



# **Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

## **BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY**

### **MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT**

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



No. 1 — February 10, 2005

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY  
2005**

Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky, Chair  
Prince Albert Carlton

Mr. Glenn Hagel  
Moose Jaw North

Ms. Donna Harpauer  
Humboldt

Hon. Deb Higgins  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Don McMorris  
Indian Head-Milestone

Hon. Andrew Thomson  
Regina South

Mr. Kevin Yates  
Regina Dewdney

## BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Thursday, February 10, 2005

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

Mr. Graham Addley, Deputy Speaker, Chair  
 Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky, Speaker, Chair  
 Mr. Glenn Hagel  
 Ms. Donna Harpauer  
 Hon. Deb Higgins  
 Mr. Don McMorris  
 Hon. Andrew Thomson  
 Mr. Kevin Yates

**Staff to the Board**

Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services  
 Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
 Margaret Tulloch, Secretary to the Board

**Officials in Attendance****Office of the Chief Electoral Officer**

Jean Ouellet, Chief Electoral Officer

**Office of the Provincial Ombudsman**

Kevin Fenwick, Provincial Ombudsman  
 Lynne Fraser, Manager of Administration  
 Ken Gerhardt, Paradigm Consulting  
 Roy Hodsmen, Deputy Ombudsman, Regina office  
 Joni Sereda, Deputy Ombudsman, Saskatoon office

**Office of the Children's Advocate**

Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate  
 Glenda Cooney, Deputy Children's Advocate  
 Bernie Rodier, Director of Administration  
 Bliss Tenning, Intern, Aboriginal Management & Professional Program

**Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**

Gary Dickson, Information and Privacy Commissioner  
 Diane Aldridge, Assistant to the Commissioner  
 Pam Scott, Office Manager

**Office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

Judy Brennan, Director of Hansard  
 Lorraine deMontigny, Director of Visitor Services  
 Linda Kaminski, Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services  
 Pat Kolesar, Assistant Legislative Librarian  
 Iris Lang, Clerk Assistant (Committees)  
 Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian  
 Jeremy Phillips, Information Services Administrator  
 Gregory Putz, Deputy Clerk  
 Ken Ring, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk  
 Pat Shaw, Sergeant-at-Arms  
 Margaret Woods, Clerk Assistant

Deputy Speaker, Graham Addley, assumed the Chair in the absence of the Speaker, pursuant to sub-section 68.7(2.1) of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*.

**AGENDA**

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Ms. Harpauer, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Ms. Harpauer, that the Board consider the Estimates for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner without requiring the Commissioner to appear before the Board. Agreed.

**MINUTES**

The Chair noted that the draft minutes for Mtg #6/04 and #7/04 were distributed.

**ITEM 1****Decision item: Legislative Assembly Third Quarter Financial and Fiscal Forecast Report**

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

That the third quarter financial and fiscal forecast report for the 2004-2005 fiscal year be received and approved.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

**ITEM 2****Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman**

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,671,000, were presented by Mr. Kevin Fenwick, Provincial Ombudsman.

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

**ITEM 3****Decision Item: Review of the Information Technology Request from the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate**

The information technology request was presented by Mr. Kevin Fenwick, Provincial Ombudsman, and Ms. Deb Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate.

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

**ITEM 4****Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Budget for the Office of the Children's Advocate**

The Estimates, in the amount of \$1,192,000, were presented by Ms. Deb Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate.

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

**ITEM 6****Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer**

The Estimates, in the amount of \$791,000 (statutory), were presented by Mr. Jean Ouellet, Chief Electoral Officer.

**ITEM 8****Decision Item: Recruitment Process for Children's Advocate**

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

That the Board appoint a selection panel composed of:

- Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
- Chair of the Public Service Commission
- 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 in time for consideration by the Assembly in the spring session if possible, or if that is not practicable, as close to the vacancy date as possible.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute # 1605

**ITEM 9**

**Information Item: Transition Allowance for Officers of the Assembly**

The Chair distributed the information on a transition allowance for officers of the Assembly.

**ITEM 7**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**

The Estimates, in the amount of \$576,000 were presented by Mr. Gary Dickson, Information and Privacy Commissioner.

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

The committee recessed for a short time.

The Board resumed public meetings at 1:37 p.m.

Speaker Myron Kowalsky assumed the Chair.

**ITEM 10**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Legislative Assembly**

**ITEM 10(a)(i)**

**Review Budget Document**

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

Budgetary:	\$ 6,734,000
Statutory:	\$13,158,000
Total:	\$19,892,000

**ITEM 10(a)(ii)**

**Update on Chamber Upgrade Project**

Mr. Greg Putz, Deputy Clerk, presented information on the status of the Chamber upgrade project.

**ITEM 10(b)**

**Decision Items: B Budget Requests:**

The Board reviewed B Budget request for the Legislative Assembly in the following amounts:

i.	Legislative Assembly Gift Shop:	\$21,000
ii.	Centennial Celebrations and projects:	\$10,000
iii.	Development of a Committee Room on the Legislative Building fourth floor:	\$1.28 million

The Board recessed for a short time.

The Board agreed to meet "in camera" at 5:30 p.m.

The Board resumed public meetings at 9:30 p.m.

**ITEM 2 (con't)**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman**

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

That the 2005-2006 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,624,000 as follows:

Budgetary to be voted:	\$1,496,000
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 # 1606

**ITEM 3 (con't)**

**Decision Item: Review of the Information Technology Request from the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate**

Moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Harpauer:

That the proposal for a two-staged information system replacement be approved with the following funding for 2005-06:

Children's Advocate:	\$28,000
Provincial Ombudsman:	\$42,000

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1607

**ITEM 4 (con't)**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Office of the Children's Advocate**

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

That the 2005-2006 Estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,178,000 as follows:

Budgetary to be voted:	\$1,049,000
Statutory:	\$ 129,000

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 # 1608

**ITEM 5 (con't)**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner**

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

That the 2005-2006 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 # 1609

**ITEM 6 (con't)**

**Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Chief Electoral Officer**

Moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Harpauer:

That the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, in the amount of \$791,000 (Statutory) be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

Minute # 1610

**ITEM 7 (con't)****Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner**

Moved by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. McMorris,

That the 2005-2006 Estimates of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$488,000;

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

And

That the Information and Privacy Commissioner work with SPMC to investigate options around available space before adding additional staff.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

**Minute # 1611**

**ITEM 10 (con't)****Decision Item: Review of the 2005-2006 Estimates for the Legislative Assembly****ITEM 10(b)(i)  
(con't)****Decision Item: Legislative Assembly Gift Shop**

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

That the Board approve a grant of up to a maximum of \$21,000 for fiscal year 2005-2006 to the RSM Associates for the operation of a Gift Shop in the Cumberland Gallery, subject to such terms and conditions as may be agreed to in an operating agreement between SPMC and RSM Associates, and subject to approval by the Speaker.

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

**Minute # 1612**

**ITEM 10(b)(iii)  
(con't)****Decision Item: Development of a Committee Room on the Legislative Building Fourth Floor**

The Board instructed the Clerk to review and report on the cost of feasibility of other options aside from the fourth floor, and including the Press Conference Room and the Members' Dining Room, for a second committee room in the Legislative Building.

**ITEM 10(c) (con't)****Decision Item: Motion to Approve Budgetary and Statutory Expenditure Estimates for the Legislative Assembly**

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

That the 2005-2006 Estimates of the Legislative Assembly be approved as follows:

Budgetary: \$ 6,571,000

Statutory: \$12,872,000

For a total of \$19,443,000

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

The question being put, it was agreed to unanimously.

**Minute # 1613**

**ITEM 10 (con't)****Decision Item: Motion to Approve Revenue Estimates**

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

That Revenue Estimates for the Legislative Assembly in the amount of \$6,000 be approved for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

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

Minute # 1614

ITEM 11

**Decision Item: Constituency Assistant Benefits:**

**Amendment to Directive #6 – Constituency Assistant Expenses and adoption of Directive #6.1 – Constituency Assistant Benefits**

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

Effective April 1, 2005:

(1) That Directive # 6 - Constituency Assistant Expenses be amended as follows:

a) Delete clause (1) and replace with new clause (1) as follows:

Each Member is entitled to have payment made on his or her behalf for constituency assistant expenses incurred by him or her in respect of his or her duties as a Member in his or her constituency. The amount available to each Member for such services is aligned to Step 4 of the Junior Ministerial Assistant classification pursuant to The Ministerial Assistant Employment Regulations.

b) Delete clause (4) and replace with new clause (4) as follows:

The employment relationship exists only between the Member and his or her constituency assistant. Payments made by the Legislative Assembly on behalf of a Member to his or her constituency assistant may only be made after receipt of the necessary documentation, as the case may require.

c) Add the following new clause (5) as follows:

Prior to payment, a Member must authorize all payments made by the Legislative Assembly on the Member's behalf to his or her constituency assistant.

(2) That a new Directive - Directive # 6.1 – *Constituency Assistant Benefits*, as attached, be approved.

DIRECTIVE #6.1  
(s. 50(3)(e), c.L-11.1)

**CONSTITUENCY ASSISTANT BENEFITS**

**General**

- (1) Constituency assistants are eligible for vacation benefits and statutory holiday benefits in a manner similar to SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union) employees.
- (2) Constituency assistants are entitled to receive the same number of sick leave entitlements that are available to SGEU employees of the Public Service. The administration of constituency assistant sick leave provisions shall be in accordance with the Legislative Assembly Constituency Assistant Sick Leave Policy.
- (3) Constituency assistants who meet the eligibility criteria must be enrolled in the following benefit plans: Group Life Insurance Plan, Disability Plan, Dental Plan, Extended Health Care Plan and, where the constituency assistant chooses, Public Employees Pension Plan. Constituency assistants may participate in the Legislative Assembly Employee and Family Assistance Program.
- (4) In the event of the Member's death, the Speaker may authorize payments to constituency assistants pursuant to this directive.
- (5) Constituency assistants shall not receive any payments in excess of the amounts specified in this directive for any of the benefits that are authorized by this directive.

- (6) The cost of the provisions outlined in this directive shall be paid by the Legislative Assembly on behalf of the Member, but shall not reduce the amount of funds that are available to the Member under Directive #4.1 – *Constituency Service Expenses* or Directive #6 – *Constituency Assistant Expenses*.

#### Workers' Compensation Benefits

- (7) A constituency assistant is eligible to receive Workers' Compensation benefits if he or she is injured in the performance of his or her duties and the injury is compensable under the provisions of *The Workers' Compensation Act*. The administration of Workers' Compensation benefits will be in a manner similar to that used for SGEU employees.

#### Notice Upon Termination of Employment

- (8) A constituency assistant whose employment is terminated without just cause, or due to the defeat, resignation or death of a Member, shall receive pay in lieu of notice according to *The Labour Standards Act* provided that:
- (a) the Member provides formal written notification of termination, as the case may be, to the constituency assistant; and
  - (b) a copy of the notification is received by the Legislative Assembly.
- (9) The maximum notice period that will be paid under this provision is four weeks.

#### Constituency Office Clean-Up and Closure

- (10) Upon the defeat, resignation or death of the Member, any constituency assistant who is assigned responsibility for constituency office clean-up and closure may receive a maximum of seven consecutive days pay for performing this duty provided that the Legislative Assembly receives the appropriate documentation signed by the Member authorizing the assignment of this responsibility.
- (11) Payment for constituency office clean-up and closure duties shall be counted as part of the notice provisions outlined in clauses (8) and (9) above.

#### Severance Upon Termination of Employment

- (12) A constituency assistant whose employment is terminated without just cause, or due to the defeat, resignation or death of a Member, shall receive severance paid by the Legislative Assembly on the Member's behalf on receipt of the appropriate documentation signed by the Member authorizing the severance payment.
- (13) The amount of severance provided will be based upon the constituency assistant's years of service as follows:
- (a) a minimum of one year of service is required;
  - (b) one week severance pay per year of service with the Member to a maximum of eight weeks severance for eight or more years of service with the Member;
- (14) For the purposes of clause (13)(b), one year of service equals any twelve consecutive months of service.
- (15) For the purposes of clause (13)(b), payment will be calculated according to the rules governing Saskatchewan Public Service employees.

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

**Minute # 1615**

#### **ITEM 12**

#### **Decision Item: Directive #4.1 – Constituency Service Expenses: Raising the Minimum Value for Inventory Records**

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

Effective April 1, 2005, that Directive #4.1 – *Constituency Service Expenses* be amended as follows:

Delete the amount of “\$50” from clause (13) and replace with the amount of \$250”.

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

**Minute # 1616**

**Decision Item: Directive #4.1 – Constituency Service Expenses: Clause (15)**

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

That for the fiscal year 2005-06, the indexing provision in clause (15) of Directive #4.1 – *Constituency Service Expenses* not be applied to the amount of \$35,000 specified in clause (2).

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

**Minute # 1617**

**ITEM 13**

**Decision Item: Directive #3.1 – MLA Travel and Living Expenses: Amendment to Calculation of Allowance**

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

Effective January 1, 2005:

That clause (4) of Directive #3.1 – *MLA Travel and Living Expenses* be deleted and replaced with:

“Subject to clause (5), instead of clause (3)(d), with the required documentation, every Member who represents a constituency wholly outside the city of Regina has the option of claiming reimbursement for accommodation expenses in the city of Regina up to the maximum of \$30 for each day the private accommodation is available for the Member’s occupancy and is not rented to any other person. No claim for rent by any other Member in respect of the same premises may be reimbursed.”

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

**Minute # 1618**

**Decision Item: Directive #3.1 – MLA Travel and Living Expenses: Claim Form**

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

That effective January 1, 2005, the MLA Regina Accommodation Expense Claim Form, as attached, be approved as the form required by Members to claim for Regina accommodation expenses pursuant to clause (4) of Directive #3.1 — *MLA Travel and Living Expenses*.

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

**Minute # 1619**

**ITEM 14**

**Decision Item: Directive #21 – Annual Indemnity and Expenses: Amendment**

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

Effective April 1, 2005:

That minute #1602 of Meeting #6/04 be revoked and that Directive #21 – *Annual Indemnity and Expenses* be amended as follows:

(a) delete the number “\$65,001” in clause (1) and replace it with the number “66,431”;  
and

(b) delete the number “5,310” in clause (6) and replace it with the number “5,436”; and

That for the fiscal year 2005-2006, the indexing provision in clause (8) not be applied to either new number in (a) or (b) above.

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

**Minute # 1620**

Moved by Mr. Hagel that the meeting adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.





Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Constituency: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Regina Accommodation Expenses for the month of:** \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with the provisions of Directive #3.1 - MLA Travel and Living Expenses, I certify that:

- The address of my non-Regina residence is: \_\_\_\_\_.
- I own ☐ rent ☐ accommodation in the city of Regina.
- The address of my Regina residence is: \_\_\_\_\_.
- My Regina accommodation is owned or leased in my name and the transaction is not with another Member or with a person or an entity that is listed in clause (9) in Directive #4.1.
- For the period claimed, my Regina residence was available for my use and was not rented to any other person.
- This claim is for a reimbursement of expenses incurred by me for accommodation in the city of Regina.

Member's Claim: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Member's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum Monthly Claim Amount (Based on \$30/day times the number of eligible days in the month.)	
January - \$930	July - \$930
February - \$840 (\$870 in a leap year)	August - \$930
March - \$930	September - \$900
April - \$900	October - \$930
May - \$930	November - \$900
June - \$900	December - \$930

<b>For Financial Services Use Only:</b>		
Voucher #:	021 03730 273	541900
Calculations checked, posted and accounted for:		



The board met at 10:00.

**Deputy Speaker Graham Addley assumed the Chair in the absence of the Speaker, pursuant to subsection 68.7(2.1) of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.**

**The Chair:** — Welcome, members. I call the meeting no. 1, '05 of the Board of Internal Economy to order. The agenda and binder has been distributed.

And before we begin, I just want to advise members that as indicated in The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 68.7(2.1):

The Speaker is the chairperson of the board, but, if there is no Speaker or in the absence or inability to act of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker may act as the chairperson of the board.

So I'll be sitting in for Mr. Speaker this morning as the Deputy Speaker. And also I would like to welcome Mr. McMorris as a returning new member to the committee.

The agenda has been . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well he's been here once before and then he left and now he's back.

The agenda, the approval of the proposed agenda — could I have a motion to approve the agenda? Moved by Mr. Yates, the seconder by Ms. Harpauer. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried. Also, members, it has been indicated that the decision item no. 5, the review of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, that committee members are able to review that budget without the presence of the commissioner. Now I would like to have an agreement by the committee if that is agreed.

**Mr. Yates:** — I would move that we review this budget without the presence of the commissioner.

**The Chair:** — Okay. Mr. Yates has moved that the committee review the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner without his presence. Do we need a seconder? Seconded by Ms. Harpauer. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried. The first item is the minutes of the previous meetings. And there's been a distribution of draft minutes from meeting no. 6, '04 and no. 7, '04 and they are available in your binders. If anyone has any questions on the minutes? Okay.

Item 1 is a decision item and that is to review and approve the Legislative Assembly third quarter financial and fiscal forecast. I would need a mover and a seconder for that. Moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Ms. Harpauer. Is there any discussions on that? Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried. Item no. 2 is the review of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman. And I would invite Mr. Kevin Fenwick to come forward and introduce any officials that he has and proceed with his presentation.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Fenwick. I understand this is also your first meeting, first appearance before the committee, just as it is mine. So welcome.

#### **Office of the Provincial Ombudsman**

**Mr. Fenwick:** — It is, thank you. And I'd ask you to be gentle because of that.

**The Chair:** — I'll be as gentle as I've ever been.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Yes, thank you very much. And I certainly welcome the opportunity. As pointed out, this is my first time before the board. I've been in the position since October 1 of last year, so thank you for the opportunity to present.

And I would like to introduce a few folks that are with me here today. Joining me at the table are Lynne Fraser, who is our manager administration from Saskatoon, to my right. And to my left is Joni Sereda, who is deputy ombudsman out of our Saskatoon office. A couple of other folks that are with us here today, who are seated behind me: Roy Hodsman, who is the deputy from our Regina office, will be sitting in as well — wave, can you; and Ken Gerhardt. Ken is joining us sort of as a technical adviser and a special expert today. As you'll know, part of our proposal deals with an information management proposal. And Ken is with Paradigm Consulting, who is the technology supplier and support person for our office, so we've asked Ken to come and answer all the tough questions you might have for us on that part of it. So I welcome them as well.

Firstly, a brief apology for the . . . asking you to substitute a couple of pages in the initial report that we gave you with a couple of others. I felt a little bit like the folks on that commercial who are dealing with computer problems and trying desperately to make a good impression and at the same time are having to ask for numerous changes in the proposal. There were a couple of pages though that were printed in error because of a mathematical miscalculation. And so I thank you for your patience in allowing us to make that submission.

We had quite honestly thought that we were going to be able to use that error to our advantage, if you like, today, because initially we thought it was a problem with our computer system. You're going to be hearing from us in a bit that we have a bit of an antiquated system. As it turns out, it wasn't. It was human error. The individual who did the miscalculation suggested that it was an antiquated system, but it was him, but we'll be more charitable than that because it certainly wasn't. But there was that one change that we needed to make.

My thoughts about this morning would be to spend a few minutes, not reading through our proposal that we have for you but rather to hit some of the highlights, and would certainly invite questions as the presentation is being made. You may prefer to wait until the bulk of the presentation is in and then

ask questions that you might have. Certainly we're fine either way.

We have, as you'll be aware, a joint submission as well with the Children's Advocate office in terms of upgrading our information management system. And my thought would be to not speak to that until we've dealt with our portion of the budget; and then Deb Parker-Loewen, the Children's Advocate, we would suggest will join us up here and we can deal with that separately. And so if that works that's likely how we'll proceed, okay?

I don't propose to talk about the background information in terms of the office and what we do. That's at the front part of the proposal. But rather if I can — although I'm certainly open to questions — we'll concentrate on the money issues, the initiatives that we're talking about, and a bit of a report on what we're doing within the office.

We have four main areas of work at the Ombudsman's office. The one that most people are aware of, and the one that certainly takes up the bulk of our time, is the public complaints portion of what we do. And the quick summary of that portion is that over the years the number of complaints we receive continues to rise. Over the last five years we've had about a 25 per cent increase in the number of complaints that we receive. So, and I know you'll hear this from other agencies as well, but there are pressures on us. There are continuing pressures on us as a result of the work that we're required to do.

Part of our legislative mandate is to respond to public complaints. That is the most public part of what we do; that is and always has been the highest priority for us. And so because that's the core of our mandate, that's what has always drawn the most of our attention.

As well as the numbers continuing to rise — although there's been a slight variation in that for the past year as you'll note from some of the statistics — as well as the numbers continuing to rise, though, in a general sense, what we find is the complexity of the cases that we're asked to look at generally speaking has also increased. More and more we're asked to look at a variety of cases that take more effort on the part of the investigators at the office.

There's been a very slight dip, if you look at the raw numbers, in the number of complaints this year for matters within our jurisdiction. I just want to point out that the numbers are very, very similar to what they were last year. We believe that the small dip that took place this year, a reduction of about 60, I think, is largely due to a difference in reporting and what we report out of our Regina office. Our intake officer in Regina has not opened files this year on some of the matters that would have been opened last year, and so we think that that dip is almost exclusively related to that.

You will note, however, that there has been a significant reduction in the number of out-of-jurisdiction complaints that we've received, and I do just want to mention a couple of things about that for a moment or two. We've looked at why that is. Our numbers are down about 400 in the out-of-jurisdiction complaints. Partly we think it's because there has been a bit of a trend over the last number of years — and quite frankly that's a

welcome trend for us because we would rather spend our time dealing with matters that are within our jurisdiction than matters that are not within our jurisdiction — so it's a continuation of a bit of a trend. However the large decrease this year, or the larger decrease, we think is a bit of a blip on the radar. It isn't consistent with our experience why they would be down that much.

We look at why that is. It may be somewhat in terms of how we report in our office. Those matters, because they're not within our jurisdiction, are not the top of our priority list. If we miss one a day, that counts for 250, for example, over the course of a year. But as we've examined it, we think part of the reason for that reduction actually has to do with things like the telephone book. At one time, if you looked up complaints in the blue pages, you looked for the Ombudsman and that's all that was there. There are a number of other agencies now who list their own internal complaint departments under the complaints section of the blue pages, for example. The federal government does a better job of advertising its complaint resolution mechanisms as well. And so we welcome that change, and we think that largely the reduction in the out-of-jurisdiction complaints is a combination of those factors. People know better now than what they used to. Public education is better now than what it used to be in terms of where they go to resolve complaints.

The last point I'd make on that slight reduction is that those are not the complaints that take up our time. We received about 1,400 of them last year. We don't think it's fair to say, I'm sorry, we can't help you; that's outside our jurisdiction. So we do expend some time and effort with those folks, making sure they're on the right track, etc. But we'd ask you not to be misled by the reduction of the out-of-jurisdiction complaints because that's not where our time and effort is spent anyway.

