting 32,500 km where appears in subsection (11)(c)(i) and substituting 42,500 km therefore, and;
deleting 45,000 km where it appears in subsection (11)(d)(i) and substituting 55,000 km therefore.

Is there a mover? Is there a mover to the motion? Mr. Yates. Second, Mr. McMorris.

Please indicate if you're in favour of the motion. Any opposed? Motion is carried unanimously. It's understood then to be effective April 1.

Moving to item 8(g).

Mr. Hagel: — That was carried unanimously, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — Yes, it was.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you.

The Chair: — 8(g), item with respect to approving the budget, both budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Legislative Assembly Office. Proposed motion is:

That the 2004-2005 estimates for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$18,695,000 as follows: the budget to be voted is 6,319,000, and the statutory budget 12,376,000; and further that the 2003-004 amortization expense for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of 106,000; and that the 2004-2005 amortization expense for the Legislative

Assembly be approved in the amount of \$97,000; and further that such estimates and amortization expense be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Moved by Mr. Thomson, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont.

Any comments or questions? Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? Motion is carried unanimously.

Dealing again with the Legislative Assembly Office budget, this time with the revenue end of it, proposed motion is:

That the 2004-2005 revenue estimates for the Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount \$7,000; and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, Mr. Yates.

Any comments? Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? None. Motion is carried unanimously.

The last item that I have before me at this time is respecting a transition allowance. The motion would read:

That directive 13.1 transition allowance be amended as attached.

I believe everybody has a copy. The purpose of this is to try to even out the inequities that existed in the previous legislation with respect to who can get the allowance; and secondly to bring it more in line with the types of severances that are allotted in other provinces and also to executive positions in industry.

Is there a mover to this motion? Mr. Thomson. Is there a seconder? Mr. D'Autremont.

Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? Motion is carried unanimously.

Is there any further business? Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to express appreciation to you and all of the staff of the Legislative Assembly and the officers of the Assembly and their staffs for the excellent co-operation. We've covered a ton of material here. And in my judgment the materials were presented with a great deal of responsibility and awareness of the information we needed to know in order to make our decisions as responsible members of the board.

And I just simply want to express my thanks to you and the other officers, and would ask that you would communicate that to them on our behalf.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'd like to echo Mr. Hagel's comments about the good and diligent work that the staff of all the legislative officers carry out. And it's certainly a pleasure to work with them and we look forward to working with them over the coming year and years.

Having said that, I have one other small item I would like to raise. Perhaps if the Clerk's office could prepare a report, or the financial office, dealing with the policy surrounding the use of constituency allowances for training and just what the policy is on that.

The Chair: — Thank you. Are there any other comments?

Mr. Yates: — Yes, we also . . . I'd like to thank everyone for their hard and diligent work as well. We'd also ask the Legislative Assembly to provide for some options regarding our communication, constituency communication allowances, and in light of the enumeration . . .

A Member: — Constituency services.

Mr. Yates: — . . . constituency service allowance, pardon me. In light of the enumeration this year some options as to, to deal with that issue.

The Chair: — Any further comments? If not, then I'll entertain a motion to adjourn. Oh, Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Perhaps the financial office could also prepare us a report dealing with the accommodation portion of the travel allowance as well, and some potential options there that we have for dealing with that.

The Chair: — Is there a motion to adjourn? Thank you and . . . But before I put it to a vote, I just would like to echo some of the sentiments that have been expressed across the table and pass on to the Clerk and the entire staff of the Legislative Assembly a heartfelt thank you to the work that they've put in, the extra hours they've put in, just to put this together and also to provide the information that made it much easier for the board to come up with the decisions and the final analysis. So thank you.

A motion to adjourn is on, has been moved by Mr. Hagel.

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — A motion . . . Is everybody in favour of the motion? Motion is carried.

Mr. Hagel: — Is that unanimous, Mr. Speaker?

The Chair: — I didn't see anybody defer.

The board adjourned at 23:00.