With respect to the bulk of our work, those ones that have increased over 25 per cent over the last five years, and that's the in-jurisdiction complaints. I think that for those who might have been a part of the board last year, you'll remember my predecessor, Barbara Tomkins, talking about being stretched to the limit. And, I mean, we hear that all the time, I realize. But certainly my observations after a few months on the job is that that's where we're at. The ability that we have to respond to an increase in public complaints for our within-jurisdiction matters is stretched to the limit. We've gone, we think, as far as we can in terms of reallocating internal resources and doing things more efficiently and doing things differently in order to respond to those complaints.

It would be, I suppose, relatively easy for us to come back here year after year and say, look, our numbers are up; we need more staff. But we honestly don't believe that the sky is falling, the sky is falling, is the proper approach to take. We've taken a look at what we do and what we need to do differently, and one of the things that you're going to hear repeatedly from us today is that we need to be more proactive. We need to do some things differently so that in the long run, if we can't reduce the rate of increase of those complaints, at least we can stem the tide. I can't tell you that what we're proposing here is necessarily going to mean we come back next year, and we can say that our within-jurisdiction complaints have been reduced by 500 or 1,000. But I'm hoping that what we're proposing

today will allow us to at least stem the increase and perhaps even reverse the trend.

Specifically with respect to how we respond to those public complaints, what we're asking for are a couple of things. We're asking you to give us the funds to maintain the status quo staffing that we have right now. We've been able to reallocate some resources internally over the past number of years. And what we're asking for you to do now is to give us a certain degree of permanency, so that we can essentially have four ombudsman assistants in Regina and four in Saskatoon, and that we know that those folks will be there next year, and we can convert some term positions essentially into some permanent positions.

So although it means a difference in the number from our budget allocation last year, what we're asking for for responding to public complaints is the status quo for the staffing that we have right now. Not a change, although it does result in a change in some dollars.

The only new initiative we're asking for in our ability to respond to public complaints is a relatively small sum of money so that we can respond to particular challenges in the North. Barb Tomkins, my predecessor, did some very good work with the Children's Advocate's office and the Human Rights Commission over the past number of years looking at the specific challenges in the North and spent some time travelling in the North with those other agencies.

One of the things that we would like to do is spend more time in the North this year working with some of the communities on a pilot basis to say, what can we do better to make us more relevant for you? And what we're looking for is \$5,000 to do that. Not a large sum of money but enough that would at least cover some travel costs, perhaps some interpreters' fees, perhaps some rental of hall facilities, whatever it might be, to do some work up there to set up a model that works better than what it does now.

We did complete a survey this fall of our awareness throughout the province and, not surprisingly I suppose, what we found was, is that our services are both underutilized and the awareness of our office is lower in northern Saskatchewan and among groups of lower socio-economic status which tends to be the case in the North as well. So that relatively small request for \$5,000 is . . . allow us to set up a pilot.

The model we're thinking about — although we want to involve the communities before we go ahead — the model we're thinking about is to have a bit of a travelling office. Instead of waiting for those folks to come to us, to go to La Loche for example, La Ronge for example, perhaps once a month, perhaps once every two months, but on a regular basis so that people know that we're going to be there and they can come to us with issues. We would hope to do that in co-operation with the Children's Advocate's office and perhaps the Human Rights Commission as well so that we don't duplicate some services. But that's the model that we're thinking about at the current time — looking at four communities and I've just mentioned two of them.

The second part of our mandate is with respect to what's called

own motion investigations. We often refer to those internally as our systemic investigations or our major investigations. Clearly part of the mandate that's been given to us by the Legislative Assembly, we have done a lot of good work in the office in the past along those lines. *Locked out* is the report that was prepared with respect to the correctional centres, which is probably the largest example of the work that's been done. But we have a number of smaller examples of those kinds of things as well.

The difficulty we have is although our budget allocation in the past has identified some funds for those major investigations, more often than not we've had to rob Peter to pay Paul and that money has been used to deal with the public complaints. So there have been years when we have not had — and there've been a number of years — when we've not had someone in our major investigations position. Over the past year the office made a commitment to do that and the results have been very encouraging for us.

In the last year we had one ombudsman assistant dedicated to major investigations. She looked at a number of things; she did a major examination of the fairness of the Public Service Commission classification system, for example. She's just completed a report on the use of restraint chairs in corrections facilities, which is something new to Saskatchewan.

We've looked at remedies that are available to our office. As you'll be aware, we have a lot of power to investigate but not a lot of power to implement because what we do is recommend. And part of what she was looking at is remedies that are available to ombudsmen's office throughout North America and to see whether what we're doing is the most effective way to do things, and is just currently working on and is near completion on a major investigation looking at the policies and procedures at the Department of Social Services — Community Resources and Employment now — in terms of their ability to meet special needs. So those individuals with special needs and whether the policies in place are fair and properly address those special needs.

So with respect to major investigations, essentially what we're asking you to do is give us a little bit more money so that what we can do is continue to fund that special investigations position. We've had, I think, \$50,000 in our budget in past years, which as I've mentioned, we've often had to take away for something else. What we're asking for is new money to the extent of \$12,000, so that we can top up that, that position and maintain the status quo as we have it now and keep that position full. So a small increase works out to about \$12,000 in real money.

The third part of our mandate is what we call the ACR positions, officially known as the alternate complaint resolution positions. My own bias, because I come from an ADR (alternative dispute resolution) background, is I prefer the term appropriate complaint resolution to alternate complaint resolution. But whatever we call it, we have a couple of positions called ACR positions in Regina and Saskatoon that are folks who have a background in mediation and they deal with a number of issues that are more amenable to that kind of an approach. We're simply proposing the status quo. We want to maintain those positions. No change in dollars with respect to

our ACR positions at all.

And the fourth part of our mandate is under the heading of public education and communications. And I need to spend a few minutes here because it's an important part of our plans for the next number of years. There's two significant issues under that part of our mandate that deals with public education and communications. The first is a communications director or a communications officer position. And the other is what we'd like to do, and which is certainly an initiative that I want to champion, and that's with respect to a fair practices training initiative.

If I can talk about the communications officer position though first. We have at the present time been able to find some funds last year to fund a point seven five position for a communications director. That person is centred in Regina and we've had her for about half of the year. So about a third of a position is what it cost us last year over the course of the year. Her work has proven to be invaluable for the office and certainly for me as the Ombudsman. We've been very fortunate to have her produce a tremendous amount of work in an awfully short period of time. And rather than having somebody else in the office take a couple of days to prepare a brochure or a PowerPoint presentation or whatever it was, it's a wonderful thing to have someone who has that expertise and you can go and ask for something and you get it in a couple of hours and it's very, very high quality.

The kinds of work that the communication officer is doing for us are not optional kinds of things. This isn't an add-on; this isn't stuff that doesn't have to be done otherwise. This is work that has to be done by the office. We do get media inquiries; we need to respond to those. We do have to prepare an annual report. We do have to prepare a budget submission. We do have presentations that we are requested to make, and believe our mandate requires us to make, to the public.

If we don't have a communications director those jobs are done by someone with less expertise, firstly, and they're also done by somebody at the expense of other work that's within their authority as well. So the communications director position we believe allows us to meet that legislated requirement most efficiently, most effectively, with the person with the most expertise. So what we're asking for is to make sure that we can continue with that position.

In the long run the biggest advantage perhaps of having somebody in that position is that the decisions that are made around public education and communications are made strategically rather than on an ad hoc basis, which is what tends to happen if you don't have somebody dedicated to those kinds of things.

The last comment I'd make with respect to the communications director is that we did do a small survey, provincially, last year, last fall, to talk about or to inquire about awareness of the Office of the Ombudsman. There was some good news in it. The good news was, is that the numbers show us that over 70 per cent of people in Saskatchewan say that they know about the Office of the Ombudsman. And that was a little bit higher than we thought and it was great news. The bad news was that in the follow-up questions when they were asked what you

know about the Ombudsman, the accuracy of their awareness was only about 20 per cent.

And most of us I guess are from the same generation, will remember Robert Cooper from that old CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) show *The Ombudsman*. That's what most people think we do, right? We investigate everybody — we can investigate their neighbour, we can investigate the federal government, we can investigate whatever it might be. And that's not right of course.

So a big part of what we need to do with the communications director position is increase not necessarily the level of awareness, but the level of accuracy of awareness. We have some work to do is what we're saying in terms of making people aware of what the Ombudsman can and cannot do for them.

The second part of our public education and communications mandate is, what we're talking about, is a fair training initiative. We do some work now working with government departments and agencies and boards, etc., largely talking to them or with them about what the Ombudsman does. What we think we need to do to make some changes in the long run is not just to go and talk to them about what they should do when they get a letter from the Ombudsman, but rather what they should do so they don't get a letter from the Ombudsman. And that's what we're calling our fairness training initiative.

Our mandate essentially is to make sure that government treats its citizens fairly. And we think that there is some work to do, and we think we can play a vital role in this, to examine policies to look at the way government treats its citizens and do some fairness training, to do some work with them so that not just the results are fair — and for the most part government does a pretty good job in making sure that the results are fair — but that the processes are also fair that lead to those results, and that's what we're calling our fairness training initiative. We think in the long run that can pay dividends in terms of the level of satisfaction with government, can pay dividends in terms — selfishly from our perspective — in terms of the number of complaints we receive.

Certainly when people call us, the tenure of their complaint is generally, I don't like the result. But when we discuss matters with them, more often than not or as often as not it's, I don't like the way I was dealt with. And that's what the fairness training initiative is all about.

We want to make a start on that this year and so what we're asking for is \$45,000, which is about a half of an ombudsman assistant position. And what we need to do to bring this initiative to fruition is two or three things.

First of all if we're asking our people to go out and train other government agencies or train government agencies in this kind of work, we need to train the trainers. We need to spend some time getting our folks up to speed in terms of what it takes to be an effective deliverer of this kind of service. And so that's part of what we're talking about.

We will, we expect, partner with other agencies and we might have to hire some agencies to work with us to develop a

curriculum. And a large part of where those funds come from is because we're stretched to the limit on our ability to respond to public complaints now, if we're going to ask those investigators to develop something new, to develop some curriculum, then we need to backfill those positions. We're going to have to hire somebody to deal with the complaints while the current investigators are developing this curriculum. And that's where the sum of \$45,000 comes from.

Part of what I believe I was hired for was my background, and part of my background is delivering training so that people deliver services better. So I would like to think at least that I sort of have been given a mandate to say yes, this is something that we would like you to explore in the Ombudsman's office and this is part of what comes out of that. Work along these lines has been started in the past at the office and there's been some good work done. What we are talking about is an expansion in that role.

We really look at this money as an investment. We don't believe that this is spending money; we look at it as an investment. And whether we will be needing to continue that level of funding down the road, I don't know. I can't tell you that it'll be a one-year commitment because it takes longer to develop curriculum, etc. But our hope would be is that once the curriculum is developed, there'll be a lower requirement for additional funds down the road. So that's our sort of last new initiative, other than the information management which we'll speak to in a few minutes, and that's with respect to the fairness training initiative.

One point I guess before I conclude my remarks, and that is it is important for us for you to know that we don't come with this as our wish list. We have a wish list. I haven't talked about that and we haven't included it in the submissions.

There's lots of other things we could ask you for. I mean, we need help with our intake. We need more people taking the complaints as they come in. There is a lot of equipment in our office that we would like to replace. I worry about our staff with their telephone headsets that are attached to the phone, when they go to grab a file and just about choke themselves as they walk away. We'd love to have some cordless headsets, those type of things. I'm told that the furniture in my office was brought to the office by the original ombudsman, Ernie Boychuk, in 1973. We'd like to replace that kind of thing as well. But that's the wish list.

The things that we're talking to you about here, the 5,000 for the pilot, the maintaining the status quo positions in the initiative, those, for us, are the essentials for allow us to deliver our mandate. And so we recognize that we're asking for not an insignificant amount of new money. But we do firmly believe that that's what we require in order to deliver the mandate that's been given to us by the Legislative Assembly. Welcome to entertain questions.

**The Chair:** — Questions by members? Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the personal services summary provided on page 17, there's an indication you clearly explained to us, the \$12,000 for the investigator in Saskatoon. But the \$10,000 increase for general counsel, could you explain

to me why there would be such a significant increase in a period of time when generally we are in 1 per cent wage increase modes.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Certainly. It's catch-up. And I can give you the background to that because that's a matter that's just been concluded.

We have a general counsel. He's been with the office since 1975, I believe. When he originally came on with the office, there was a four-stage categorization for Crown counsels — there was a Crown counsel I, II, III, and IV. A number of years ago, those positions were compressed so that now for people in the Crown counsel position, you have a Crown counsel 1 and a Crown counsel 2. The old levels I, II, and III were all compressed into Crown counsel 1; the people who used to be a Crown IV are now Crown 2s.

At the time that that happened, our general counsel had many, many years working with the office, and at that time the decision was made that he should be a Crown 2. But the order in council for some reason, and we understand that it was an oversight, the Crown ... or the order in council appointment designating him as a Crown 2 set a specific salary level, rather than saying he will be paid at the Crown 2 level. The result of that is he's been frozen at a salary level since 1997. And it's come to our attention that he has not received the increases that the other Crown 2s have received since 1997. And what they've received is, I believe on April 1, 2004 ... 2003, sorry, they received a 6 per cent increase. On April 1, '04, they received a 2 per cent increase, and they have another 2 per cent increase coming on April 1 of this year.

So all we're saying is, and what we've actually ... what's happened is the order in council has already been passed saying he will now be paid at the Crown 2 level rather than he'll be paid at a fixed amount.

Now to his credit, he didn't ask for any retroactive pay and we haven't paid him any retroactive pay. Effective February 1, he's paid the same level as all of the other Crown 2s in the province. And this is purely catch-up without any retroactivity. So it looks like a big number, but in some ways it's a cheap way out of it because there was no retroactivity.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you. A follow-up question, Mr. Chair. Could you give me an FTE (full-time equivalent) breakdown to the number of employees and classifications, more or less, in and out, that you have? There seems to just ... pops the number out 8,000 for out of scope; 1,100 for in scope for this year. Just trying to ...

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Sure. I can give you a breakdown of the office by Saskatoon and Regina; I'll probably do a general. We have the Ombudsman; we have a general counsel, who is headquartered in Regina, who is full time; we have two deputies, one in Regina, one in Saskatoon, who are both full time; we have three ombudsman assistants presently in Regina and three in Saskatoon, who are full time. In addition we have one ombudsman assistant ACR — these are the designated alternate complaint resolution positions — one in Regina and one in Saskatoon. So that's the four OAs, ombudsman assistants in each location.

We have one full-time complaints analyst in Regina and one in Saskatoon. And we also have an additional point six position in Saskatoon for complaints analyst. So one in Regina; 1.6 in Saskatoon. We have our manager administration, Lynne, who's here, and that I think covers all of our out-of-scope staff. That's all of the out-of-scope, and all of those people are full-time.

Sorry, we have the communications officer right now who's out of scope, in the point seven five position. Sorry, yes, one more out of scope. We also have my executive secretary, or the office executive secretary who is full-time; she's also out of scope.

Then we have two full-time, in-scope positions, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon, and they are the receptionists.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — So the total equivalent is 18.65 FTEs.

**The Chair:** — Okay, then. Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question about the communication director position. You said it's a point seven five position.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Yes.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — And you are requesting 47,000 for that position. How did you pay for it last budget?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — A large part of it came because of the transition from the old ombudsman to the new. We had a period of time when, although the Ombudsman position was not vacant per se, our general counsel was acting ombudsman for a number of months between the transition from Barb Tomkins to myself. So most of that money came from the salary we were not paying for general counsel.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — So this request would remain at the point seven five position itself. It still would be a part-time position?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Yes, that's right; that's right.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I'd like to pursue this question. Last year it seems to me we considered the funding for communications director, and the board denied the request. I'd be curious to know why the Ombudsman felt it was important to create this position after the board had denied funding for it and why you wouldn't have returned to the board to seek that funding first.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — I can't respond, of course, to what happened last year because I wasn't here. The decision to hire the communications person was made by the office before I arrived on the scene. All I can tell you is that it's an essential position from my perspective and from those at the office. So they were able to find the funds internally without requesting any additional funds by special warrant, I suppose, in order to fill that position.

I suppose it would have been possible for the office to say, well we've saved some salary on vacancies. The large part of it was the general counsel being vacant. We had another vacancy for part of the year as well. I suppose it would have been possible to say, well we'll hand that money back. The office identified that the need was sufficient enough that if it could be met without having to come back for additional funds, they chose to do so.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — And yet you are coming for additional funds now.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Yes, we are.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Why did you decide to staff this on a permanent basis rather than on a term basis then, understanding it was on one-time money?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — It's on a term basis. The term ends March 31.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — So there's no additional cost if we eliminate this position then? No liability?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — No.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions? No further questions. The next item before the committee is a review of the information technology request from the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate. And I understand there's a presentation that you would like to make, so I welcome Ms. Parker-Loewen.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Well good morning. Kevin Fenwick and I are coming back again to raise the question again of the information management system that we jointly share between the Children's Advocate and the Provincial Ombudsman. And our understanding last year was that we would be welcome to bring it back, so we have. And you have in front of you the request in both of our budget submissions, but I thought I'll go through it briefly and then we could answer any questions. We also have with us Ken Gerhardt, who is the consultant that we've been working with from the Paradigm program, who we hope can maybe help us answer any of the technical questions that Mr. Fenwick and I aren't able to do.

So as you know, we do have an information management system that we use to conduct our businesses. Our existing system continues to be unstable. It has performance issues and it continues to be unreliable. Neither of our offices has adequate annualized funds to undertake a replacement of the existing system, and therefore we're again seeking funding from this board for that purpose. As you probably are aware, we jointly share and manage our information technology and our resources under a strategic plan that we have submitted to the board in the past. We store the information in a system that maintains the data on the complaints that we get from the citizens, and that's our primary source of data on which our programming decisions are made.

This system was developed in 1994, actually prior to the establishment of the Children's Advocate office by the then

ombudsman. When the Children's Advocate office was established, we made some modest adaptations to it in 1994. And we've continued to use that modified, but never developed for the Children's Advocate, data system process. The software platform that it was developed on in 1994 is no longer supported by the manufacturer of that particular software.

In 2003-2004 we did a detailed information management needs assessment. We analyzed our systems, and based on that, we prepared a joint funding request which was presented to you last year. And we didn't have that — those funds — approved. However our understanding was that if the problems persisted that we were welcome to bring it back to you for your consideration again.

The status of — the current status — of the system we have now is that it continues to give us the same kinds of problems that we've been having and it continues to be increasingly difficult to support that system. We're unable to implement sound risk-management strategies based on that current information system. And we think that by not proceeding that we're going to continue to have ineffective and problems ... What we do now is do a number of different kinds of hand counting to verify the reliability of the system as best as we can.

In addition, there's increased costs to productivity and operations each time we continue to carry on with this now quite old system, 10- to 11-year-old system. We have a difficulty to ensure program accountability, reporting, and performance management. And in the days now that we have of a desire for all of us to have increased public accountability and a desire for our offices to have and report on indicators of our success, we want to make sure we have a system in place to keep that information in a way that we can report — are we doing what we say we're going to do and are we getting the results that we want. And we're afraid that we might at some point lose some data, but at this point we're still continuing to support it, although it continues to have pressures and costs to our office that we don't think are effective or efficient.

In total we're requesting a two-staged replacement cost. So we've come back to you with a different kind of request and one that's substantially less than what we had brought forward last year. And we're also proposing that it would be staged in over two years, which would reduce the impact on the system over one year. So we're looking at a two-staged approach to replace the existing information management system.

And in conclusion, we're asking for \$70,000 in this fiscal year and then an additional \$40,000 in the upcoming fiscal year to manage this replacement over a period of two years, with a distribution of the funds, 60 per cent of it into the Ombudsman budget and 40 per cent of that into the Children's Advocate budget.

We want to ensure that the system is not only secure but that it has integrity, that it's reliable, and that it's available for us to make critical programming decisions now and into the future.

So with that we would welcome any questions you have.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay, Mr. Chair. Have you reviewed this request with the Information Technology Office and have you had any discussions with them, any feedback from them?

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — We have talked to the Information Technology Office, and we've gotten some good advice from them with regards to the kinds of systems that we need. And they in fact supported that we do need to have a replacement to our system. But because we're not an arm of executive government, we're not eligible or we don't qualify to get support services from the Information Technology Office as Crown corporations, commissions, and independent officers; we're not a part of that system.

But we have consulted with them and they have supported that we, we indeed have an antiquated system that needs some updating.

Mr. Fenwick, if you have any further comment to that.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — My information on that is certainly ... it's before my time, so I'm gathering it from what I've been told by others in the office. But yes, that's my understanding is, is that we don't fit within their mandate because of who we are, partly.

But also because we're looking at development of new software, what I understand is, is that the ITO (Information Technology Office) to this point has not been in the software development business so are not able to provide us with that.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I'm curious about the development of new software. Every time I hear that I just can see the dollar signs in some consultant's eyes.

What kind of rigorous process has been gone through to make sure that we are not simply able to buy this kind of a program off the shelf? I'm not big into reinventing the wheel in IT (information technology), and I have yet to see an IT project come in on the budget that we've projected it for.

**Mr. Fenwick:** — I'll take a stab at the first part of it. I share those concerns. And personally, I might have had a bias towards an off-the-shelf system, and we have examined that. And I'll talk about the one that I was personally involved in.

The BC (British Columbia) office of the provincial Ombudsman has a package that they've developed that's for sale. And so we spent time with them, talking about what that would be. For example, that system happens to be used in Alberta as well.

We have some difficulties. One is that because of our situation in Saskatchewan where we're sharing services with the Children's Advocate's office, the Children's Advocate's office, or its equivalent in British Columbia, found that the BC Ombudsman's package didn't work for them. So they have their own. So then we're faced with the difficulty of trying to find a package that can work for both offices. And that's more difficult to find. The other difficulty that we have with an off-the-shelf package is that we don't have the most up-to-date hardware in the world either. And some of the off-the-shelf

packages, we are advised, won't run on our hardware or won't run properly on our hardware. So that's part of the answer.

The other is that when we're talking about software development, we're not talking at this point, in the interests of cost saving, at starting from scratch. What we're talking about is, in the proposal that's coming forward this year, is taking the model that we have now, putting a new platform under it so it's expandable down the road, but building on what we already have. So there should be — although I recognize the concern — there should be considerably less risk of this being an open-ended package.

We're not going to write anybody a blank cheque. We've examined it; we think this is the best way to go. We've looked at a number of off-the-shelf packages, and I'm not the computer expert certainly in the office so even the names of some of the other packages slip my mind. But we've looked at off-the-shelf, off-the-shelf packages that you and I could walk into Future Shop probably and get, maybe not quite that easy but . . . We've looked at models from other provinces and we believe that this is the most cost-effective way of doing it.

That's part of the reason that this year's proposal is considerably less money than last year's, is because we've taken out some of the soft costs around staff training, etc., but partly because we're talking about building on the existing system, putting a new platform under it. And this is a good building, I guess, to be talking about raising something and putting a new foundation under; that's really what we're talking about here. But there should be less than saying we're starting from scratch.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I think the experience would show that the smaller the operation, the tougher it is to manage the projects in IT. There's simply not the technical expertise within the organization to do that. How would you anticipate managing that?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Well that's where I would hope that the ITO would be of assistance to us, certainly. We have a relationship with Paradigm that . . . quite frankly, we trust them. And perhaps we could ask Ken to comment on some of this as well. But part of it is, is we have a relationship with them that we trust. On the other hand, I've been involved in enough of these projects peripherally in the past to know that . . . I mean I don't give my garage mechanic a blank cheque either. And I would hope that the ITO would be of assistance to us to help us do that. We do not have the expertise within our office to manage that project on our own.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions?

**Mr. Fenwick:** — Mr. Chair, could I just add one other thing. I'm not a . . . I'm a fairly small "c" conservative when it comes to my own computer stuff at home as well. We don't have the fanciest technology, and I bring that philosophy to the office. And so as somebody who's come to the office fairly recently, I maybe have a different degree of objectivity.

The difficulty I see with the system we have now is I try to look

at it from the user's perspective and the client's perspective. The frustrating thing for me is when I sit down at my computer and I go into our complaint tracking system — and that's really what we're talking about here, because I have a complainant on the other end of the telephone — one of the things we need to do is punch up that client's previous files. Well I can do that three times in one day. And one time it'll tell me we have three previous files. One time it'll tell me we have one, and one time we don't have any at all. So the reliability of the system is suspect.

The other difficulty we have is because this is an old system. This is built on . . . I'm told that the expected lifespan of a software program is 7 to 10 years. We're now on about 11, and it would be a couple of years before this is implemented. So the interaction between the software and the hardware isn't very good. We have dead time where I'll be on the phone with a complainant, and I'll try and punch up that file, and I'd just get a screen that blinks back at me for three, four minutes sometimes, and there's just nothing there. I mean it comes eventually — although it's not always reliable — but it does come, sometimes.

We can punch up reports, and we don't always get the same numbers — which is why I said to you somewhat facetiously when we started that we were going to try and blame this on the computer system. That wasn't a surprise to us because we can ask for reports, and we can get different data from one time to another. And so we really did think that was a computer problem, and in a sense it still was. Part of the problem that there was reason for human error when we were giving you our basic numbers for complaints last year is because for something as basic as that, our current system can't give us totals. So we punch up some of the information or punch in the request, we get some information back, but then there's an extensive manual element where we need to go through and add up some of those numbers. That's the state we're at with it, with our system now.

So I guess back to your question, Mr. Minister, we know we have to replace the system. There's just no doubt about that. Now this is the proposal we're looking at right now. We're not telling you that if we have the funds to do it that we're going to go with this proposal tomorrow either. We think we've got a handle on this, but we know there would need to be further inquiries and further due diligence before we committed ourselves to this package.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions by committee members? Okay. Seeing none, I'd like to thank you, Mr. Fenwick, for your presentation. And we'll move on to item no. four, which is the Office of the Children's Advocate, Ms. Deborah Parker-Loewen, and review the 2005-06 budget. So thank you, Mr. Fenwick, and thank you to your officials. And turn the table over to Ms. Parker-Loewen. And if you could introduce your officials as well.

#### Office of the Children's Advocate

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Well good morning again. I'm very pleased to introduce to you this morning Glenda Cooney, who's the deputy children's advocate in our office and Bernie Rodier who is our director of administration. And with us today too

we're very pleased to have Ms. Bliss Tenning. She can identify herself. She is an intern in our office with the Aboriginal management and professional internship program with the Public Service Commission, and we've been very thrilled to have her as an integral part of our office now for a few months. And she's been learning about budget process so this is one part of her internship learning activities.

Well here I am, giving you my tenth and what will be my final budget as Children's Advocate, so it's my privilege to again appear in front of you and present our 2005-2006 budget proposal for the Children's Advocate office.

Because this is my last budget proposal, I just thought I'd preface my remarks with a few comments before I go to the specific budget request. When I think about these 10 years I want to say that I have appreciated greatly the very thoughtful support that I've received from the members of the Legislative Assembly and in particular from those 10 years ago who crafted the legislation that we're continuing to work with.

That legislation that was prepared by the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) at that time and the officials at that time, and which created our office in 1994, has been visionary legislation — not just for Saskatchewan but it has served as a prototype for other Children's Advocate offices across Canada and elsewhere in the world. So I just want to say thank you and congratulations to those MLAs and to all of you who did that excellent work that many years ago and that we're continuing to use as our foundation in the work that we do in this office.

We have recently renewed our strategic plan for the office, and we have once again utilized our legislation and the responsibilities outlined in that legislation as the foundation for our strategic plan, and we think that it continues to be a very solid piece of work. Our goals and objectives can clearly be linked to the legislative authority that you've given us as elected members, and it continues to serve us in good stead.

We're directed in our legislation to promote the interests and well-being of children and to provide advice and recommendations regarding the interests and well-being of children to you as elected members and to the public. We've been working to strengthen and solidify the work that we do in this regard throughout these 10 years and in the past year as well. Getting ready for succession planning, if you will, has been one of the activities of the past year in my office.

We actively promote the protection of the rights of children. And our advocacy work is guided by what we believe is an unwavering belief in our office that all children have a right to receive the level of service that they need and are entitled to by government departments and agencies. We actively work for systemic change to improve government practices, policies, and legislation. And we do this in a number of ways in accordance with the Act that we have.

On a personal note, I want to say that the 10 years have been a real challenge for me. And we wouldn't be doing the work we do without the understanding and also the unwavering commitment to children that you, all of you, as elected officials have and the public officials that we deal with every day also have to the children of our province. I also want to thank my

dedicated staff. It's been a privilege for me to work with them, and they're going to continue to be there even after I leave next month.

There have been some tough issues in these 10 years. There've been some tough conversations between my office and government departments and agencies. None of that has been easy, but it's always been respectful. We continue to produce reports, make recommendations — the office is going to be doing that in the next month or so — and we'll also continue with that when I go. I do believe that we all have a strong commitment to the children and their families and to the work that we do.

So with regards to our 2005-2006 budget request, we've essentially prepared a status quo budget. We haven't asked for any particularly big, new initiatives other than the information management funding. Our individual advocacy work has been relatively stable the last few years. We've, for the most part, been able to complete the child death reviews that we do in a more appropriate timeline. And we'll always have new projects to undertake, which we'll work to do this year within our annualized budget. As you've just heard, our information management system requires replacement and that that is an outstanding area of concern for me.

But with those introductory remarks, I'm just going to summarize that we're therefore requesting an increase to our budgetary statutory increases, which are outlined in the document that you have in front of you. An overall increase — I'm not sure how much detail I want to just take us through — but the overall increase from our 2004-2005 budget is 3.7 per cent which includes both personnel and non-personnel expenditures. And then when you add in the requests that we're making for the information management system, the total percentage increase is 6.09 per cent with a total request of \$1.22 million. So with that I'd pleased to take any questions you have.

**The Chair:** — Any committee members? Mr. McMorris? Are there any other committee members that want to add something, ask any questions? Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — If I might just thank Dr. Parker-Loewen for her service to the Assembly, certainly we've had an opportunity in the Assembly proper to thank you for your work, but I want to join with other MLAs who have had the opportunity to thank you for your leadership in this last decade. I agree that Saskatchewan has had a tremendous opportunity to lead this country in terms of the work with children and children's rights. And that has, I agree, not always been easy to sort out what the framework of the issues are or how we approach them as a government and a legislature, but I do believe that the work that you've done through your office, and undoubtedly that your office will continue to do, has been a great service to the people. And I want to thank you for that.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Thank you.

**Mr. Hagel:** — I don't have any questions. I'd just like to concur with Mr. Thomson's remarks but also add, if I may, I've had opportunity, Mr. Chair, to have worked together with Dr. Parker-Loewen in her capacity as Saskatchewan's first Children's Advocate in a couple of different ways — in

addition to being a member of the legislature, formerly as a Speaker, and then later on particularly through responsibilities related to the portfolio of Social Services, and Community Resources and Employment. And I'd just like to say, Deb, that I think the children of Saskatchewan have been well served, that the bar has been set high, as it should ought to be, and that this is a better place for kids than it was a decade ago because of the work that you have led, you and the folks in your office over the course of the last decade. And to simply add my personal words of thanks to you and to wish you well in your post-advocate career.

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

**The Chair:** — Any further accolades? Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — I'm welcoming questions too.

**The Chair:** — We've got all morning. Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you. I also do not have questions, but want to thank you for your valuable work throughout the years. You've been working with our most valuable resource in our province and that's our future, our children. So thank you for your service. You'll be hard . . . very difficult to fill your shoes.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — It'll be your next task.

**The Chair:** — Any other comments or questions? Seeing none, I'd just like to add to the chorus. Thank you for your 10 years of contribution to Saskatchewan and your presentation here today, and thank you to your officials. Thank you very much, Ms. Parker-Loewen.

Committee members, item 5, we've already agreed to review the budget in camera without the presentation of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. So we'll move directly to item 6, which is the review of the '05-06 budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. And I would invite Mr. Jean Ouellet to come forward and introduce his officials and give any presentation that he may have. Welcome to the committee.

#### Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Thank you very much. I would love to introduce officials today, but my assistant chief electoral officer is on bereavement leave. His step-mother passed away so he's absent. I'd like to introduce my finance manager but we're in a staffing process for this position. I'd like to introduce my manager of operation but she has pneumonia, so . . . I had to leave my receptionist at the office. Sorry but . . .

**The Chair:** — How are you feeling?

**Mr. Ouellet:** — I'm fine, I'm fine. I just have some brief remarks since this is my first opportunity, Mr. Chair, members of the board, as this is my first opportunity to address you — hopefully it will not be my last — it is my pleasure to thank each and every one of you for the trust that you have placed in me through your recommendation to the Legislative Assembly that appointed me as your Chief Electoral Officer.

The Chief Electoral Officer, as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, must possess neutrality, integrity, and be worthy of trust of all the components of the voting public and political entities. The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer strives to achieve excellence in its administration and reaches this goal through the optimal use of resources that are made available to it. The Chief Electoral Officer's role is to strengthen the office's mission, uphold its values, enhance its visions while remaining accountable for its performance. My office must possess short- and long-term priorities. Furthermore, both members of the Legislative Assembly and the public need adequate information about the office's goals and they must be able to measure the office's achievements, an issue which has already been brought to your attention by the Provincial Auditor.

To that end, my office is developing a comprehensive 2005 through to 2011 strategic plan that will define where the organization is, where it will be going over the next seven years, how it's going to get there, and, through measurable outcomes, evaluate its progress and ultimately determine if it got there or not.

The ultimate success of the office may be achieved through a renewed partnership with legislators, political entities, and the electorate while at the same time maintaining or even strengthening the independence of the office. New partnerships must be created with all elements of the voting population; in particular, with the youth and Aboriginal communities. Positive experience will lead to some success in their rate of participation.

My office also wants to develop partnership with the office of the Minister of Learning with a view to include a strong component of civic and political education in our schools as part of their curriculum. My office also intends to build constructive relationships with the media since it is one of the most important means of reaching our stakeholders.

Voting must also be made more accessible to all Saskatchewan electors. Through its reporting functions, the Chief Electoral Officer must recommend to members of the Legislative Assembly various ways of making the voting process in Saskatchewan more user-friendly and more accessible. My office needs to revisit and re-evaluate existing processes to determine why they are needed, how better to implement them, and how to measure their success and effectiveness.

The province is celebrating its centennial. This is an opportunity to focus on past success and future renewals. Collectively, we can create a made-in-Saskatchewan electoral process that responds to the needs of all our stakeholders.

Members of the board, you have before you the 2005-06 expenditure estimates of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. You will note that the office is requesting 30,000 above its 2004-05 submission. This request is to study the possibility of offering electronic filing to candidates and registered political parties.

In closing, I wish to assure you the continued co-operation of my office and to thank you for your time and if you . . . can ask for your kindness.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Open the floor to questions, and I have Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Seeing your submission for this year, it amounts to about a \$30,000 increase here.

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Page 3. Page 3, it's 30,000, in excess.

**Mr. Yates:** — And I understand, looking at the detailed statements, part of that estimate is for a new computer or filing system.

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Not to my knowledge.

**Mr. Yates:** — Excuse me one second here. Under new initiatives there's an electronic filing system, consulting.

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Electronic filing, a study of electronic filing for candidates and political parties, correct.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Could you just give us a little bit of background as to what that would entail?

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Sure. One of the demands on the office, and reasonably so, is in this age of information people wish us to file electronically any returns or lists of names of whatever, lists of contributors. And it's . . . the 30,000 is to look into the possibility of this.

There's other offices across the country that have similar products that are offered to their candidates. And we can look and see if some of this could be adaptable to our own jurisdiction since basically the disclosure system from office to office is very similar.

**Mr. Yates:** — Would such a system result in a cost savings? Because initially there are usually cost implications for the development and implementation of a new process. Do you believe that process would result in cost savings to the . . .

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Well such processes are certainly advantages or benefits, if you wish. More and more people are asking for transparency in election financing and political financing as well. I mean we see all the commissions that are created for here and there to study improprieties. One of the benefits of an electronic system would be to be able to post information quickly on a Web site, for example, directly from the receipt to just posting it.

One of the benefits also would be for candidates to, and parties, to reduce the level of frustrations because sometimes errors are made and they're reproduced from page to page to page. You can create a reporting system such that all internal checks exist in it, so that the degree of accuracy is obviously enhanced and the level of frustration is decreased. So these are some of the benefits of such a system.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions?

**Mr. Ouellet:** — Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — No further questions. Well thank you very much, Mr. Ouellet, and thank you to your many officials.

Committee members, we are at item no. 7, and because we've been so efficient at getting through the agenda, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is not here yet. So I would propose that we would move to item no. 8, which is a decision item, the recruitment process for the Children's Advocate. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Agreed, okay. It's in your binder, tab 8. Are there any questions on this process that is laid out for the recruitment process for the Children's Advocate? Ms. Gwenn Ronyk, the Clerk, would like to speak to this issue.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Members of the board, you will recognize this request for approval of a recruitment process for finding a new Children's Advocate to be very similar to the process that the board authorized for the last three recruitments for independent officers — the Ombudsman, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

However, these were done at a time when the new House Services Committee was not yet operational. Now that that House Services Committee is operational, the committee and the House and the board may be wanting to consider moving to the direction that was expected — that the House Services Committee would be managing the recruitment of House officers, or could be doing that, because their mandate does include receiving the annual reports of all the House officers and reviewing them, and dealing with issues with respect to the House officers on behalf of the Assembly.

So I think the board has the option here of either approving this process as it was in the past, or perhaps setting up the selection panel as recommended, but perhaps having recommending that the panel report to the House Services Committee which then in turn would report to the House. So those I think are your two options to consider.

**The Chair:** — Okay, committee members. Any discussion or questions? Comments? Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. When is the Children's Advocate position need to be filled? Like what's the timelines for this?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — The term of the current advocate ends on June 20 of this year. So we have just a few months to conduct the recruitment. There is provision for an acting position, an acting advocate, if there was a gap of some time.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Okay. I guess, you know I'm trying to think back, but if that was kind of the part of the responsibilities of the House Services Committee is to look after these processes, I would agree with that. Is that . . .

**A Member:** — I know it hasn't been.

**Mr. McMorris:** — I know it hasn't been, but I mean, you were on the Rules Committee and the House Services Committee

was set up. What is your recollection of mandate of the House Services Committee?

**The Chair:** — Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well my understanding is that we were to . . . the House Services Committee would assist in the day-to-day operations. But I think in the selection of legislative officers, it was always contemplated that we would continue to use an ad hoc process. We had not contemplated that. Now Mr. Hagel may have a different . . . This is what we remember of it, is that the House Services was not really intended to deal with these selection panels. And I would think that the Assembly would probably still be better served dealing with this through an ad hoc approach.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — No, I would concur with Andrew's observation and the recommendation before us here. The reason I say that is two things. One, in selecting an officer of the Assembly, it is important that it have two criteria, I think. One is that it has all of the appearances and actuality of non-partisan process in the selection and I don't underestimate the importance of the appearance of that as well. Because the confidence in the officers of the Assembly is not limited to only the confidence of the members of the Assembly but the public at large because they will serve the public at large. And it also does require a substantial amount of personal time and attention from those who are involved in order to do that appropriately.

And it would be more . . . not so much on the first point but on the second part of that that I think being done by the House Services Committee, my fear is that it wouldn't get the close scrutiny in a national competition that you want to have to end up with your final selection, just because of the timelines of the members and the inability to very easily get, you know, those blocks of time from everybody involved at the same time.

And so at first glance, I think to repeat the standard process which brings the Clerk, the Chair of the public service, and then representatives selected by government and opposition who would be administrative personnel together with the task of bringing recommendation then to the board is, I think that's the one that's soundest in getting the task done properly and also ensuring the integrity of the process and its political independence is achieved.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that we accept the recruitment process as outlined to us in decision item 8. Could I have a seconder?

**The Chair:** — There is a motion that has been prepared if you so choose.

**Mr. Yates:** — Oh let's go to the motion then. I didn't see it here. I would move:

That the Board appoint a selection panel composed of:

the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the Chair of the

Public Service Commission, a representative selected by the government, a 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; and (5) complete the process in time for consideration by the Assembly in the spring session if possible, or if that is not practicable, as close to the vacancy date as possible.

I so move.

**The Chair:** — And Ms. Harpauer has agreed to second that. Okay, will committee members take it as read?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Agreed. Okay, it's been moved by Mr. Yates, seconded by Ms. Harpauer. Is this motion agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried. Okay, that concludes item 8. Item 9 is an information item, distribution of the transition allowance for offices of the Assembly, and that will be so distributed.

Okay, committee members. I now see that the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Gary Dickson, is here. So I would invite him forward to introduce his officials and begin his presentation. Welcome to the committee.

#### Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

**Mr. Dickson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I hope we haven't kept the members waiting. Good morning, and I'll introduce my two colleagues with me. On my right is Pam Scott, who is the office manager for the Information and Privacy Commissioner office. On my left is Diane Aldridge, who is the assistant to the commissioner.

What I've discovered, Mr. Chairman and members, over my first 13 months in Saskatchewan is that people in this province take their privacy and their access rights seriously. The calls and the correspondence that we've been getting from citizens, from government staff, and local authority staff looking for advice, information, or investigations have in a number of respects overwhelmed our small office.

Many of the . . . There are many new challenges in our privacy-conscious world. For example, this year we had to deal with the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act. Its impact on Saskatchewan public bodies and privacy generally are . . . Just two days ago, this office met with RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) "F" Division, Regina city police, and Department of Justice officials to address a new problem. This arises when the police try to access information about hospital patients in the course of an investigation. And apparently some health care workers are refusing to disclose information even when it's appropriate and

important they do so. So it's usually because it's not clear what HIPA (The Health Information Protection Act) allows and what it inhibits. So we've agreed to develop on an expedited basis some materials for police and health care workers to clarify what personal information can be shared with police and when.

I offered those simply as examples of the interesting kind of privacy landscape we deal with in Saskatchewan in 2005.

We now have, members of the committee, our first full year's experience behind us, and we have a much clearer picture of what's working in Saskatchewan, what is not, and where we have to focus our resources going forward.

As I promised you one year ago, we have developed a three-year business plan to chart what we will do through to the end of 2007-2008. We've posted that business plan on our Web site so it's transparent to the people of Saskatchewan. The business plan closely tracks the statutory mandate of this office. The business plan provides some key performance measures so you can judge whether we're meeting our goals year over year. It's a rolling business plan that we will revise from time to time as required. And our estimates for 2005-2006 reflect that business plan.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to advise you that we took the resources this board voted one year ago, and we have stretched and we have leveraged those resources as much as we possibly could. The best example might be the conference, last October, Privacy Laws and Health Information: Making It Work. We took \$8,500 from our budget. We leveraged that to produce a \$43,000 conference in Regina.

We also partnered with SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) so that we could produce a two-disc DVD (digital video disc) set from the conference that's now available for the cost of \$20 to thousands of health information trustees throughout the province.

We formed some other partnerships I want to share with you. This includes the new arrangement with the Saskatchewan Law Reform Commission by which it will, with our help, produce a book of annotated Saskatchewan privacy laws, regulations, best practices, checklists of specimen documents.

We partnered with Public Legal Education by developing articles on access and privacy rights that they send to every weekly newspaper in the province.

We developed a plan for staff training of investigators and commissioner offices in the Western provinces. That will now happen in Regina next month, and I'm delighted to tell you with the complete tab being picked up by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. The value-added is that we will have 50 or 60 investigators from Western Canada coming to Regina, sharing experiences, and helping us improve our skills.

I can tell the committee that — or the board, I should say — that the people of Saskatchewan have responded enthusiastically to the creation of our office and you will have seen from my estimates booklet, pages 3 to 10, that the demand on our office for assistance and information has grown dramatically. In addition, the government's overarching privacy

framework for executive government has generated a great deal of additional work for us.

When you look at the statistics, recognize that 2003-2004 was an odd year. It was split seven months under the part-time commissioner, five months under a full-time commissioner. So if you look at the last full year under a part-time commissioner, 2002-2003, the contrast I think is cleaner and clearer. You'll find that page 5 of the estimates booklet.

In 2002-2003 our office received 369 inquiries for advice and information. In 2004-2005 we received 1,054 inquiries. Actually we received more than that but we don't have time to track all of the e-mail requests we get. In terms of case files where someone has made a formal complaint their privacy has been breached or they've been denied access to records they want to see, in 2002-2003 there were 72 case files. In 2004-2005 we had 122 case files. In 2002-2003, the board members will appreciate, there was no HIPA, there was no privacy framework, and the decisions were simply . . . weren't posted in any kind of a Web site. It just takes longer now to write a report.

If you look at the use of our OIPC (Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner) Web site on page 9, we're getting approximately 1,800 to 2,000 visits a month and that continues to increase. Interest in our Saskatchewan *FOIP FOLIO*, the e-newsletter, has grown steadily since we started it. We now have more than 1,100 subscribers and we add more every month.

In 2002-2003 we might have done three or four public presentations. In 2004-2005 we did approximately 120 presentations in more than 16 different Saskatchewan communities. More than 150 presentations since November 2003.

And at this point, Mr. Chairman, if you'd permit me, I'd just like to acknowledge that the reason we've been able to achieve as much as we have in the last year is because of the creativity and the resourcefulness of the office manager and my assistant. So my colleagues sitting beside me deserve an awful lot of credit for what's happened.

But as we raise awareness, the reality is demand for our mandated services grow. It's become very clear that no matter how hard we, the three of us, work or how creative we try and be, we simply don't have sufficient resources to meet the mandate that's been defined by the Assembly in the three laws we oversee.

We hear from citizens who believe their health information is being improperly disclosed. We hear from citizens who are trying to access public information. We cannot now help them in a reasonable or an appropriate time. We are getting more and more requests from departments, Crowns, local authorities for advice and guidance in meeting the legislative requirements. We can't provide that advice in a timely way. In my view that's not satisfactory.

In terms of the estimates themselves, we've managed to reduce cost in three elements: in travel, in supply and services, and in advertising. This is set out in page 11. We require an increase,

however, in three elements: number one, personal services; number two, contractual services; number three, equipment and fixed assets. And let me just briefly explain why.

In terms of personal services, our business plan anticipates growth in this office over the next three years. This was anticipated by the selection committee that interviewed me a year and a half ago, and I understand by the board when it accepted the original recommendation of my predecessor to put a bigger focus in this province, a meaningful commitment to access and privacy protection.

What we need immediately are two portfolio officers or investigators and an administrative support person to help us reduce the backlog of reviews and investigations. The backlog is substantial. Our plan is to hire the support person in the spring and then to hire the portfolio officers in September.

You have asked in past years, and it's a good question, how this compares with other commissioner offices. Now that Newfoundland has expanded with four persons in their office, I can tell you we now have the smallest office of any province in Canada, other than Prince Edward Island. At schedule 1 tab, you can see in contrast to the three FTEs in Saskatchewan, Manitoba has 12.5 FTEs doing the same work. Alberta is much larger at 37, British Columbia at 17, but that becomes an apples and oranges kind of thing.

The more reliable comparison is Manitoba. The population isn't much larger than Saskatchewan. Manitoba has a health information law like we do, so there's some similarity there. They don't have a private sector privacy law like Alberta and BC, similar to the Saskatchewan experience.

You might be interested to know that in Manitoba with their 12.5 people working in this area, they actually have more people doing access and privacy than they have in the ombudsman side of their office. Their Ombudsman spends 60 per cent of his time doing access and privacy work, 40 per cent doing what we regard as traditional ombudsman work.

In terms of contractual services, we have a very small office of less than 1,000 square feet. Before I arrived, my predecessor had chosen some lease space and we'd entered into a five-year lease term, but there's no room for expansion. I've recently spoken with SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), and they will explore a space swap, an assignment, or a sub-lease of space, but because there's no certainty of whether or when we can reduce that . . . extinguish that lease liability, we have constructed our estimate submission on the basis of paying double rent for at least a portion of 2005-2006. Obviously if we can arrange an assignment or sub-lease sooner, we'd be delighted to do that and that would reduce our cost.

In terms of equipment and fixed costs, let me tell you there's an increase of \$35,900 and this reflects advice from SPMC on the one-time cost of tenant improvements, acquisition of furniture, and advice from the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) information systems branch on the cost of desktop computers, software, and licences. But as I said before, in all other categories we've reduced our expenses.

So, Mr. Chairman, just in concluding, I might say that you could almost think of this in terms of building a house. Our office is the contractor, the house builder; you and the Assembly are the building owners. The architectural plan and specifications we're building to meet are the legislation that have been delivered by the Assembly, and in building your house so far we've tried to reduce our costs wherever we could. We've tried to use substitute materials and just work the staff we have as hard as we can, but we've now reached a point where we've reduced those costs where it's possible. And as your contractor, I guess I'm now telling you that to finish the house to your specifications I should point out, unless specifications change, i.e. unless legislative mandate changes, it's going to cost some additional money. And what we've put in front of you is my best estimate in terms of the money required to meet that mandate.

So thank you very much for your patience, Mr. Chairman, and committee members, and I'd be delighted to respond to your questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Dickson, and that's very good information in your presentation. I'll open the floor to any questions. Mr. McMorris? Ms. Harpauer?

**Mr. McMorris:** — I'll start. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I see that you're roughly going up a couple hundred thousand dollars, and you had mentioned at one point that there may be the issue of double rent. What proportion of that increase may that be? You're saying there may be double rent for a period of time. If that wasn't the case, if you didn't move or, you know, what numbers are we looking at there?

**Mr. Dickson:** — I'd mention that the plan . . . We wouldn't be able to move, assuming we could find satisfactory space, until the summer in any event. The cost in terms of rent, it's currently \$24,180. That's the current estimates for the current year. We had projected \$68,000. That's on the basis of sitting down with SPMC and talking about if we had to pay rent on our existing space and on new space.

Part of the problem is that SPMC has got the lease. I mean, we're sort of stuck with that lease, so we don't apparently have the opportunity to negotiate directly with the owner. We're kind of dependent on SPMC to come up with some kind of an arrangement. And we're, believe me, we're open. I've raised with the other legislative officers, for example, the Ombudsman and some of the other officers, and I've said . . . I mean, we'd be delighted if there were a possibility of finding some space that could be shared with another legislative officer. We'd be more than willing to do that.

I'm not sure I'm being responsive to your query, but I'm . . . If we move — and obviously we can't until we'd have the authority from the board to be able to go in that direction — but if we did, we're projecting that \$68,000 would be the cost.

**Mr. McMorris:** — The current lease that you hold then, what is the term of that lease? How long?

**Mr. Dickson:** — I regret to tell you it's a five-year lease. Now, it's prime space. It's a modern building, lots of . . . It's great

space. The problem is it's only . . . it's a little under 1,000 square feet. And so we will explore . . . If we get a green light from the board, then we'd have to sit down with the existing landlord and explore if there's some other, you know, arrangement could be made in the building. So we're . . .

**The Chair:** — Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the commissioner's appearance before the board today. I do have a couple of questions about the new positions he's contemplating about adding to the office and I was hopeful he could explain to me, perhaps in a little more detail, of what these two new officers would undertake.

**Mr. Dickson:** — The single biggest challenge for our office is that we can't keep up with the formal reviews we do and the privacy investigations. So what happens is that right now it's Ms. Aldridge and I who do the investigations. So that means if we get a formal request, a breach of privacy complaint, we're the ones that meet with the complainant to fully understand what the issue is. We then go to the public body, find out what the response is. We're the ones that do the research, the investigation. We try and mediate a resolution. And if we can't do that, then we have to sit down and prepare a report that then goes on our Web site and we hope has some educative value.

So in a nutshell, it's primarily investigation and mediation. Those are the kinds of work that would be done by these two people.

What's happening right now is that we have files that we opened more than a year ago, Minister — more than a year ago. We still haven't finished. We've now spent hundreds of hours of work on a cervical cancer screening report that a lot of women in this province are very interested in. We've now started writing the report, but that has taken . . . I mean, I'm embarrassed to say that we initiated that January . . . well, it was beginning of the year 2004.

So let me be more precise. The two positions would be about doing investigation work, exploring mediation, doing the research so I can sign off on a report and conclude those files. That's what they're going to be doing. There might be elements of some public education. All the public education is being done between Ms. Aldridge and myself. We may continue that. So really, what we're trying to do is get the backlog resolved.

And then you'll see, in our business plan, we've set a target, that if we're resourced adequately, of five months. In other words, 80 per cent of all of our files get to either a report or a mediated resolution within five months. So that's really our target. That's what we're trying to achieve.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — To what extent is the backlog caused by a desire in the office to take on new projects and larger reviews than we have resourced? How much of this is driven by public demand and how much is being driven by the strategic plan?

**Mr. Dickson:** — Well I'd have to say that there has clearly in Saskatchewan been a pent up demand, if you will, for access to reliable and accurate information on access and privacy. I

expect all members of the committee appreciate that there hasn't always been a place people could go to raise those questions, to seek to have those things resolved. So believe me, this is not so much a question of us sitting there trying to dream up new plans and projects. It's very much responding.

I gave you the example at the beginning because it's so typical. When the RCMP and the Crown prosecutors and the Regina city police contact us and say, we've got a problem with, with we can't get health information that's being withheld, even when it's appropriate and we think the law gives us a right to do it . . . now I mean that's nothing we've generated; that's nothing we've created. But it's clearly part of our mandate to try and do whatever we can to resolve that.

I mean that's . . . the mandate, I'd come back and say, is very broad. I discuss it in page 2 of the business plan. It's in page 2 and 3 of the estimate booklet. It's driven by the three statutes that I oversee. And I'd come back, Minister, and say when you and your colleagues in the legislature set the mandate in legislation for the office, you have drafted it — as it's been drafted in most other Canadian provinces — very broadly.

So I think whether it's offering advice and direction to the Department of Learning, if they have an issue in terms of compliance with the PATRIOT Act, I don't know how I can say, Minister, to that department, sorry you know, we can't help. Because they're entitled to point to my mandate and say, for Pete's sake, that's in there. That's what you're supposed to do.

Am I being responsive, Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Yes. And I want to thank you for the advice you have provided along the way to myself as minister and certainly to my department on key issues. I guess what I'm asking about is to what extent, as I would look at those issues being driven by the system or driven by . . . on a needs base, an issue base. Certainly the cervical cancer initiative is an important one. I understand the pressure on you to deal with the issues brought forward by the police forces within the province.

I guess I'm interested in how much of your time you feel you should spend on those clearly high priority issues brought to your attention by those who are in conflict with the system or needing some kind of resolution versus what I see to be other business objectives like reviewing Acts, undertaking the discussion around HIPA, these perhaps more ancillary items. How do you see your time being worked through with that and why does that then necessitate us bringing two more people on staff to do what at this point I trust would rest largely with you and the deputy commissioner?

**Mr. Dickson:** — Well let me come at it this way. We spend a lot of time thinking how we can best use the very small resources we've had and we tend to focus on those things that are reactive just because we have an organization at our door saying, we need help in this area. And so that tends to be where the focus is.

But it occurs to me that in my experience in other provinces and watching what happens in other commissioner offices across Canada, you know, you could work on six or seven files where

there's an issue that comes up in a department or around a piece of legislation, and at some point it becomes more logical and a more efficient use of limited resources to approach the department and sit down and say, there's some issues or there's some problems here. And we've got six complaints already and we expect we're probably going to get another dozen if there is some kind of a systemic issue, if there is some kind of a gap, a problem, something in the area of non-compliance. It makes more sense in my view to try and work with that public body to fix the issue, if you will.

So you could say on one hand, well why don't you just sit and deal with the complaints as they come in. I think when we see areas that . . . I take my responsibility to give advice and comment to public bodies as seriously as I take my responsibility to respond to an individual citizen that comes forward with a complaint. And I think if that hadn't been the intention of the legislature, the mandate would have been written differently. But when I look at that providing advice and commentary on, for example, the draft HIPA regulations, I mean that was kind of my initiative. The HIPA regulations were out there.

I think part of my job is to ensure that there's a full and robust and informed debate in this province about what the privacy implications may be of those regulations. It may not be the . . . There may be times a department would just as soon that we didn't engage in that kind of discussion, but I think that's my mandate.

And there's nothing that we're doing in Saskatchewan, Minister, that's — except maybe more — that is different than the way our counterparts exercise their mandate, utilize their mandate in other parts of the country.

So I don't think we've gone out of our way, Minister — and this may not be where you're going — but I don't think we've gone out of our way to sort of try and create projects. I think what we've tried to do is identify where the issues and the log-jams and the problems are in Saskatchewan, on the access and privacy file, and then to do what we can to try and remedy some of those gaps and issues.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Yes. Mr. Dickson, I note your performance objectives of completing 80 per cent of reviews within five months as your target by the beginning of next year.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Yes, sir.

**Mr. Hagel:** — How would you . . . What would be the length of time, the average length of time for 80 per cent of your reviews currently?

**Mr. Dickson:** — Probably maybe nine months, eight months. It gets to this point where we have complainants who will come to us and say, you know, what's the point? We've been waiting, waiting, waiting; sometimes people have left the province by the time we get around to issuing a report.

We've encountered a problem recently that's given me a great deal of concern with health information. We've had occasions where a woman calls me and complains that her GP (general practitioner) has improperly done something with her health information; she wants me to investigate. Well as we get into it, I then discover that she's refused to meet with the specialist until this thing gets resolved.

One case I ran into, the specialist says, well if the Privacy Commissioner's got his oar in the water, I'm not going to see this patient until we get this sorted out. So now we get — to me, which is just a completely unacceptable situation — where somebody is not getting health care or not getting treatment and that's somehow being suspended while my office is trying to do an investigation and we have no facility really to be able to sort of turn something around on a couple of weeks. And so that's happened I can think on at least four occasions. And so those sorts of things are . . . you know it's tough to take nine months to issue a report that involves the communication between a patient and their family doctor and a specialist, and that's just a source of a lot of concern.

**Mr. Hagel:** — What would be the . . . what would not be the target but the experience of completions of reports in other jurisdictions, say Manitoba? You look to Manitoba as the most comparable to Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Dickson:** — Yes it is, it is. And although I don't have numbers from them, just from my informal discussions with the Ombudsman there and his staff — and we went to Winnipeg this summer to spend a day looking at how they do things — our sense is they have like we have, some big files that take a long time to get through. And they also will tell you they think that they're operating, getting those reports out, too slowly. But I'd say on most of their reports they're able to do them faster than we are. Well they've got 12.5 people doing them, so they would probably have 5 or 6 people doing investigation, investigative work. So my sense is they're turning most of their reports around much faster. But that's a bit soft, Mr. Hagel, I don't really have any precise numbers from them. And they have some big ones, to be fair, they have some big ones that like us take a long time and a lot of investigative time and work.

**Mr. Hagel:** — When I look at the total request, it's 48.84 per cent increase in the year over year budget which . . . and I know that you appreciate that's huge in comparative terms, absolutely huge. The bulk of that is the . . . seems to be the implications of the adding the additional three FTEs, I think. Can you tell me, what would be the difference in cost increase if it were instead of three, if it were two, or if it were one? And what would be the service implications of that change?

**Mr. Dickson:** — If I could deal with them in reverse order.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Sure.

**Mr. Dickson:** — I've had the unique experience, I think, of sitting in your place before, in another life. And I'm mindful that there's never enough money and there's never enough resources and there's lots of well-intentioned legislative officers that are convinced their mandate requires more support.

When we did our business plan, we looked at not what would

be optimal. We didn't set a standard in terms of well this is going to be . . . we're going to have the best operation in Canada, the shortest turnaround, the quickest response time. We didn't do that because that would have been wholly unrealistic.

What we did is we said, look there's only three of us in the office now. What's the kind of minimal requirement we'd have to do internally to at least allow us to be able to come in front of you and say, look, we're not setting any national standards or records, but we're doing what we think is kind of the minimal level of turnaround of service that we think the legislation requires.

So I think . . . Although I appreciate that the percentage increase looks huge, we viewed this as what was sort of the least we could do that would make a significant difference in our performance for the people we deal with. So that's where the three additional people came up with. So that's not . . . this is not a sense where we're going to suggest four and hope we get two or whatever. I'm just telling you, in my opinion, based on my experience, this is what we need to meet what I regard as fairly minimal performance expectations.

If we had two additional staff instead of three, then what we'd be looking at is an increase of 37.98 per cent overall instead of the overall percentage increase that we put in front of you. And that would be . . . we'd be looking at \$534,000. Is it? That's correct. That would be our . . . \$534,000, Mr. Hagel, which would be an increase of 37.98. In terms of personal services, it would be an increase of 40.81 per cent. So you'd still have the increased space. We'd still be in that business of having to pay some additional space if we had . . . Well, I think that's one other hypothetical . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** — Percentage. I'm sorry. I got thirty-seven ninety-eight and forty point something which . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — Okay, the overall increase over the current estimates for 2004-2005 would be 37.98 per cent. The other number I gave you was the increase in personal services would be 40 per cent, point eight one. But the key one I guess from your perspective would be the 37.98 per cent.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Yes. I'm asking from the context of the . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — Right.

**Mr. Hagel:** — And with one FTE increase?

**Mr. Dickson:** — If we had one, what we'd be looking at would be \$488,000 in the aggregate, which would represent an increase of 26.10 per cent overall.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Okay.

**Mr. Yates:** — Twenty-six point . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — 26.10, Mr. Yates, overall from the current estimate amount.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you. Just following up with a couple of questions. With one staff member increase, would that require a change in accommodation?

**Mr. Dickson:** — Yes. We're already to a . . . I mean we have a desk in a . . . (inaudible) . . . I don't know if you've been to our space but frankly, we have big stacks of boxes that have now sort of become part of our furniture. We've needed more filing room. There was I think a single file cabinet that we inherited when we took over from the part-time office, and we've now probably got four and we don't have enough filing space now. So I think if we had one additional person, I physically don't know how we'd be able to . . . I mean, I guess, you know, you do what you have to do, but these people often have to have people come in and meet with them. Like it isn't the open desk thing in the middle of the kind of the reception room doesn't work very well, because people who come and talk to us are talking about personal health information things. We're a privacy office and so we're supposed to be going around telling, offering advice to departments and authorities, how to be respectful of people's privacy. And that means that in our own office and doing our intake, we have to be able to assure people a measure of privacy.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Dickson:** — It's unfortunate, Mr. Yates, just the space I think there was some general assurance to my predecessor that, this is pretty good space and at some point when you guys need to expand, we can probably, no problem, we've got lots of other space in town, and we can work a shift and so. But the legal reality is we've got a five-year lease we're stuck with. So I'm hopeful that something could be negotiated that would obviate having to pay double rent.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, members. Any further questions? Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Dickson, could you just break this down a bit for me. You said with one extra staff, it would still mean a 26 per cent increase of \$488,000. So we're talking one extra staff, a little higher rent, and you figured the double rent in increase would be \$68,000? So the 488, you're talking about a total budget increase with that one staff person.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Well we sat down as an office and we sort of said, so if we only had one additional staff person, that would be a portfolio officer doing investigations and so on. What the reality is, we in terms of administrative support, we can't frankly manage now. I mean, we've got a whole stack of reports that we just don't have time to format to get on the Web site and so on. So what we anticipated was if we had only one person, we'd have to do something in terms of when people go away on vacation; we'd need some part-time administrative support, secretarial support. So we factored that in, I think in the 488,000. If there was one additional staff person, we would have to find some way of producing reports. We'd have to find some way of . . . somebody's got to type those things up and format them and that sort of . . .

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — So you're actually looking at a staff person and a support person.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Well a full-time one. If you said to us, Dickson, we're only prepared to give you one additional staff person, and that would have to be a portfolio officer doing investigation, then I'd have to tell you . . . I mean, that without some change on the administrative support side, we're . . . the log-jam doesn't, it just sort of moves around a little bit, but it doesn't get resolved. And so when we looked at 488, we looked in a small office, somebody goes away on vacation, then you're really sort of stuck. So if you bring somebody in — I don't remember what we were talking about in terms of additional support — to fill in those gaps, to help try and get the stuff done.

But it's frankly pretty tough from where we sit to take one additional portfolio officer without having one additional administrative support person. We're in a paper business. We have a lot of information coming in. There's more sophistication now on the kinds of reviews we do. We're requiring public bodies to send in the whole package and not little summaries and things like that.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Okay, and just something else I was wondering about. In your overview . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — Right.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — . . . you talk about you initiated the conference, Privacy Laws and Health Information: Making It Work.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I guess I would like some clarification on initiated. I would think that any office taking on a challenge of organizing and putting on a conference for 400 participants is pretty daunting.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Yes.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — So what exactly is . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — Why did we do it?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — No, no, not why you did it; I understand totally why you did it. But I would think that that is a large undertaking for an office of your size. And what exactly initiated entailed . . .

**Mr. Dickson:** — Okay, okay.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — . . . come up with the idea or actually did quite a bit of work? Because I would assume that would have consumed a fair bit of your time.

**Mr. Dickson:** — Let me tell you what happened. Initially I had encouraged Sask Health to undertake this as a project because they're responsible for the administration of HIPA and so we went to them. We went to SAHO, obvious kinds of organizations to do this. And there was no people . . . the reaction was too big a project — we don't have time; we don't have resources.

In the meantime what we were encountering were more and

more health trustees coming to us looking for information. It was clear that there wasn't material out there and we were moving to a major kind of log-jam where people just weren't complying with the legislation.

So what we did is we contacted all of the colleges and all of the health regions and said if you're interested, if you think there would be value in this kind of a conference, let's sit down and talk about it. So what happened was we actually created a steering committee with representation from four health regions. We got not . . . so clearly not all of them, but we found Saskatoon, Regina Qu'Appelle were interested. We found Heartland Health Region. We found some of the colleges, the College of Pharmacists were very interested in supporting this.

So we created a bit of a steering committee and it certainly wouldn't be fair for us to take the credit . . . that's why I say initiated. We actually created a steering committee and yes, we handled some of the secretariat function but we managed to deal portions of the work off. If we weren't able to do that, then no matter how incredibly skilled my colleagues are we . . . it just would never have happened.

In some respects it was initially a tough call because we had to sit down and say, you know this is a huge project, lots of risk that we could fall flat on our face. But I have to tell you that — and I take full responsibility for the decision — we just saw that we had to do something to focus health trustees on the complexity of the law, what they had to do, and get them past paralysis and get them understanding that the thing can be made to work.

And I'm happy to report we've . . . Well I can't speak for all the health trustees but the feedback we've gotten is that tremendous material has come from that conference. People in health regions report they have a whole different kind of confidence now in terms of doing these things, so . . . Anyway, I mean, this was . . . I looked at it this way. We could have continued to deal with all kinds, dozens and dozens, maybe hundreds of requests from individual health trustees around the province, because that's where we're moving to, for advice and information and checklists. And we'd continually be sort of chasing after those things on a one-off basis.

Or we could try and put something together where you bring in some resource people, you bring in some experts, you create some tools, and then that, frankly, is the best way of kind of stopping the, or reducing the demand in terms of one-off complaints. And I have to tell you it's worked that way. We've now . . . People have complaints and issues, we're able to say there's somebody in your region, go to the conference, look at the . . . There's a big binder everybody got at the conference with papers and information.

So I'd have to tell you I think that it achieved, that the time we spent supporting that worked well for us. And in some respects it was more economical than having another 50 or 60 investigations, reviews, education sessions, that we'd be doing in individual regions and individual hospitals.

Sorry for such a long response, but it was . . . At the end of the day, I have no hesitation in saying I think that was an economical and an efficient use of our time. It certainly took

some time. We were able to lay off some of the responsibility on our partners in the steering committee, but the time that we did spend worked okay.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Further questions, committee members or board members? Seeing none, thank you very much, Mr. Dickson, for being here and thank you to your officials.

And it is now approximately the time when we would break for lunch. Is that agreed that we'd break for approximately one hour?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Is that agreed? Okay. This . . .

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

**The Chair:** — Till 1 p.m.. So this committee . . . Thank you, committee members, for your patience permitting me to fill in as your Chair for this morning, and I understand Mr. Speaker will be taking over after we reconvene after lunch. So this committee stands recessed until 1 p.m.

**The committee recessed for a period of time.**

**Speaker Myron Kowalsky assumed the Chair.**

#### **Legislative Assembly Office**

**The Chair:** — Okay, we're set. Well good afternoon, everyone. And in addition to the work that the board members did this morning with respect to hearing the presentations from the independent officers, one of the main duties of the board is to establish and implement the controlling financial policy that's applicable to all offices and branches of the Legislative Assembly. And that's our next item, which would be item 10, a decision item which calls for the review of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

We'll be reviewing the document, the budget document, then we will be updating the . . . getting an update on the Chamber project, and then we will be presenting some B-budget requests. The process that I want to use on this is to just give a brief overview of the budget myself, then turn it over to Gwenn Ronyk, the Clerk, and also to some of the managers who will be assisting here today.

And at this time, before we proceed any further, I just want to recognize the people who are here with us at this meeting. Seated, of course, beside me is Gwenn Ronyk, our Clerk; beside her Marilyn Borowski, director of financial services, and Linda Kaminski, who is the director of human resource and administrative services. Also beside me is Margaret Tulloch, who is the assistant of the Speaker. And if you could raise your hands at the back as I . . . just in case there's somebody that doesn't recognize a face, because we also have present here today Greg Putz, the Deputy Clerk; seated beside him is Jeremy Phillips, information systems administrator.

We have Ken Ring, who is the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk; Meta Woods, the Clerk Assistant; Marian Powell, the chief librarian; beside her is Pat Kolesar, the assistant legislative librarian; behind her is Iris Lang, the Clerk Assistant. And from . . . as a director of Hansard, Judy Brennan is here; seated beside her is Sergeant-at-Arms Pat Shaw, and also we have here today Lorraine deMontigny, director of visitor services. I think I've got everybody there. Absent today is Gary Ward, who is not able to be here, and we may be . . . Ginette Michaluk may be popping in later as assistant director of human resources and administrative services. Also the assistant director of Hansard, Lenni Frohman, may be popping in.

I want to refer you to the document, starting on page 2 of the document. I remind members of page 3 of the structure of the estimates. The estimates presented to you are divided into two parts. There's the budgetary portion, which accounts for about 34 per cent of the Legislative Assembly's expenditures. It's mainly for operational functions like the Office of the Clerk, the Hansard, the library, the IT, the broadcast, and outreach services. These are pictured on page 5 in a graphical form.

The statutory expenditures, which are about 66 per cent of the budget, which is about 3.2 million, pays for members' identities, allowances for additional duties, members' committee expenses, and the government caucus, and of course the opposition caucus, and the Leader of the Opposition, office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Pages 6 to 12 of our document provides the framework and sort of the philosophical basis, including the goals and the environmental factors, all those things that you need to know and be aware of as you're setting up a budget. And I won't take you through the details on that. Also in these pages are included some of the highlights from the last session. I'm very pleased with the reaction and the action of the Legislative Assembly Office and the way they carried out their duties over this last year.

At this time then, as we're going into the estimates, and starting at about page 13 or 14, I would like to turn this over to Gwenn Ronyk, the Clerk, who manages and is responsible for managing the budget.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members of the board, as usual it's a pleasure to come before you and have the Legislative Assembly management team with us.

We found last year to be a real challenging and rewarding year. In fact it was really a very, very good year. It was a year when we brought new rules to fruition. We saw the work that had been done in previous years on the development of new rules and processes for committees actually take place. We saw the new committee room that took a large team to work on, work out to be a very good facility for the use of our committees. And we saw changes to private members' business rules work well in the House. And we even had some really interesting procedural challenges with the number of casting votes — right, Mr. Speaker?

And also, this year saw the project for a very long-needed technology upgrade in the Chamber. And that's just so rewarding to see some of these things finally go ahead. So we'll

have, by the time you come back to the House in March, the new sound system will be in place, you'll have cable for Internet access at your desks, and you'll have electrical outlets so you won't have to run orange outdoor cords halfway across the Chamber. And so these are the things that . . . highlights for our year this year, in addition to our usual and ongoing work.

This coming year we will be continuing the adjustment in our work processes to adapt to the spring and fall sittings of the House. We will be working with the new sound system, which we assume will be working very well. And we hope to continue to work with committees as they develop their new expanded roles according to the new rules. And we may indeed have the long-awaited gift shop be launched. The staff in the Assembly are looking forward to participating with the rest of the province, I think, in the centennial activities, the royal visit, and particular focus will be assisting with the operation of the Midwest Legislative Conference to be hosted in Canada for the first time, in Regina, this summer. And ideally we'll be looking forward to the completion of this beautiful heritage building in our 100th year, as we hopefully finish and use finally the wasted space in the fourth floor.

And now I will launch into the actual budget itself, and on page 13 you will see the outline of the basis for the estimates that we've brought before you.

The estimates were prepared on the basis of funding for personnel increases in line with the collective agreement provisions in the public service. So that meant we are considering there was an out . . . 1 per cent increase on October 1 of '04 and there will be a 1 per cent in October 1 of '05 for all of our Assembly positions that are aligned to the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union) positions in government. And for those positions that are aligned to the management out-of-scope positions, there will be 1 per cent in July of '05. And that's where you'll see later on we talk about one and a half per cent and point seven five per cent because the 1 per cent for out of scope is for three-quarters of a year. So it's point seven five impact overall on the out-of-scope positions. And the 1 per cent for the in-scope aligned on October '04 and 1 per cent on October '05 amounts to a one and a half overall.

Now the consumer price index increase rate that we use to apply to the non-personnel matters, including MLA indemnities, allowances, and caucus resources, was a 2.2 per cent inflation factor. And as usual our estimates are based on a 76-day sittings in a fiscal year, and we're reasonably close to that in our actuals. The average, I think, for the last five years has been about 70, somewhere along that, in that area. And this is consistent with the basis used in previous years.

Now what we did is started to develop our status quo budget, which you will see on page 14, and I want to walk that through with you. What we were asked to do was to prepare what would be the number that would be a status quo request for our estimates that would allow us to continue to provide services at the same level as the previous year. And to come up with this status quo figure, we did the following. For personnel services, we added those adjustments of 1.5 per cent and point seven five per cent for in-scope and out-of-scope aligned positions, as I just mentioned a minute earlier. There are no requests . . . This

does not include any new hours or FTE requests. This is our current levels.

And then we went to the other expenses, the non-personal expenses, and subtracted some items and added some items. So our other expenses, the level in our current fiscal year, the old year, was the 2.272 million. And you'll note that that did not include the supplementary estimates that were approved for the sound system because that was one-time funding; it's not included in our base. We'd like to include it, but we didn't.

Then the next lines will show you what was removed from that base because they were . . . We did have a couple of one-time expenditures last year. Repair of the mace, which has been done, and by the way it is beautiful; you will see it. It just glows now. It's very, very nice, and under budget, I might add.

And then there was the discontinued program. The remaining dollars for the internship program that was discontinued by the board last year were removed from our base consideration here and that was the 37,000.

And then we did add back in the 14,800 for personal services that aren't included in the personal service codes that comprise the first number of personal services above, so that gave us our subtotal of the \$2,244,800. And then we took that total for the other expenses and adjusted it by the inflation factor, as I noted on the previous page. And the total then for expenses inflated, or adjusted for inflation and with the increases from the personal services, gives us the 6.366 million.

And then we added a number of things that were required to maintain our current level of services, things that we had no control over: the increase in SPMC accommodation expenses which now includes amortization costs; and there was some increase in the utility charges of 24,000; the Corps of Commissionaires that provide us with our 24-hour building monitoring and security, we were required to add sufficient to cover a contract renewal; and the directive 24 increases that were approved by the board in November and December; and an increase for satellite distribution costs for the fall sitting. Our current contract for satellite distribution was for four months and with the fall sitting we had to add another month. So that becomes part of our base for a total status quo budget of 6.513 million.

Now when go to page 15, these numbers here are not manufactured to . . . based on a status quo calculation. These are the actual numbers in this year's budget compared with the actual numbers approved in last year's budget. And the status quo only comes in, in calculating the percentage of change here. So to walk through that, the budgetary estimates that we're proposing this year are the 6.734 million, and approved last year are the 6 million 319. So what the request is for this year amounts to a 6.5 per cent . . . five seven per cent increase over last year's estimates. But the increase, percentage increase over our status quo budget that we just developed, was 3.39 per cent. Statutory estimates, the request here is for a percentage increase over last year's estimates of 6.32 per cent, giving us a total for the Legislative Assembly estimates altogether of nineteen thousand eight hundred and ninety-two thousand — an increase of 6.4 over last year's estimates. And again, our revenue estimates are there, very small.

Any questions before we proceed to the analysis of the major changes?

**The Chair:** — I see none.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — How the next pages work then, is that on page 16, it's basically a summary of the increases and decreases in our proposed, our requested budget for last year. And then the following pages actually take each one of those items and explain the increase or the decrease.

Page 17 is a listing of the changes in the statutory expenditures. And there is more detail of what these are on pages 31 and 51, and perhaps we can come back to that if the members have further questions later on.

And on page 18 we get into the explanation, the analysis of the change, the increases or decreases. And for the personnel policy factors, I will ask Linda Kaminski to briefly explain what you see there in those two pages.

**Ms. Kaminski:** — Thank you, Gwenn. What I will introduce to you then is on page 18, as Gwenn has referred to, our Assembly budget, we have 63 per cent of the total expenditures on budgetary composed of personnel services. And we see an \$85,000 increase this upcoming fiscal year, and that's due to economic adjustments as well as performance or increments in addition to a slight increase in our non-permanent FTEs of point four six.

At the bottom of page 18, in terms of the out-of-scope aligned employees within the Legislative Assembly office, again Gwenn had indicated that there is a 1 per cent estimated cost-of-living adjustment for the '05-06 estimates. And the overall effect then on the '05-06 estimates would be a point seven five per cent increase.

Just to note that in terms of our out-of-scope aligned employees, there are 11 out of a total of 35 out-of-scope employees who still have some range movement and are entitled to performance pay. So 11 out of 35, or 31 per cent, have some movement yet in their range.

On the next page then, in terms of the in-scope aligned Legislative Assembly employees, they are entitled to annual increment or performance adjustment for 4 per cent if they are within their salary range, and the '05-06 estimates do include a 1 per cent economic adjustment as per the SGEU collective agreement, and that would take effect October 1, 2005. But in terms of the overall impact to the estimates is a one and a half per cent increase as a result of a 1 per cent that was applied October 1, 2004 and then the further 1 per cent, October 1, 2005 which will have a net effect of 1.5 per cent on the '05-06 estimates.

In terms of in-scope employees who are still entitled to increments, we have 6 out of 23 permanent employees who still have range within their movements . . . pardon me, have range, salary range. So 6 out of 23, which is equal to 26 per cent. And in terms of non-permanent employees there's 41 out of 63 non-permanent employees who still have salary range movement, or a total of 65 per cent. And just a comment in regards to our non-permanent employees, we've seen a huge

turnover in terms of Hansard staff — Hansard have hired a number of new employees and so they're starting at the bottom of their salary ranges.

So in terms of overall, there are 17 permanent out-of-scope and in-scope Legislative Assembly employees who still have salary range movement, or 29 per cent of the overall permanent staff. And in terms of total perm and non-perm there are 58 employees out of 121. So less than half, 48 per cent, still have salary range movement.

In terms of the additional FTE requests, I do refer you to page 20 that has a detailed chart. And what you'll see in the chart is that presently there are 58 permanent Legislative Assembly employees and you'll see that our request — and I just want to note that there was just a slight oversight in our printing of the budget — the FTEs for '05-06, that should be FTEs requested. They have not yet been approved. We are requesting 58 permanent employees.

And then in terms of non-permanent employees, you can see that for '04-05 we had 19.18 FTEs, so out of the 121 actual employees there's 19.18 FTEs. And we are requesting for '05-06 a total of 19.64 FTEs. And the increase is point four six, and we arrive at the point four six FTEs from Hansard. Hansard is requesting point one seven additional FTEs and that's as a result of anticipated increase in the committee hours. And in terms of the library, the library is requesting a point two nine increase of FTEs. And that would allow them to handle the backlog of several large collections of gift materials that have been donated to the library that they have not yet been able to integrate those donations into the collection. So that takes care of our personnel requests, and I turn it over.

**Mr. Yates:** — Would you like us to ask questions as we're going through each individual section or at completion?

**The Chair:** — If there's a question that comes to mind right now, I think I'd entertain it.

**Mr. Yates:** — I'm trying to understand what the cost of the additional point four six FTE is in budget.

**Ms. Kaminski:** — On the budget, additional cost . . .

**The Chair:** — Is that easy to access or do you need a few minutes to do it because what we could do is go ahead with the next presentation and then come back.

**Ms. Kaminski:** — I don't have the immediate answer, so we'll come back. I'll get information from the officials.

**The Chair:** — Are there other questions?

**Mr. Yates:** — I have one other question you may have to dig up some information on as well. The request regarding the Corps of Commissionaires, to give them a 25-cent-an-hour increase costs 90 cents. I'd like an explanation why.

**Ms. Kaminski:** — Okay, We'll have the official respond to that question.

**The Chair:** — Do you have that answer available at this time? I

think we do have that answer. Perhaps I can invite Pat Shaw.

**Mr. Shaw:** — I'll have to get it out of my files. I'll be back shortly.

**The Chair:** — Okay, thank you. Then I think we're ready to proceed with the next in more detail, and this would be on the proposals from the Legislative Library. So we'll have Marian Powell. I invite Marian Powell to the table.

**Ms. Powell:** — Thank you very much. We're on page 21 with the detail on the explanation for increases for the library. Most of these increases are industry inflation related, and in all cases we are requesting something less than the industry is recommending to cover future purchases.

The first item listed is licences for electronic information resources. And these are a very large part of our expenditures now because there's more and more material coming electronically, and of course members are asking for more electronically. We anticipate an actual increase of something like 12 per cent for these basic electronic subscriptions. We're asking for 7.5 per cent on these to try and maintain our current level of subscriptions.

And these are the kinds of things that the reference department uses to answer questions. It particularly includes special licences for those of the MLAs who access our direct-user news service. There are presently 23 MLAs who have direct access to all of the Saskatchewan daily newspapers and many more publications from their own computers. And this is a fairly costly service. We're anticipating that there will be an increase in members who will wish to access this, and we're allowing some money for that. And we're also looking at some additional electronic resources. We're looking at \$5,000 to allow us to move into new databases as they become available and important to the legislature.

Now the next item you have is a big item; it's a big number. And it's actually here because we have a one-time opportunity to do something that will help us quite a lot.

We have since 1988 been adding our records for our very large and historic book collection to our on-line computer catalogue. And we're doing it as time permits so it's going very, very slowly. In a decade and a half we've added 17,800 records so that's quite a long time. We have over 28,000 records that are not in our on-line catalogue.

We have recently been offered an opportunity for a substantial price reduction by a library co-operative that does cataloguing on contract which would allow us to get all those 28,000 records on-line and on the Internet in one year plus a price saving, so we've come forward with a proposal to do that.

It's important that we move quickly in this direction for a number of reasons. On-line and on the Internet is the way research is being done now. And the clients want it 24/7. Everybody else offers it. Members, their staff, caucus staff, and ministerial staff have told us they want more electronic resources on the desktop and on their laptop. They want access from home. They want access from their constituency office location, and they want it on holidays, after hours, first thing in

the morning, such as they need to support the needs of the House. And as I've mentioned, 23 MLAs already have taken up the direct-user news service which we offer which gives them exactly this kind of access to daily newspapers.

Now the problem we face is you can't connect to the card catalogue from anywhere but the library reference room. So if you're in Athabasca or Moosomin or now in the Legislative Chamber with your Internet connection, you're out of luck. All this rich, locally held material is invisible to you. It's also invisible to researchers, civil servants, and citizens of the province.

At the same time Saskatchewan libraries across the province are putting substantial funds — many hundreds of thousands of dollars — into co-operative funding of databases that provide Canadian and international material, and at the same time this important collection is not accessible to them.

Now it is possible to undertake this conversion in smaller chunks over a longer period of time at a smaller annual cost. For example, we could do the same thing over five years with three years of smaller contracts of 17,000 for the first year, and of course an increased cost after that because a discount would not apply. The price savings that were being offered are only available for bookings to mid-March, 2005 and hence our request for this consideration.

In 2006 the collection will have been developed for 130 years; it's older than the province, the earliest in the province. Making this research material fully accessible to Saskatchewan researchers and citizens is the most significant way the Legislative Library can mark the centennial and build for the future. We have the opportunity to achieve this in three years — one year of contract funding and two years of staff work, rather than the estimated 18 based on our present level of activity.

Now the next item you have before you is the newspaper and magazine subscriptions increase and this again is an industry inflation factor issue. We expect that we'll be closer to the industry level because we're still dealing with the aftermath of the bankruptcy of our former subscription agent. During that period of time we missed most of a full year's publication output from many of our subscriptions and we're having to buy those retrospectively to fill the gap. So we anticipate that we probably will indeed need the higher level of funding to be able to cover this material.

If you turn to page 22 we have an increase requested in fixed assets. Most of this is routine material such as a microfiche cabinet to accommodate the microfiche materials that we have, but there is a large component of the \$14,000 that recognizes an environmental issue in our large stack area over at Walter Scott.

We're requesting \$9,000 to fund two commercial dehumidifiers for the mobile storage shelving area. The relative humidity levels in the summer in that area have reached upwards of 100 per cent. The recommended levels are very, very much less than that; in fact it could almost have rained in the stack area with that level of humidity. Fluctuations in humidity severely reduce the life of paper books and publications. So for \$9,000 we're able to make better facilities available to keep the materials from disintegrating any faster than they can.

And that I think represents our requested increases and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Are there any questions at this time? Yes, Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — If I might just pursue this question of the digitization of the library card catalogues. I want to commend the Legislative Library for moving in this direction. This is certainly something that is happening throughout the library system in our province.

What I don't have a particularly good understanding is why there's a \$51,000 cost attached to this, as opposed to us being able to simply accelerate the digitization utilizing our existing staff resources.

**Ms. Powell:** — Yes, I can answer that. We're doing the process in-house right now at a very slow level because we have a very small support services staff. Their routine work does not allow much time to be dedicated on a regular basis and this is a very large, old collection of significance to the province.

The only way we're going to improve the speed at which this is converted is to either hire more staff in-house or hire the work out. And we've tried to identify the most cost-effective method and certainly hiring the work out is much more cost-effective. We've done an estimate internally that it would cost something like \$17 a record to do it in-house. We're looking at anywhere, depending on the material, from \$2.50 to \$3.40 a record.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — And this is aimed primarily at making sure the special collections are available on-line?

**Ms. Powell:** — That's right.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Okay. Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Are there any further questions? If not, thank you very much, Marian.

And we will go to item 1-6.3. No. We'll have to skip that one for now. Able to do that? This is directive 24 expenditures, so we'll ask Marilyn to make that presentation.

**Ms. Borowski:** — The directive 24 program, I think members are familiar with it. That is the program that allows members to purchase computer equipment and furniture and have their photocopying expenses paid for.

In the November board meeting, the board approved an increase to the term amount from what was 7,000 a term to 10,000 a term. And based on the increase in the term amount, we increased our estimate for that program, expecting that members may be spending more of it in the next year because there will be more funds available for them.

**The Chair:** — Are there any questions of this item?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well I'll just ask, what is our actual expenditure expected to be this year on this?

**Ms. Borowski:** — For a directive 24, 258,500. Of that, a

hundred and twenty-nine, five hundred, has mainly to do with the photocopier program. That's pretty fixed. So in terms of the additional amount being spent on equipment and furniture, we would be expecting 129,000.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Is there a pattern over the last . . . this last term that we've had this in place, is there a pattern to members' expenditures and utilization of this? Is it higher at the start of the term, higher at the end of the term, or is it consistent basically throughout the four years?

**Ms. Borowski:** — I think Linda would . . . probably has to answer that way. The way they come up with this estimates is to . . . I believe right after the beginning of a term it is higher initially, and also at the very end. So I believe as the last term was ending, members were — if they had funds left over — were purchasing. And then after the election there was a fair amount of purchasing happening with new members, or even members upgrading once the election happened.

The other then . . . what Linda does to estimate this, is she basically takes what hasn't been spent, divides it through . . . by the remaining three years, or however years are left, and puts that amount into the estimate. So she basically evens it out over the four-year term once the first, you know, once the first year's term is spent. Is that right?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We generally do have a surplus, but you know it does vary as to how much.

**Ms. Borowski:** — It's hard to . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Some members just don't end up using it all.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I think that's my experience with it, but I'm not sure how . . . I guess what I'm trying to determine is what we're budgeting versus what our actuals are. And on these ones I know it is difficult because we have fixed allowances that we need to be able to afford. But in terms of our budget, I wonder how we manage the risk of the budget being fully utilized versus the . . . us building into the budget a number that clearly we won't use?

In some ways I would rather that we were closer to the actual and come back with a potential special warrant to cover off the need if it arose, as opposed to the approach that we seem to be using, which is to build in a base number that we seem to under spend.

**Ms. Borowski:** — Well, I can actually . . . In the 2003-04 year, I don't have the numbers to date, just in the computer hardware, software, and furniture 190,000 was spent. So there was a great deal of activity just before the election and right after the election last year. Wasn't the election last year?

**Mr. Yates:** — What was the budgeted amount that year?

**Ms. Borowski:** — Budgeted amount that year? Good question. I'd have to find it.

**Mr. Yates:** — Would it be the 202,000?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — I have it here.

**Ms. Borowski:** — Do you? Okay. No, but do you have the budgeted . . . You don't have the 2003-04 year.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I guess the question I'm asking, it's not specific to this program but is specific to these types of expenditures. And it may be something that we should discuss in terms of how we undertake our budgeting so we move it closer to the actual, understanding that we do run more risk when we do that of requiring a special warrant in mid-year.

But I, in many ways, would rather be closer to the actuals than having these very large numbers that we know are simply not going to be expended. It's probably less so on the directive 24 than it is on issues like our members' travel and those kind of issues where we know we've got fixed amounts members can access but rarely do. And so it has a tendency to over-inflate our budget which I guess is prudent in the case of making sure we cover off the statutory . . . potential statutory expenditures, but it doesn't actually reflect what the cost of running the Assembly is, which is significantly lower than what we budget.

So maybe we can return later to some of that. But I have a number of questions as we go through this that are of that same vein and so maybe we can just get some data on where we at on the actuals on these and how we might readjust our budgets downward to reflect more actual expenditure.

**Ms. Borowski:** — We do have the actual estimate in the year that it was 190,000. The estimate was 48,000.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — That was an election . . .

**Ms. Borowski:** — That was the election year.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well, certainly on this directive 24, and that's why I ask about the pattern of the expenditure. I would expect that after the elections you're going to see significantly higher expenditures as new members come on who will want to ensure that they've got the office equipment in place that they require. And obviously those of us who are re-elected once every four years get forced into a buyer constituency assistance to kind of, you know, buy something other than the 386 computers they've been using. So . . . that and the abacus.

**Ms. Borowski:** — I was just going to say, if I can say too, because the expenditures in '03-04 were 190,000, then our estimates last year were 77,000. I mean, we expected there to be a much lower expenditure in that program because there had been such a high expenditure the year before.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Okay, thank you.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — But we are adding this year because of those changes. So again we're . . . it's not certain whether it will really be taken up or not. And so we have a little more room to be flexible there.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. If there aren't any further questions on this item, I think we'll proceed to page 23, 1-6.4, and I invite Greg Putz and Iris Lang to the table.

**Mr. Putz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think committee

support is one of those budgets that Mr. Thomson might fit into his category of being very difficult to gauge and estimate what the year's activity will involve as far as our budgetary estimates.

As members are aware, last year was the first year for the new committee system to come into place. And before that, we traditionally budgeted on the basis of an average level of activity for our main committees that were active — Public Accounts, Crown Corporations Committee, etc.

The challenge last year was to gauge what level of committee activity there might be, given the new system with the committees' broad mandates that included examining legislative proposals from the House, the Bills, the budgetary estimates, annual reports, regulations, bylaws of professional associations, plus the independence the committee had in launching and conducting inquiries.

Now last year, it being the first year of the new committee system, we purposely budgeted quite low based on it being a start-up year and our estimate actually is based on a minimal number of committee meetings, basically extrapolating the number of hours that the committees might, the committees might use, based on the number of hours the House used to engage in similar sorts of activities, such as examination of Bills and estimates.

So the number that we had last year was fairly low and fairly conservative. It included some basic average levels of activity — say for Public Accounts, duplicating the work that the Crown Corporation Committee used to do, but now will be done by the Crown and Central Agencies Committee — plus the work of the Bills and estimates in these committees. There were no inquiries budgeted for. It was felt that none would be conducted in that initial year.

Now the challenge for this next year was to determine what number would be appropriate in estimating the committees' activities for the upcoming year. And the budget that you have before us was based on the actual time the committees have spent in pursuing these ex-House related activities — Bills and estimates, as well as some of the other work that was done by Crowns and Public Accounts of course. So that remains at the core of this budget.

As well we, given the broad mandate of these committees, we felt that it was appropriate and prudent probably to survey the Chairs to see what they anticipated the level of these . . . level of activity of these committees, and that was done during the fall sitting. And I'm going to turn the microphone over to Iris now to explain what it is that Chairs did tell us and how we arrived at the figure that you see as an increase in your budget document.

**Ms. Lang:** — Thanks, Greg. As Greg mentioned, we did survey the Chairs and the Deputy Chairs to get some information from them as to what they anticipated the level of activity of the committees would be. Because based on the hours that I was anticipating the committees to meet last year, those targets weren't met. And so I was trying to get a better feel as to what to anticipate the level of activities would be for the committees.

Some of the committees like PAC (Public Accounts Committee) and Crown and Central Agencies certainly didn't anticipate a change from last year, pretty well the status quo from the year before as far as how many sessional hours and how many intersessional hours were anticipated.

The big theme throughout some of the . . . what some of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs had told us is they'd like to have a pot of dollars, or at least one committee suggested that they would like to conduct an inquiry. So based on one committee telling me they would like to have an inquiry, another committee saying it might be more prudent to have a pot of dollars for all of the committees to have the possibility of having some kind of public hearings or an inquiry — so not specific to one committee, but the potential in any given year that one committee may have an inquiry — so based on that information, I came up with . . . I analyzed some of the previous years where we had had inquiries like Tobacco Control Committee, those types of committees, as to how many hours possibly to anticipate, and actually was a little bit more frugal and estimated 80 hours time. Now that's not only just meeting time, but that would include members' time of sitting down and writing reports. So there'd be . . . actual meeting hours would be less than that.

So based on that, I came up with a number of hours that I anticipated that intersessional meetings would occur and how many sessional hours. So during the session my estimate was moved downwards. Last fiscal year I was estimating 274 sessional hours and 106 intersessional hours. But looking at what the committees actually did in the last session, those hours were very high. I anticipated, for example, the Economy Committee and Human Services Committee to meet substantially more than what they actually did. Because of some of the changes, how some of the estimates were conducted, for example Learning, their estimates were in the House, and so I was anticipating they'd be in the committee, so there were a little change there. So I did adjust the figures downward to reflect that.

So for 2004-2005, the total hours for committees, I was estimating 380. This fiscal year, 2005-2006, I am estimating 362. So that is approximately 20 hours less than the previous estimate. But within that 362 hours, what I've done is include 80 hours for an inquiry. And other than that and some minimal 20 hours for House Services to do possibly a rules review, that's the only real activity other than the normal activity for PAC and Crown and Central Agencies outside of session.

Intersession, during the session, the hours that I've estimated is 162 hours. Now budget-wise that really doesn't make a whole lot of impact on the budget because there's no extra money for per diems or for that kind of budgetary impact.

So that's how I came up with this figure. I believe it's a little closer than, you know, previous years as far as estimating what potentially committees are going to do without really knowing what could perhaps be on the agenda for any given budget year.

**Mr. Putz:** — So in essence what you have here is more or less a base budget based on this previous year's experience, with the addition of one inquiry, which is somewhat less than what the various Chairs and Deputy Chairs were telling us they'd like to

do, but we thought it was more realistic that there would be probably one inquiry in this upcoming fiscal year.

So I don't know if there's any questions members have on how we arrived at this number. We'd be happy to take them.

**The Chair:** — A question from Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — My question has to do with what we've spent this . . . to date this fiscal year for committees. Do we know that — what we've spent to date in this fiscal year, the first ten and a half months? It should be basically our yearly cost.

**Mr. Putz:** — Iris is just going to pull that up for you. She has our last forecast.

**Mr. Yates:** — About 45,000?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Most of the committee work this year was during session.

**Mr. Putz:** — The irony is with this new committee system is that the committees are actually meeting less than what they did before. But that's maybe not unusual in that this was the first year of the new committee system and members are just feeling their way around, of how this whole system would work, getting used to doing estimates and Bills in these committees.

There's been a lot of talk on various inquiries, perhaps, or hearings on Bills, but to date nothing has happened.

**The Chair:** — The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — If I might ask, I am curious to see that there is a suggestion the House Services Committee may undertake a role review. I'm not aware of House Services requesting this. Mind you, it's only a 20-hour . . . an incremental increase of 20 hours worth of staff time, but I don't know that this has been requested by House Services.

**Mr. Putz:** — This number was arrived at through consultation with the Chair and the Deputy Chair. It was an anticipation of what the committee might do. As you might recall since you're on the Rules Committee, is that the idea was to, originally, with the Rules and Procedures Committee of the last legislature, was to implement the reforms and then return to review the rules that were left over, the existing rules, and perhaps make some modification to those.

There are a number of rules that for instance are obsolete and haven't been used in ages. We still have rules on our book for double member seats and that sort of thing. So it was always anticipated that at some point that the Rules Committee, now the House Services Committee, would have to come back and clean up some of the old and antiquated and obsolete rules, and perhaps also put them into a maybe more user-friendly terms, into user-friendly language.

And so I think . . . I hope I'm not putting words in the mouth of the Speaker, who is the Chair of that. He may wish to add to this but I think that was the thinking behind the Chair and the Deputy Chair, feeling that there may be some use in having a few meetings of the House Services Committee to tackle that

issue.

**The Chair:** — These were items that we had thought should be addressed but the Rules Committee had its hands full just simply dealing with a new committee structure and there was just too much of a workload at the time. So it should be addressed as we go into the future.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I guess the only caution I would place in this is that it is my view that members are only now starting to come to grips with the new rules that are in place. And I think if this is a case of us looking at doing some internal housecleaning of the old rules, that's fine. If it is, however, thinking about layering another set of changes onto it, I think we would be very ill-advised to do that. But I'll take that up within the House Services Committee.

**Mr. Putz:** — And the House Services Committee may also want to make adjustments to the new rules, having experienced them for well one, maybe two sessions. So there may be some adjustments that you might want to make. There are some things that need to be changed already just by legislative changes. For instance, The Archives Act changed and no longer should the House Services Committee deal with retention disposal schedules, but that's included in the mandate of that committee. So there's little housekeeping things all throughout that need to be adjusted at some point.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. That ends the . . . Oh, do we have a response to that first question now?

**Ms. Lang:** — Certainly. For the support costs we're currently only at \$8,000 of the \$17,000. But there certainly are some other items that are going to be coming out of this budget during March, so I'm anticipating there being \$11,000 spent of the \$17,000. That's on the non-statutory side of it. Are you asking for the statutory side as well? It's pretty bare bones.

**Mr. Putz:** — For instance we believe that Public Accounts is going to be meeting once or twice in March and of course if another committee wants to meet, then of course that's an intersessional expense and that'll come off of that bottom line that Iris just mentioned.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Then we'll proceed I think to the next item, that is 1-6.5, the SPMC accommodation expenses. And Marilyn Borowski's taking that one and I think also . . . Oh, no, then we'll proceed to Corps of Commissionaires. We'll come back to that.

**Ms. Borowski:** — This is . . . What does that mean this year with SPMC changing from a corporation to a department? We have space in Walter Scott Building. The library and *Hansard* both have space in Walter Scott Building that we pay for. Those costs will now be passed down to us, which we always did have them in our estimates. But what's also being included is the amortization costs are being passed on to the tenants whereas in previous years the amortization costs would have been part of SPMC's operating expenses. So that's increased the cost for SPMC accommodation.

As well there's an increase in the . . . They will also be passing on the cost of maintenance for these buildings, so the square

footage charge has increased. And in addition to that, there's been a little bit of space added to the *Hansard* and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Just *Hansard*, yes. That accounts for the 23,800 increase.

**The Chair:** — Is there any comments or questions regarding 1-6.5? Then we should proceed to 1-6.6, Corps of Commissionaires. Maybe I could ask Pat Shaw to come to the table at this time as well; it's dealing with that item. Do you want to start with that, Marilyn, or do you want Pat . . . Okay.

**Mr. Shaw:** — The letter I've just handed out to you, excuse me, is in response to a letter I sent back asking the same question that you asked, Mr. Yates — if they're looking for a 25 cent an hour increase for the commissionaires, why am I being billed 90 cents an hour? And I think that explains it to a T or to a cent, I think.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. It is a very detailed answer.

**The Chair:** — I wonder if it wouldn't help if you were able to just explain, how did you come to an understanding of all of these numbers that are given to us, to figure out the difference? If we need a one or two sentence explanation?

**Mr. Shaw:** — The total number of hours that we rent the commissionaires for annually times 90 cents per hour increase, gave us the difference between what our cost was last year at the end . . . The contract actually ends March 31, 2005. So for that billing year, those hours at the old rate and the hours at the new rate gives us the increase.

**The Chair:** — What does the balance column represent?

**Mr. Shaw:** — Well we started out with \$10.60 — that's the billing rate to us for a commissionaire per hour. The commissionaires are actually paid a wage of \$8. The cost per hour below that column is what in addition comes out of that in order to pay their benefits, vacation pay, etc., etc.

**The Chair:** — Okay.

**Mr. Shaw:** — And reflected on the other side is a dollar figure.

**The Chair:** — Does anybody have any questions or are we ready to proceed then to the next item? Thank you very much then, Mr. Shaw.

**Mr. Shaw:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — We proceed then to item 1-6.7, page 24, information technology expenses. And I welcome to the table once again, Greg Putz and Jeremy Phillips.

**Mr. Putz:** — I don't intend to take a lot of time on this because it is a decrease and the board's probably pleased with that.

Just in prefacing what is described more fully in your budget book, we found that over the last number of years we're getting more life out of our computer hardware in particular. And this decrease is mainly through an effort that we don't need to buy a server that we anticipated we had to do. What we've done is

done some consolidation of our server, so there's a decrease there.

As well, at this time last year when we were before the board, we did have an estimate for a video streaming. Members are aware that we do stream the proceedings live on Internet from the House and all of the standing committees as well. After the board meeting we went to tender on our contract for video streaming and we secured a good savings on our new contract. So that's also reflected in the numbers that we're proposing for this year, that it's a two-year contract so that we've included those lower numbers in our IS (Information Services) budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Basically that explains the \$14,000 decrease in our IS expenses over the previous year.

**The Chair:** — Yes, Mr. Thomson?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I am pleased to see that there is a decrease in this budget, but the question I have actually relates to how the Legislative Assembly generally deals with IT expenditures. This morning we heard presentations from three of our officers — the Ombudsman, the Children's Advocate and the Privacy Commissioner — all saying that they need to undertake significant new expenditures in IT support to carry out their function.

I wonder to what extent the Legislative Assembly has looked at a consolidation of systems, to provide central support out to its legislative officers in a way that may be able to provide not only a more streamlined and consistent approach to IT enabled services, but also at the same time to decrease some of the costs associated. Is it really everyone for themselves within the Legislative Assembly, or is there a consistent and coherent approach to service integration?

**Mr. Putz:** — I don't know if you could say there's a consistent and coherent approach. Certainly from our standpoint, internally we do have our own internal long-term plans which we hang our budget on every year, and you've heard those in the past when we've explained those in great detail. We do offer assistance to other officers that are willing to accept that help, the help within the latitude of the expertise that we do have in-house.

And in fact the Privacy Commissioner does utilize our services quite extensively. They have piggybacked on us, and we have a memorandum of understanding with Mr. Dickson and Jeremy, and the staff in our IS (information services) office are their support actually. And they give them advice on their computer hardware and software and help them manage the day-to-day administration of their computer and software assets.

So in answer to your question, we do have that; it's not across the board. The Provincial Auditor of course has his own people, just as we do, for his systems. But the other officers from time to time, in fact they did consult with us on their . . . the Ombudsman did consult with us about a year ago on their proposed hardware refresh with their database. And basically they asked us to review what their consultant had said and what the ITO had told them, and we generally supported the conclusions of the ITO. But, I mean, that was a minor thing.

But certainly with regard to the Privacy Commissioner, we provide day-to-day, hands-on support for them, which I believe saves them money, saves them contracting out.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Is there an opportunity to make better use of the IT resources we have across the Legislative Assembly to both reduce costs and improve services by integrating in Legislative Assembly systems with the Provincial Auditor's system, with the Children's Advocate systems?

**Mr. Putz:** — I'm not sure the Provincial Auditor would be interested in that sort of thing with us, but maybe the other officers might be. The auditor has his own reasons for that, and I'm not acquainted with all of those reasons. But to the auditor, like I said, has his own staff and that's probably geared towards their type of operations.

Now the other offices, Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, the type of things that they were asking for, this tracking system, that's something that we won't have expertise in in any event. That's sort of a customer-driven type platform that we have no such tracking software that we use here ourselves. We could help them presumably with their day-to-day operations, with their desktops and that sort of thing. But to date I'm not sure what they do. Maybe the Clerk has a better idea of how they go about doing their day-to-day support activities.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Part of the issue with the independent officers, one, is that they are independent, and they take a great deal of concern that their activities are private and independent from anyone else's information. Secondly, they are not all located here. Both the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate have offices in Saskatoon. That complicates the support, even for their day-to-day support. You need somebody who can actually come and solve your network problem instantly, not like next week or tomorrow or whatever. And that's why the Ombudsman and the Advocate do have to contract support for their systems because they don't have it on staff.

Also it's my view that we have only three people in the Assembly. It's not as if we can really do a whole lot of support for other people, including the Chief Electoral Officer that has also contracted out for their systems. And we all do very different, as Greg says, customer-driven things. No one else has to run library software that's connected with the University of Regina's library software system; no one else has to do digital audio that has an important computer component, as well as does our television, a growing component there. We do have different requirements and requiring different expertise and different software and our three people can only manage so many different kinds of software to support.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Now I understand that we would have capacity issues within the system today. I understand that there would be capacity issues. What I . . . I think there are a couple of issues that we should tackle though. First of all, when we speak of independent officers, they are independent of the government; they are not independent of the Legislative Assembly. We do not have a series of different fiefdoms. Surely the Legislative Assembly has one overarching set of policies in terms of payroll: who's the paymasters; how do we have consistent approaches in terms of dealing with contracting for everything from furniture to supplies and services.

We seem to have an ability to use the government services when it is convenient for us and a resistance to do it on areas like IT. Why is it we work with SPMC to purchase supplies, we can work with Finance to pay our staff, but we can't seem to work with any other government agency when it comes to running our IT services within the Legislative Assembly.

With due respect, there is no doubt that our Legislative Library is unique, largely because of its collection, not because of its systems. It differs very little from anything else that is going on in the Provincial Library network in terms of its systems. The type of office and service delivery that the Ombudsman would require surely can't be much different than what the Clerk's office requires in terms of desktop support.

Why would we build separate fiefdoms? Why would we go the opposite direction in the Legislative Assembly than what taxpayers tell us they want to be happening within the government at large?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Are we talking about the Legislative Assembly joining with ITO or are we talking about something different than that?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — No, I'm talking about us ending up with a more coherent approach in terms of the legislative officers working with Legislative Assembly to make sure that we've got better utilization of resources.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — For the most part, none of them have any resources. It . . . you know we're working with such small numbers here that it just hasn't been an issue that we have any excess capacity or resources but I think you make a point that's worth exploring.

But the actual legal status is that the Assembly, I do not have any responsibility over the independent officers and their administration nor should I have. The independent officers by their own legislation are mandated to manage their operations and the board doesn't manage their operations. The board has mandated to provide them with their funding if they agree with what they're proposing. But in terms of their internal operation and use of that funding, the board does not direct the independent officers as to what they should be doing in terms of carrying out their mandate.

Now controlling the budget is a very major component of what they can and cannot do. But I guess what it would take would be the board to request the independent officers and the Legislative Assembly to put together a working team to explore these matters.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I do appreciate that it is difficult to set direction, even within the budget, by the way, for how the independent officers will conduct themselves. I did find it interesting this morning to note that both the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate went around the board and funded an initiative that we explicitly denied last year without returning to this board for that funding.

If this were the executive government and that happened, there would be very serious approaches to doing that, to funding positions that were explicitly exempted. I do think we should

pursue, particularly in the IT area but in others, ways for us to develop a shared services model within the Legislative Assembly and the legislative officers that helps bring down the costs and provides better services to those departments.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — I think as I said it's something we could pursue if the board would wish that. In the absence of the officers being here, I feel that it's important for me to comment on your previous comment about how they used their money for a position that was denied last year, what . . . and that's why I referred to the independence that they're given by their Acts. They are given the authority to manage their offices. And within the resources that were provided, they have more independence than we do to allocate that in a way that best meets their needs. And I feel that's what they were doing. I do not feel that they were violating the direction of the board. That's my view of it.

I feel that the Assembly office has more of a department-Treasury Board relationship with our board than do the independent officers with the board. We, indeed you, the board is responsible under our Act to give us policy direction and to determine the programs and policies that the Assembly provides; that is different than is the case with the independent officers.

But would you like us to put together a motion for you to consider to explore with the independent officers some initiatives with respect to IT?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I don't think it's just IT. I think that the question with shared services model across government . . . Surely each of these independent officers don't have their own paymaster.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We do all of that. We do their payroll already. I mean we do a lot of their central service support that is sort of non-sensitive, non-specific to their clients. We deal with their staff payments and their expenditures. That is done through our financial services people and through HR (human resources). So I think we are doing a reasonable degree of shared services here. It's when we move into specific programs that we have gone our own ways.

**Mr. Putz:** — To date I think it's . . . When these officers have come to us and asked for our help we've been . . . we've tried to provide it. And Jeremy's just reminded me that another area where we have provided assistance is that we do host the Web sites of the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate. They had no in-house ability or resources and I think one of the officers did get a consultant to help them design their Web site, but beyond that we do host that; we do maintain it for them. We do the upgrades and the updates when they change their Web site as well.

And it was the Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Dickson, that asked for our support. And as I mentioned earlier, he . . . in order to accomplish that, we have a memorandum of understanding of just what it is we will help them with and are capable of helping them with.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Okay. I'm sure we'll return to this next year.

**The Chair:** — Okay, thank you very much. I wonder if at this time, Greg, if we could ask you also to just give us a brief update on the status of the renovations in the Chamber. I think members may be interested in that. That was funding provided by this board earlier this year and . . . or earlier during the last fiscal year. And maybe a quick update.

**Mr. Putz:** — Yes. Most members are aware the board decided, I think it was sometime in mid-August, that they wanted to proceed with the audio . . . or with the Chamber technology upgrade which included replacing the old sound system that was put in place in 1977 and at the same time also provide data cabling and electricity to each of the members' desks. And the third component was improvement in gallery sound.

I can say since the last time I reported to the board that the project has advanced beyond the RFP (request for proposal) process. A contract was awarded about the time of the fall sitting and we've proceeded with a project plan, and the project has gone through a number of phases where we're on time and under budget.

Beginning at the end of the fall sitting, the old sound system was decommissioned. That took place through the Christmas holidays and into the early part of January. SPMC, of course, is working with us on this project because they're responsible for some of the building aspects such as the coring that we needed to do for the wiring and that sort of thing in the Chamber proper. They were responsible for a contract for the wiring that was accomplished in early January, and as of the end of last week, the wiring portion of that was done. SPMC carpenters are also assisting with modifications to the desks. That work is largely completed. It's still going on and will be completed in short order.

Beginning next week the contractor that's actually providing the MediaMatrix sound system and the Crestron interface for our camera system in the master control panel, they'll be on site here next week for two weeks installing the actual sound system. It'll be tested, and then with the goal that the sound system will be in place and ready for commissioning on February 28. We expect still to meet those goals.

And it's at that point then that we're going to turn our attention to the gallery sound. Members will recall that in the original proposal to the board, an item was included to put acoustical fabric into the galleries to try and absorb some of the sound waves that bounce off those hard surfaces. It was SPMC's recommendation that this would help considerably in improving the sound in the galleries.

Since that time, we thought it would be prudent before we spent the money that was provided by the board to put that acoustical fabric into place was to have the new sound system up and running because that was the other part of this equation. That was our understanding that the new sound system would help in that regard in any event because we have more control in the way the sound is output into the Chamber. But the other part, the second part, was this fabric idea.

In order to determine whether this is going to be of cost benefit spending the \$10,000 on this fabric, we thought it prudent that once the new sound system is in place that we bring in an

acoustical engineer to do some testing and to determine whether we're going to . . . whether the \$10,000 we plan to spend on that fabric is going to be of great benefit or whether it's marginal or whether there's some other things we need to do. So that'll take place beginning March 1 or March 2. An engineer will come in with the new sound system in operation and do a number of tests and then provide us with a report in which we'll make a decision on where to go — whether it is the fabric or whether it's other better speakers in the gallery.

If it is the fabric, we plan on, through SPMC, purchasing that fabric, but it's not likely to be in place by the time the House meets, if the House does meet sometime the middle of March. If it means that it's buying some better speakers to put up in the galleries — as members are aware, there are speakers there currently; they're very small speakers — if that'll help solve some of the problem, those can be in place more quickly. But that's a status report on the project.

The bottom line is that the system will be in place and operational by the end of February, in place in time for the beginning of session, although we may not have solved all of the gallery sound problems by the time the sitting begins.

**The Chair:** — Any questions? I think members do have the opportunity, if they want at some time, to just take a quick look themselves to see how things are progressing there. Well thank you very much, Greg.

This takes us then to the end of the items on the stat and the budgetary sides of these estimates, the Legislative Assembly estimates. There were a couple of questions that were asked. I wonder if we're in a position now to respond to them. So maybe we could ask Linda Kaminski, first of all, to respond to the question on FTEs. And the question on security, I think, has already been responded to. So Judy Brennan from *Hansard*.

**Ms. Brennan:** — Thank you very much. I can respond on behalf of the library. The cost of the increase in FTEs for the . . . for the *Hansard*, sorry, is \$6,097, and that increase is directly correlated to the projected increase in committee hours.

**The Chair:** — Good. Do you have an addition to that, Ms. Powell?

**Ms. Powell:** — Yes, I do. In terms of the library, we have an estimated figure Linda has calculated for us based on last year's estimates and the difference of \$4,200. That doesn't address the impact of any cost of living that would have been calculated in the figures, so I think it's high. But that's for the library section itself. It's the point two nine FTE.

**The Chair:** — And in both of these cases, does it involve hiring new people or does it involve additional hours for existing staff?

**Ms. Brennan:** — In the case of *Hansard* it would be just additional hours for existing staff; there would be no new positions.

**Ms. Powell:** — And it's the same with us, it's additional hours for existing staff.

**The Chair:** — Thank you.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — You might note we give additional hours to existing staff.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. We have in addition to this, items that are detailed on pages 26 and 27 and in through 28, requests for new initiatives. This being centennial year in Saskatchewan at the . . . one of the questions we put to ourselves working in the Legislative Assembly is, are there things that we should be doing in addition to what is being done through the centennial office for the province? Are there specific things that we should be doing here for the Legislative Assembly Office right . . . or the Legislative Assembly itself?

The board has already approved in principle the concept of the gift shop. We have received very recently a response from the Cumberland Gallery gift shop, that is from the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates, which is a preliminary business plan which is in the material supplied. A couple of things that I just want to bring to the members' attention that the gift shop at the Royal Museum is operated by the Saskatchewan Museum . . . by the, pardon me, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates Incorporated, which is a separate organization from the museum itself. And they operate a gift shop known as Apperley Place.

They have been contacted previously and after the board made its desire known to the . . . publicly at a previous meeting, the board position was carried to the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates via Steve Bata, who is operating on behalf of SPMC here in the building. And Steve did bring to them that we were in a position to look for a proposal from them that would coincide with an April 1, 2005 opening.

They have done considerable work on this and given it considerable thought, and they are proposing that they have a separate manager that would work to head up the Cumberland Gallery retail team and that this manager would work closely with the management of Apperley Place. They make the observation that, in their report, that Steve Bata represents the group with the building interested in developing the venture, that he will be the lead contact for the operating group acting in the capacity of facilities coordinator. Steve will also represent the group at the operating meetings and Steve will maintain his current position in the SPMC.

They also make a point that right now there are very few stores in Regina that offer affordable, unique, and culturally distinctive Saskatchewan gifts, so I think that shows that they're quite interested in this, although they are also cognizant there are possible pitfalls, and primarily the biggest pitfall would be financial and that they would . . . they definitely would need some type of grant to work. And they indicate in their proposal that they could suffer a budget deficit of up to \$24,000 in a year.

They have set out on page 9 their goals and objectives for such a shop and they indicate on page 9 that they would, in order to make this work, they would try first of all to develop a strong presence through some advertising, possibly right here in the building, and they want to be able to capitalize on visitor groups. They want to be able to develop relationships with the

building staff to facilitate personal shopping, develop an association with buyers in the building, particularly to supply needed articles with MLAs and staff directly. And they would . . . For them to work through this, it would be imperative that there would be a growth in sales increase in the first three years.

So we have this proposal before us. The reasoning of us going this route, if I would bring to the attention of the board once again, was because it seemed to be simpler, easier, and less costly, and I thought that this would be a proposal to go with. And I would recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've read through in detail the business plan and proposal from the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates Inc., and although on page 10 they say that they could . . . there remains a possibility that sales may not reach targets, thus resulting in a budget deficit up to approximately 24,000 each year, nowhere in this plan or proposal do they ask us for any subsidy. Are they in some other form asking us for a subsidy?

I'm wondering if, in fact, they are asking for one or not. They simply said they could lose up to \$24,000 in the first year, and nowhere in here does it say they actually want a subsidy, and I'm wondering if they formally requested that.

**The Chair:** — I don't know why they put that 24,000. That must be their view, their figure that they've looked at.

But in our previous discussions and previous proposals, we arrived at the figure of 21,000 — that would be something that would be reasonable for us to expend. And at the same time, we felt that that would be something that they could probably live with. So I have no indication other than that since receiving . . . other than through this report.

**Mr. Yates:** — Correct. And based on a previous proposal, we anticipated that they may be looking for a subsidy up to 21,000 a year, but we haven't offered that to them and they haven't requested it, have they?

I want to know where we're sitting because, if we're going to make a decision item on this, we need to know whether or not in fact they want a \$21,000 subsidy or not. And without that information, we can't make a decision.

**The Chair:** — My understanding is that in our discussions we had indicated that we were looking at a subsidy and that that subsidy would be in the vicinity of 20 to 21,000. It's my understanding then that Steve Bata went to them and I would expect would have used that number as he was discussing this with him. But we do not have any specific request for them for that amount. I think they're kind of leaving that portion, the number . . . it's a sort of a negotiable thing in a way. They didn't have . . . they've given us another number. We have, not officially, but we have given them the number that we think it's going to cost us and that it would be sort of a maximum amount that we would go with. So I think that's where we're at.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I read this though I hear them talking about a deficit of 24,000, but nowhere do I hear about a subsidy in their business plan. So I would very much request that we seek some clarification before . . . It's

very difficult to make a decision on an item without knowing what we're deciding upon. And perhaps we could clarify it with Mr. Bata who attended whose meetings or with the Royal Saskatchewan Museum Associates so that we can perhaps make a decision on this item.

We had initially indicated, as the report does, wanting to start as early as April 1. I think we do need some clarification in order to move forward.

**The Chair:** — What we can do is try to get a little more information, perhaps for a little later on in the meeting. We'll see if we can contact Steve and find out just what the understandings are.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — And what I'll do is proceed with the other items. We are looking also at three items with respect to centennial celebrations. And the first of these would be, the proposal would be that the board consider funding of an official photograph of the members of the centennial legislature and that this would be taken during the session. It would have all the members in their seats, and it would require a professional photographer with specialized techniques.

The result would be a picture that every member would receive, about 16 by 20; it would be quite suitable for framing. And a larger version or two would be one that would be displayed permanently in the Legislative Building as the centennial legislature. The approximate cost of that would be, we were estimating, at about \$5,000.

It was also . . . also have bandied about the concept of planting a centennial grove in Wascana Park. This would be a grove of Saskatchewan trees and trees that grow well here. Originally we had the idea of planting some birch. We were advised that, although birch grow quite well and it's our provincial tree, it doesn't grow that well right here on this particular plot of land. So then we thought, well it really didn't matter whether it was birch or saskatoon berry bushes or other type. But we did ask . . . have made contact with the Wascana Centre who were in charge of the grounds and asked them what this type of a thing would cost and whether they would be prepared to recommend a site close to the building or in the vicinity of the building, and what such cost would be.

So we've received an estimate, and this estimate was mailed February 4 so members were unable to get this until . . . we were unable to distribute this to members until last night. But the numbers that they've come up with here to do all of this, including the preparation, planting, and the labour, and the cost of the trees themselves . . . These would be trees that would not be seedlings. They would be trees that would look like they had really been there for a little while, probably 4-, 5-, and 6-foot trees. And the figure that they came up with was about \$13,000. Our original estimate was that this might cost us, you know, between 4 or \$5,000. I was surprised to see the cost come in this high. So that figure is not really reflected in our budget.

The concept of this centennial grove also was to provide each MLA with an opportunity to have a tree planted with a group of students or some group from his or her constituency and it

would be sort of a dedicated tree. There would be one marker in the grove identifying what all this was about and when it happened. There would be additional trees available for special events that might come up and special occasions, and that the first group of trees would probably be planted by an official ceremony on Arbor Day which would include some of the top officials of the province.

And the other centennial project that we're looking at is to have an event where it's a special open house celebrating the centennial. That would be to celebrate, well, first one hundred years and next one hundred years very similar to what's being done any place else. And this would include some, well, some unveilings, likely just a bit of advertising about this open house.

The third item, we do not have a proposal for and that is the reinstatement of legislative internship program. There will not be a proposal until after such time that we get a proposal from the Internship Advisory Committee, so I'm not in a position to make a proposal at that.

But the last proposal and perhaps the most significant one is the proposal for the development of the fourth floor for a second committee room in the Legislative Assembly Building.

This request is not a new request; we'd looked at this in the year 2002. We'd looked at it also again in 2004, and it had been subject of discussion in the years 2003. At this time what I see happening is several of the things sort of coming together. That was the original proposal, one of the original proposals for a committee room even before this one was refurbished. At that time we had discussed the possibility of looking at fourth floor. It was evident to members that establishing this room that we're sitting in here now as a committee room would be a lot cheaper and it would fit the purposes as closely as possible as what we wanted, and that as a second committee room we would still continue to use the Chamber.

Since that period of time members who have used this committee room have expressed to us almost unanimously, I think, that the set-up in here is excellent for committee use and that we should be looking at a second room. They much prefer using this room for committee purposes for policy field committees and with the Public Accounts Committee than they did in the use of the Chamber for purposes of estimates and committee work on Bills. So there's that driving factor.

There's also the concept of, discussed in the past, that it's quite a fair expense to move into that space because the proposed cost is close to \$1.4 million. And a lot of that's due to the upgrade costs on building codes — the cost of putting the elevator up there, the cost of putting a stairwell into that space, and firewalling that area. So just that particular cost itself was a deterring factor.

There are certain times in the life of a legislature that, you know, sticking . . . or that you can justify making additional expenses. And we, in this legislature we found that spending considerable money on bolstering the foundation of the building was important because it was important to us to keep this building as in good a shape as possible. This was followed by, more recently, expenditures on the big dig, which again lent to the attraction and just to the grounds and to the building itself,

and stressed again sort of the importance of this building to the entire province.

And it seems kind of natural that this would be a good time, the time of the centennial, to make a decision to go ahead and make the recommendation to complete the building, 100 years later after it was told that we could put the whole building to use because that part of the building now is not used. It is heated but it is not used. And it's used . . . Well if it is used, it's used mainly just for storage purposes and could be converted into a committee room which would be even more amenable to committee function than this room itself is.

Because that space is shaped differently, it doesn't have the rectangular shape that this room has but it is more of a square shape, and would . . . so in addition to being used for a committee room, could also be used for certain receptions. And it . . . for a fairly large crowds I think probably could accommodate up to maybe 100 people in it if necessary for a reception. And it could also, well could be used for other meeting purposes for larger groups to meet than meet ordinarily in this room.

So that's the proposal. The proposal is detailed on the third page in terms of cost. You can see that about a third of the cost of 1.3 million would be due to equipping, which would come from the budget of the Legislative Assembly. The other cost, traditionally in this building, would be borne by SPMC, although we didn't indicate that in our proposal here. We just put the total proposed cost in there so that you have a handle on everything because it would trigger money that would have to be redirected from SPMC. Members are prepared to follow up on this.

So at this time, I think I'm open to comments and questions on the B-budget items. Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I have two questions. But one would be, when will we hear more about the reinstatement of the legislative internship program? You had said that you couldn't speak to it until the committee had discussed it. Now do you have any idea of when that will be?

**The Chair:** — I was trying to convene a meeting of this committee over the last two, three weeks but we have not been able to establish a date. I'm not sure if we have one. Do we have a proposed date? A proposed date for February 21 for the committee to meet. We could . . . the committee probably would only have to meet once, but it is charged with the responsibility of coming up with a proposal.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — The second area I wanted to question was the proposal for the centennial grove in Wascana Park. Now, although I am in favour of planting trees where they're needed, I feel this is quite a costly project if there isn't a need for 100 trees to be planted. And that perhaps that's one area that is not as appropriate spending I don't think.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, could I ask what exact area that you've talked about with this centennial grove, Avenue C to 23rd Avenue, where is that?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — They're talking about, they're talking about the mall. You see that word in there, mall, legislative mall. There is a long-term plan within Wascana Centre Authority for there to be a walking mall from the back of the Legislative Building right across to the bowl in front of T.C. Douglas, right over top of the heating plant. That's just in their 100-year plan, but it was thought that an appropriate place for these trees would be behind the Legislative Building between here and the heating plant.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Oh, okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Along there. Now when they say 23rd Avenue, Avenue C to 23rd Avenue, I'm not just sure whether they mean on the other side of the heating plant to 23rd. But we didn't actually . . . This came back in the proposal and we haven't actually any suggestion from them at the time as to where the appropriate . . . they were to come back with a suggestion. So it's either on this side of the heating plant or the other side of the heating plant. There are trees already on the other side.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Okay.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — With respect to the committee room on the fourth floor. The breakdown of costs in terms of additional audiovisual equipment versus structural upgrades, do we have that breakdown in dollar numbers?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — For the detail proposal?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Yes.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We have.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I was wanting it in the record.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Oh, sorry.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I mean I could just read it in, but it would be just better if I asked the question and . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Certainly. In fact I might have . . . Greg can come and talk to it as well. The proposed estimates here are based on some estimates that were done three years ago and had been increased according to SPMC's advice to appropriate levels for this year.

So the actual building code upgrades to make it fire code safe up there requires the building of a stair . . . two stairwells, an elevator and a fire separation between the new space and the . . . What do you call that? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, it's the false skylight above the main stairs. There's a false skylight. If you come up the main staircase you'll see there's a false skylight above. So there's actually lights in there and there has to be a fire separation there to make it code safe.

The other base building construction and operational requirements include the wiring, mechanical, and operational requirements includes \$50,000 for the what will be ongoing cost for the maintenance and janitorial care that additional developed space in the building will require from SPMC.

Finishing the fittings of course is the wall treatments. And the proposal that originally was brought forward was to use some of the techniques that were used in the new entryway, the barrier-free entrance, to make it look like the rest of the building, but using very inexpensive finishings. Instead of marble on the walls it would be plaster that was made to look appropriate. And it would mean the light fixtures and all of those things. And that was the finishings and fittings; the paint and the wall treatments and that were going to be 121,000.

Television broadcast equipment, the audio system and all the cabling required for that function, was estimated now at 262,000. And the furniture for the committee room, the chairs for the spectators and for the three small offices that would also be available up there and the waiting area outside the committee room, was going to be 49,500. And SPMC always applies a contingency amount of 7 per cent to estimates, of 83,790, for the total estimated project cost of \$1,280,790.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The follow-up question I would have then is how does this compare to say undertaking to build the second committee room where the current radio room is in the legislature, which of course is two walls over from this one exactly on the opposite side of the current second control booth that we have in place?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We haven't had SPMC actually do an actual estimate on that space, but when we did come forward with the initial proposal, we had three options that had been spec'd out and costed out by SPMC. And I think some of those costs can give you an idea what it costs to renovate anyplace in this building.

For example the first one was room 119, which I hesitate to say because that's where Marilyn's office is and IT's offices are. But it is a space of 140 square metres in this building and that's about what we were looking for, for a committee room. The estimated cost of redeveloping that space and relocating the existing functions out of it — that's exempting the broadcast equipment that we would need anywhere and the furnishings we'd need anywhere — the construction cost to redevelop room 119; which is, you know, good office space at the moment, is \$175,000. And the estimate for relocating into other adequate space those functions that were there at that time was \$108,000. And of course, when we move people out of the building, we have to start paying rent and we'd be paying rent at 50,000 a year for the equivalent space elsewhere.

The other option they reviewed was the converted storage area. If you're aware of the caged storage document area that's under the Chamber on the first floor, it's across from the Speaker's office and Financial Services. They had looked at that as converting that space into a committee room; and it's about 155 square metres, so a good size. Now it has some problems — got low ceilings and pillars. But even with that, they did estimates of 180,000 for the base building and 100,000 for the mechanical upgrade because, of course, it's just unfinished base under there. It's just storage space with cement floors and brick walls.

And then, of course, they put a cost in for relocating the storage facility that would be lost and of course, they propose to put that up on the fourth floor which would have cost about \$200,000 to renovate it for that purpose.

So you know, even to take another part of the building and renovate it, you know, we're looking at a minimum of 175,000 in good space and something more than that in space that needs more renovation.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I guess, in part, the reason I ask about the potential use of the radio room is that it is already a large open space set up in essentially the same format as this, without the audio visual equipment in it. But it is immediately next to the current control room, so we would have our committee space basically on this . . . in the west wing of the legislature on the basement floor. It would be, I can't imagine a huge cost in terms of upgrading it.

Now there would be, I would think, some opportunity to work with Executive Council that currently I think pays the rent on that space, for us to have to look at some kind of an opportunity to not only cost share but actually work out a protocol on usage. Obviously the Executive Council still requires some space to carry out press conferences and such within the confines. But it would seem to be that that would be a much lower cost option to renovate that room, which is already set up like this, although it's about three-quarters of the size of this one, and simply take that over for the smaller committee room.

What I hear members saying that they like about this configuration is that it is a more intimate setting, that it is set up in a less confrontational approach. We don't have this same configuration within the Assembly. And it takes . . . it leaves the Assembly for the purposes that the Assembly was initially designed for.

I don't know about the need for us to have a full marble-lined committee chamber to hold meetings in on the fourth floor, but rather to have a secondary committee space that we can meet in. Obviously as it is now this would be, I would anticipate, the primary committee room and what we're looking for is a smaller, secondary committee room. I'd be interested in knowing what SPMC would project the cost to be on renovating the . . . or taking over the radio room as the second committee space.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We could certainly ask them to do that estimate for us. It would take, I guess, negotiating it with Executive Council. As I understand, they do very confidential conference call, cabinet-related meetings in there when the Premier's out of the province, and I don't know that sharing would be advisable in that instance.

I also did have time to actually look for the floor plans for the area and I'll just send one of them across to each side there and share this with the Speaker. If you look at it, it's this space here that we're talking about, that it's really underneath the front staircase that goes out at the end of the building. And the space is on the basement floor equivalent to this one.

And I agree with you that to have the two committee rooms adjacent is very . . . would be very convenient for staff. But without having the expertise of SPMC at this, it looks to me like those two squares around the entry are part of the support for the front stairwell going out the front and they would not be movable. They're structurally required supports for the building. So that means it leaves us a very narrow space, much

narrower than this room, for a committee room. But that's what I can tell from this, and we would want to look at the size and costs of doing that.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Yes, I do have no doubt that it would not be the same configuration that we have here. It is a somewhat narrower space because of the antechambers that are built onto it or, at the very least, if those came down there'd still be some pillars that would need to be maintained there. But for a second committee room, and the fact that it is largely unutilized space — now I understand there is only one employee, perhaps one and a half, attached to that program area — the relocation cost would be significantly less.

Additionally, if we were thinking about using this as the primary committee space where we'd have room for . . . We have some gallery space here. We may not have the same amount next door. It would still, I think, be sufficient for what we needed accomplished as members, to undertake. So I'd be very interested to see what a cost would look like on that, and whether we could get an accommodation from Executive Council to turn it from dedicated space into some kind of shared usage.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — So we would be looking at using this space for press conferences . . .

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The second room.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — . . . as well as committees? The other service in there, I think, is the recording of all the electronic media that is done for Executive Council, and I assume that would need to be done . . . continue to be done somewhere.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I don't know that we would need to take that back space that is available there as much as just the common space that's open now.

**Mr. McMorris:** — There's a riser there.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — But the riser would come down; that's just for wiring.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — I just, you know, suggest that we look at that area and get some costs and feasibility of it and what we would get from it. But if it's smaller than this room, it just strikes me as such a large investment in the television equipment to put it in a room that'll have such restricted usage. Whereas to put our investment in our television equipment in a room that isn't going to be a lot larger, on the fourth floor, I think even there we're only looking at 140 square metres, Greg? So it's not as if it's going to be a big cavernous room that won't be comfortable for a committee.

**A Member:** — What size is this one?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — This one now is 140.

**Mr. Putz:** — This one, it was about 90 square metres before they moved the walls. Now it's just over 130 square metres, I believe.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — And upstairs, the advantage that you get is that

it's not long and narrow. It's more square and it gives us much more flexibility. For example, we've had to be prepared over this period when the Chamber's been . . . unable to be used. Right now it's down; it can't be used if the legislature needed to sit.

What if there was an emergency? What if SaskPower went on strike in January and you needed to legislate them back to work? What would you do when the Chamber was out of commission? Now, we have to be prepared to offer an alternative and make sure the House can meet and do what it needs to do. And you know, we've got ideas and some very draft plans of what we would have done should that have happened, but if we'd had the fourth floor chamber up there, the Chamber could . . . the House could have met up there and would have had fully televisable . . . It could have been used for that sort of alternate chamber purposes should the actual Chamber be down. It certainly could be used for seminars, conferences, that kind of thing that we don't currently have an appropriate space for.

And if we do put a lot of money into equipment and so on in a smaller room that really isn't going to be able to even hold officials and the public, I don't think we're getting the value out of that investment that we should have.

And the other problem is that we also are in desperate need of additional space in this building. And it's not the Assembly just, it's all of the offices here that are always clamouring and competing for space. For example, if we did have a travelling committee and they needed a short-term contractor to do research for the committee, we have no place to put them; we'll be putting them in the bloody hallway because we are, we are even using all the little cubbyholes that are in the press gallery now.

So the fourth floor not only gives us a committee room with an appropriate waiting area but it does give us three small other offices that would provide space for committee support and perhaps other functions that need expanded space in the building — maybe interns.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well I think . . . Sorry, just on this matter, I appreciate the defence of the proposal. I'm simply looking for one that doesn't require us building a new elevator and new stairwells. I'm just looking for a lower cost alternative. I'm fully committed . . . As members of this Assembly know, I'm one of the co-architects of the new approach to the rules as trying to use the committees more effectively. But I'm not interested in legacy projects. I'm interested in finding effective space that we can use for the members' purposes, and I would like to see us undertake a review that finds a lower-cost option than spending \$280,000 to put in an elevator, build some stairwells, to put in some full marble paint, and actually instead simply find a workable low-cost solution for members to have a more intimate space to be able to conduct their hearings.

Perhaps the room next door is not suitable. The many times that I've been in there for press conferences, it strikes me as being essentially laid out appropriately. It seems to be able to accommodate my officials, myself, and the media quite comfortably, and there's many more of them than us. And I don't know why we couldn't at least look at that as a solution.

Surely I don't want the committees meeting in the rotunda or in the hallways, but I think we've got to be able to find some other way to deal with this. I'm interested in looking at the alternatives, but I'm not prepared to support a fourth floor expansion at this point without fully seeing what other lower-cost options may be available.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a simple question here. The 1.2879 million proposed for this renovation, that is all-inclusive and would be paid for 100 per cent by the legislature and there would be no expected expense out of SPMC? Is that what I'm reading here, that this is . . . as the proposal is written, it would all be paid for and . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** — No, we do expect that SPMC would still . . . At least they would've in their previous incarnation and what I'm not certain of is just where it would fit in their budget. The reason we put the whole cost in here was so that you had an idea what the whole cost was, and at this point we don't have a commitment from SPMC to pay for their share. It is the first two items that would traditionally be SPMC's share.

The division usually between . . . with SPMC and the client is that they pay for the building code, bringing the space up to the building code, that's the first item; and the base building construction — the mechanical, the electrical, those kinds of things. And then the client will pay for the program-related things, like the equipment and the furniture, and we will pay for the finishings that bring it to the level of finish that we want for a legislative committee room. So in this estimate SPMC would be paying almost 800,000 of the total.

**Mr. Yates:** — \$764,500.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Now they don't . . . whether they . . . You know, SPMC budgets ahead of time like everyone else and they haven't put this in their budget for '05-06. And I'm expecting that it would need Treasury Board to actually approve the project and fund us for our part and fund SPMC for their part. But this is the . . . You needed to see the total dollars required.

I don't like to argue . . . I do like to argue actually, but I don't intend to argue. But I do want to say that if the fourth floor doesn't go ahead this year . . . This is the year to do it. This is the year that this project can be justified because it's such . . . this is a heritage building and this is such a . . . it just makes much more sense than actively having to expand outside of the building for future services. And if we don't do it this year, it likely won't happen for, you know, a good long time.

**The Chair:** — What I'm hearing from the committee members is generally that we should be looking at a new committee room or an additional committee room. I haven't heard any differing opinions on that, and also that we should be looking at something that is as cost effective as possible.

So I think where that leaves us on this is to do some homework

and get some actual costings, and also try to sort of put to some kind of value for dollar on what it is that we're . . . what we cost out. We could cost out in a little more detail and update the costs on the fourth floor. We could do it in the what I think being referred to as the radio room, which is the space . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Radio room, it's space directly west of us. I don't know if members want us to follow up with the cost of putting it someplace else like in that . . . beneath the Chamber space. I'm not sure if that's a very suitable space at all. Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — What I might suggest is that if we're looking at other space, we may look at areas like the members' dining room, which is essentially used solely as a meeting room. I don't know what the applicability of the new Prince Edward room is, being used, but I think it's already wired for those kind of space. We have lots of space in this building; we are just very protective of sharing it, and I think what we need to do is see what other option . . . The members' dining room would strike me as a perfect space for us to be able to conduct our committees in.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — It's not large enough.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Why not?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — It's not large enough — not if you expect to have any audience there.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well I was recently in there for a speech to journalism students; there must have been 35 of us in the room. That's more than half the Assembly. That's nearly two-thirds of the Assembly we can accommodate in that one room. So I don't know, I think we just need to look at it. I look at the size of the cabinet room in Saskatoon, in the cabinet office, and it is no larger than the radio room. And yet we are able to accommodate the entire cabinet in there to undertake its work, plus our officials.

So maybe we need to give up on some of the frills and simply find ourselves a more accommodating working space for members, recognizing that this is still obviously designed — and we've spared no expense in making sure it's designed — as a well-appointed, very well-appointed committee space for members. Maybe what we need is a secondary, smaller working area for members to conduct other committee work in. I think there's lots of options here and we should examine them.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would agree with the member opposite that I wouldn't mind exploring some other spaces. But I find it interesting, the split between SPMC and the cost to the Legislative Assembly and some of the costs that you have mentioned earlier about repairing, I forget the different rooms, but we're looking at a couple hundred thousand dollars to bring up to speed some other rooms, which would probably — am I correct? — be borne by the Legislative Assembly. Whereas if we do the fourth floor, we're looking at roughly about \$500,000. Perhaps twice, but probably twice the space.

When we look at repairing rooms down here, whether it be the

radio room or the other room that you'd mentioned, what would be the break on something like that? Because I know the major costs of developing the fourth floor is the building code and construction of an elevator and all of that, which I realize comes out of government but doesn't come out of the Legislative Assembly per se, it comes out of SPMC.

So I guess what I'm saying is that if we look at the true cost to the Legislative Assembly, it may be twice as much only, not . . . if not . . . I don't think we can compare the \$200,000 it'll cost to fix the radio room and compare it to \$1.28 million. I don't think that's a fair comparison, is it?

I guess my question is, when you're comparing the cost of refurbishing some of the other rooms, would that be borne all by the Legislative Assembly, or would some of that be borne by the SPMC?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — In my previous estimates, the construction costs for renovating like room 119, which is one of those proposals, which we . . . it's currently our space, we were going to have to pay the 175,000 for the renovation.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Out of the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes.

**Mr. McMorris:** — So we're looking at, you know, a space that is substantially larger, doubling our expense — maybe even, you know, going from 175 to 500,000. But we're . . . I guess my point being is that we can't compare refurbishing those rooms to refurbishing the fourth floor on a dollar-to-dollar figure — 175 compared to 1.28 million, that's not a fair comparison. We have to compare it down to the 500,000 that we think it would cost the Legislative Assembly to . . . us to put in the fourth floor. Correct?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — That's one way of looking at it, yes.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I don't think that that's actually the argument. I think the argument here is when we look at the estimate that says it's \$280,000 to undertake the building code upgrades. That's the issue that we're looking at. Is there a way to find a lower cost alternative.

Certainly there's going to be some base building construction and operating requirements. Certainly there's going to be some finishing and fittings and we know the broadcast cost is about the same regardless. We got to buy the same number of cameras, furnishings; as much as it pains me, there's a high expense to those and there's the contingency. The question is the 765,000 that's indicated under this program for the building code upgrades and the base building construction and operational requirements, how does that compare to other space?

I don't accept the argument that we shouldn't worry about the SPMC cost. Last I looked there's still only one set of taxpayers and they pay the Legislative Assembly budget the same way that we send them the bill for the SPMC budget. And so we need to be mindful of that overall cost.

One point two million if we were really taking a look at it, yes,

it seems to me is about the same cost as the foundation repair at Campbell Collegiate. You want to know what my priorities as the member for Regina South between upgrading the fourth floor of the Assembly or fixing the foundation of Campbell Collegiate, I can tell you. So there's a lot of choices and trade-offs we make. I'm saying, what are the other low-cost alternatives for doing this. Setting aside the faux marble paint and the elevator, is there another way for us to do this cheaper.

**The Chair:** — Well I've kind of summarized what I thought was . . . Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Sorry, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of comments for the members maybe. SPMC's responsibility is the base building and bringing it up to code. So on any of the proposals that I have seen, there has always been a share that has been hived off and a responsibility of SPMC.

But it also, when you look at added space, it also adds to the Legislative Assembly budget no matter who's . . . (inaudible) . . . because Minister Thomson's right, it all comes out of the same pocket eventually. The Legislative Assembly would have added accommodation costs for the extra space.

So when you have put the 1.28 into this year's budget or as a proposal in this year's budget, which, by my figures, is closer to the estimate that was done in 2001 than any of the updated versions, have you also added into the budget the additional accommodation costs for the fourth floor being renovated?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — It is in there, but the interest . . . The thing that's different about this building is that we do not pay accommodation costs in this building. The Assembly doesn't.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Oh it just comes in as your . . .

**Ms. Ronyk:** — This is the Assembly's building.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — . . . grant, your operating grant. Okay. Okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — But when we add space, we are charged.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — You are charged.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — And so that is in the second line, base building construction and operational requirements.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — That includes \$50,000 that will be ongoing . . .

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Ongoing.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — . . . for the care and maintenance, cleaning, the ongoing work in that space that will be paid to SPMC.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — In the operation. Okay.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — And that will be ongoing annually. And that would affect our budget.

**The Chair:** — Yes, Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Is there any avenues that there is a possibility to access federal assistance to renovate the fourth floor considering the importance and the stature, the history of this particular building?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We had hoped that that might be an avenue, especially this last year with the infrastructure funding and so on. In fact when Ralph Goodale was here, the minister responsible for that program was here, a year and a half ago — because he is a former member here; he's quite knowledgeable about the building — and when we discussed it, he was quite enthusiastic about it. So I thought oh great, this is great; maybe they'll put it on their list.

And indeed, I did write a formal letter to the minister asking if there would be some interest in federal support for the fourth floor. And what I was told was that all of the federal funding goes through government. They do not make direct arrangements with anyone else, including the Legislative Assembly, and that we should put our proposal onto the government's infrastructure list. And I wrote letters to do that, but it didn't get to a priority position.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — If I could seek clarification. As this debate goes on, I'm increasingly unclear as to whether we are looking for additional committee space or whether we are looking for a reason to develop the fourth floor. It's my understanding we are looking for additional committee room space so that members need not hold committee hearings in the Legislative Assembly Chamber. And I think that we need to decide amongst ourselves which it is we're looking for.

If it is our desire as the board to find an excuse or a reason to develop the fourth floor, this may be as meritorious as any other. However, if we are looking for a reason to . . . If we are looking to find a way to move the committee out of the Chamber into other suitable space, surely that must open up other options.

I'm working on the assumption it is the latter, that we are looking for committee space. And as such, I think we should see what other options look like. However, other members may be more inclined to seek some excuse to develop the fourth floor, which is unutilized space in this building. If that's the case, then we should determine that early in.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — I think the issue is not . . . I think you're right, what the board is being asked to do is to provide committee space. I think the difference is what kind of committee space is appropriate and adequate. And we were trying to provide a committee space that would allow the new committees to work to the potential that was contemplated in the Rules Committee report, meaning providing more public access to legislators and to the policy development, legislative review process to the public. And if we . . . In order to do that, if that indeed is going to happen, we need a space where we can adequately accommodate the public.

And other Legislatures, when they start doing hearings on controversial Bills, they'll find they have hundreds of people coming to be heard or to observe. And we do not have any space that could accommodate that and the fourth floor was going to give us just a little more flexibility to do that. This was

going to be the small committee room. I agree we didn't need two large committee rooms.

But if that is not the intent, if that is not what is needed for the second committee room and if you don't expect to hold public hearings, then certainly a smaller space would be adequate.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — So then just to refresh my memory, what is the size of the fourth floor versus the size of this room then?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — This room is about 130 square metres and the fourth floor committee room that's proposed is 140 square metres.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — So it's 90 feet bigger, 110 feet bigger — square feet.

**An Hon. Member:** — I think it's a little wider.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes, it's square. It's so long and narrow which makes it just a little more flexible.

**The Chair:** — Well, I think we've been advised as to what our, your know what our direction is in terms of additional information that's needed and comparisons that are needed. So I think what we'll do is with the consent of the board, members of the board, is to undertake to you know, find some . . . get some more detail on the costs and also on the suitability I think is important too. And it also will require considerable consultation, I think, with Executive Council and anybody else that may be affected. Mr. Hagel did you have a . . . Are we okay with that? All right.

Now members we've sat for three hours and we've got a couple of items here remaining. Would the members like to take a little break, or would the members like to go into camera or would you like to just continue on? What I would propose, I think there is a couple of items that should be discussed in camera, but what if I propose that we break . . . Yes, Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't clear to me, was there a timeline on your recommendation for additional study and review and report back? The reason I ask is because I do tend to be of the view that this is the desirable fiscal year in order to move forward on the achievement of a second committee room be that fourth floor or other. And imperative in that discussion of course has to be why any project consultation with SPMC and their capacity to get their portions of funding into their budget because if that doesn't happen, it doesn't matter how willing we are through Board of Internal Economy, it isn't going to happen. So it seems to me that there is . . . that this is a pretty short timeline on the additional review of the various spaces. And I think there are probably about four or five that have been referenced here this afternoon to look at outside of specifically the fourth floor.

**The Chair:** — Well I just summarized the things that I'd heard, so I wasn't going to project a timeline. So if you have a suggestion . . .

**Mr. Hagel:** — Soon. By definition I think it has to be because the whole financial decision-making process leading to a spring

budget is becoming very ... (inaudible) ... the time is becoming very concentrated. And I can't recommend what that date is, but I think it's probably within the next three or four weeks at the very most.

So a review which would take five weeks, for example, means nothing's going to happen this year, by definition, if I'm right when I say it's got to be within the next four weeks. But the Department of Finance will be able to define when does the ... there will be a deadline for Executive Council; there will be a deadline. And we've got ... in order to have any potential to arrive at a plan that's workable in this fiscal year, it's got to be within that deadline or the capacity is lost, I think.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — We could try for an initial two weeks and see if we can get at least a preliminary assessment.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Because I would think that's very reasonable, if we're going to try and be realistic about getting something done in the '05-06 fiscal year.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I guess the alternative would be for us to explore this, return back, and look at it as a mid-year expenditure once we have a better idea on what the mid-year financial situation is. Nothing would rule out the ability for us, through the Legislative Assembly, to generate a special warrant to cover the cost once we have a better handle on what those costs are and what we're prepared to incur and what the budget situation is like. Although I do tend to agree we've discussed this so many times, it'd be nice to have a resolution to it at some point.

**Mr. Hagel:** — I think we've looked at this, the fourth floor, for several years — nothing new about this idea. And it's been the one that has had the most attention given to it.

But I also agree with the important question that Minister Thomson asks, and that is what is our first objective? And I think clearly we're all saying our first objective is to have effective committee space that represents the needs of the new parliamentary structure that we're using.

It may very well be that if the answer is no — there is not room in the SPMC fiscal budget for the spring budget now — that another option would be then to reconsider this at the mid-year, you know, later on in the fiscal year. But clearly if we don't get this achieved, I think within the next couple of weeks, it's automatically no, there can be no other answer but no.

And I'm not sure that there's a ton of work left to be done because things have been looked at. And it's a matter of having some consultations, tying down some numbers, coming back with recommendations in priority ... or order, I should say, with the advice of the Clerk as you project our committee needs into the future.

And it may very well be that the most prudent course of action would be to have two committee rooms about this size which accommodate committee needs in the usual course of events, and that you use the Chamber if there is something that is anticipated to have, you know, attendance in the hundreds, as the Clerk has referenced, because there isn't an option. I don't think there is a room around here that has the potential to

accommodate people by the several dozens, let alone, you know, counted by the hundreds in attendance outside of the Chamber, would be my guess.

I know that this would require a high-priority attention, but I think it's achievable. And if we are serious about trying to get a decision made and move on in this fiscal year, in this centennial year, then I don't think there's any other way of doing it.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Well we can try to get something back in two weeks. But as you mentioned, if we can't meet the deadlines for this budget our only other option would be then to carry it over. I do think it's important to do a thorough job on this and to have the answers to all anticipated questions. So thank you very much.

Now once again, would we be in agreement at this time to have a little recess followed by an in camera session.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — And so then we are therefore recessed, back into camera, and then we will call staff back when we're done the in camera. I expect we will be calling them back today sometime? All right, thank you.

**The board continued in camera.**

**The Chair:** — I think we'll come back to order, members. The members have had an opportunity now to listen to all the presentations and also to consider the implications in camera, and I expect that members are prepared at this time to make some decisions.

So I would bring to your attention, please, first of all, that we should start with item no. 2, consideration of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman.

I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I'll make a motion, Mr. Chair:

That the '05-06 estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$1,624,000 and divided as follows: budgetary to be voted, 1,496,000; statutory, \$128,000; and further that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder for the motion? Mr. McMorris. Are there any comments? You can sign that, please, and then pass it this way. If not then, will members take it as read?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All in favour of the motion? Those in favour? Any opposed to the motion? None opposed. Motion is carried unanimously.

We'll proceed to item 3, which is a review of the information technology request from the two offices — the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman and the Office of the Children's Advocate. I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I move:

That the proposal for the two-staged information system replacement be approved with the following funding for the '05-06 budget: the Children's Advocate, \$28,000 and the Provincial Ombudsman, \$42,000.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder for the motion? Ms. Harpauer seconded. Any comments or questions? If not, those in favour of the motion please raise your hand. Any opposed? None opposed. The motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4, review of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Children's Advocate. I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

That the 2005-06 estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$1,178,000 with the budgetary to be voted, \$1,049,000 and the statutory, \$129,000; and further that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair, so moved.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder? Mr. McMorris. Any comments? Those who favour the motion, please raise your hands. Anybody opposed? I see none opposed. The motion is carried unanimously.

Item 5, Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, review of the 2005-2006 budget. I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

That the 2005-06 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 Chair:** — Thank you. Is there a seconder? Mr. McMorris. Any comments or questions. Those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Are any opposed to the motion? None. Motion is carried unanimously.

Item 6, review of the budget for 2005-2006 for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

That the 2005-06 estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, in the amount of \$791,000 statutory, be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

I so move.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder for the motion? Ms. Higgins ... pardon me, Ms. Harpauer. Anybody on the motion of Higgins and Harpauer? Those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Anybody opposed? None opposed. Motion is carried unanimously.

Item 7, review of the 2005-2006 budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

That the 2005-06 estimates of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$488,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair; and that the Information and Privacy Commissioner work with SPMC to investigate options around available space before adding additional staff.

So moved.

**The Chair:** — On the motion by Mr. Hagel, is there a seconder? Mr. McMorris. Any comments or questions? Those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Any opposed? None opposed. The motion is carried unanimously.

I believe the next item deals with the budget of the Legislative Assembly Office, and we should first of all refer to the Legislative Assembly gift shop proposal. Is there anybody got anything on that? I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Are you on item ... which ...

**The Chair:** — This would be item 10.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Oh, you're jumping ahead. Okay thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair I'll move:

That the board approve a grant of up to a maximum of \$21,000 for fiscal year 2005-06 to the RSM Associates for the operation of a gift shop in the Cumberland Gallery, subject to such terms and conditions as may be agreed to in an operating agreement between SPMC and RSM Associates, and subject to approval by the Speaker.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder for the motion? Ms. Harpauer. Any discussion or comments? Those in favour of the motion, please raise their hands. Any opposed? None. Motion is carried unanimously.

I think then we can proceed to the item no. 10 as well, which deals directly with the total budget. Are there any other items on the B-budget that we should be looking at? I don't think there are. Then with respect to the review of the budget document itself I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I'll move:

That the 2005-06 estimates of the Legislative Assembly be approved as follows: budgetary, \$6,571,000; statutory, \$12,872,000; for a total of \$19,443,000, and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

So moved.

**The Chair:** — On the motion by Mr. Hagel, is there a seconder? Ms. Harpauer has seconded.

**Mr. Hagel:** — I've already filled in Mr. McMorris on the form.

**The Chair:** — Friendly amendment. Motion by Mr. Hagel, seconded by Mr. McMorris. Those in favour of the motion, raise their hand. Anybody opposed? None opposed. The motion's carried unanimously.

We then have the decision item with respect to approval of the revenue estimates. I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

That revenue estimates for the Legislative Assembly in the amount of \$6,000 be approved for the 2005-06 fiscal year.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder to the motion? Ms. Harpauer. On the motion of Hagel and Harpauer. Those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? Motion's carried unanimously.

There may be some discussion as we move to item 11, constituency assistant benefits, some amendments. Is there any . . . open for discussion or comments. I recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move:

Effective April 1, 2005:

(1) that directive #6, constituency assistant expenses be amended as follows:

a) delete clause (1) and replace with new clause (1) as follows:

Each member is entitled to have payment made on his or her behalf for constituency assistant expenses incurred by him or her in respect of his or her duties as a member in his or her constituency. The amount available to each member for such services is aligned to step 4 of the junior ministerial assistant classification pursuant to the ministerial assistant employment regulations.

b) delete clause (4) and replace with new clause (4) as follows:

The employment relationship exists only between the member and his or her constituency assistant. Payments made by the Legislative Assembly on behalf of a member to his or her constituency assistant may only be made after receipt of the necessary documentation, as the case may require.

c) add the following new clause (5) as follows:

Prior to payment, a member must authorize all payments made by the Legislative Assembly on the member's behalf to his or her constituency assistant.

And point 2, Mr. Speaker, is:

(2) that a new directive — directive 6.1, constituency assistant benefits — as attached, be approved.

I so move.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder? Ms. Harpauer. Open for comments or questions. Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I would just like to comment on the importance of the constituency assistants. They are our primary support person in many situations. They handle a broad spectrum of situations in the constituency office.

Many of them are working alone, and they have to know a little bit about every avenue and every department of the government and how to assist a number of people in a lot of ways. So I think that their skills has to be fairly diverse. Their hours sometimes are quite inconsistent, and I can't say enough of the importance of our constituency assistants and their abilities to do a great job.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. I recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to concur with the comments made by my colleague opposite. Our constituency assistants are our most valuable resource. They, on a day-to-day basis, represent us in the community, take phone calls from members of the community, from our constituency and otherwise, and deal with those people on our behalf. And the talent of those individuals play a key role in our ability to deliver services to the public.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think we cannot say enough about the role they play in helping those members of the public deal with us as members of the legislature and with the government and our various departments when they are in time of need.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to appreciate what our constituency assistants do on our behalf. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Are there any further comments or questions? On the motion by Mr. Yates and Ms. Harpauer, those in favour of the motion please raise their hand. Anybody opposed? None. The motion is carried unanimously.

Are there further motions with respect to constituency assistants?

Let's proceed then to item 12, which deals with the inventory records . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We can deal with this one first. Item 12, dealing with raising the minimum value for inventory records. I recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, I would move:

Effective April 1, 2005, that directive 4.1, constituency services expenses be amended as follows:

Delete the amount of \$50 from clause (13) and replace with the amount of \$250.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder? Ms. Harpauer. Any comments? Those in favour of the motion please raise their hand. Anybody opposed? I see none. Motion is carried unanimously.

We go back, I believe that's item 12. Back to item 12. Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Chair, I would move:

That for the fiscal year 2005-06, that the indexing provision in clause (15) of directive #4.1, constituency service expenses not be applied to the amount of \$35,000 specified in clause (2).

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder to that motion? Seconded by Ms. Harpauer. Those in favour of the motion by Yates and Harpauer? Anybody opposed? None opposed, the motion is carried unanimously.

Now we . . . the discussion on item 13 with respect to MLA travel, living expenses, claim forms. Does anybody have a comment? Mr. McMorris.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Effective January 1, 2005, that clause (4) of directive 3.1, MLA travel and living expenses be deleted and replaced with:

Subject to clause (5) instead of clause (3)(d), with the required documentations, every member who represents a constituency wholly outside the city of Regina has the option of claiming reimbursement for accommodation expenses in the city of Regina up to the maximum of \$30 for each day the private accommodation is available to the member's occupancy and is not rented to another person. No claim for the rent by any other member in respect to the same premises may be reimbursed.

I so move.

**The Chair:** — Do I have a seconder? Mr. Thomson. Are there any comments or questions? On the motion by Mr. McMorris and Mr. Thomson, those in favour of the motion raise their hand. Anybody opposed? I see none opposed. Motion is carried unanimously.

Further to item 13 with respect to the claim form, I recognize Ms. Harpauer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I move:

That effective January 1, 2005, the MLA Regina accommodation expense claim form as attached be approved as the form required by the members to claim for Regina accommodation expenses pursuant to clause 4 of directive #3.1, travel and living expenses.

**The Chair:** — Is there a seconder to that one? Mr. Thomson. Any comments? Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to speak to this only to put into context the discussions that we've had and the decisions that we've made. I think all people, all citizens understand and taxpayers understand that members of the Legislative Assembly — particularly those who reside outside of Regina — incur often unusual expenses, certainly the requirement for members to be in their home constituencies but also to spend a fair amount of time here in the capital city. As we have seen over the last several years,

with MLAs taking on much more of an active, full-time role in the public life of the province sometimes means that they are out of pocket expenses that frankly we wouldn't expect other Saskatchewan families to incur.

The changes that we have undertaken here, while not providing for, by any means, a full recovery of those out-of-pocket costs, I think do provide some recognition that out of . . . members from outside of the capital city do need to maintain second residences in many cases, that these go obviously beyond the normal costs that members should be expected to incur and that this provides them with what we believe to be a reasonable offset for the ancillary costs that they incur in undertaking their duties.

So in that regard we have tried to balance off both the need to make sure members are not out of pocket a great deal, but also to make sure that there is a reasonable provision for those members to recoup some of those costs and to provide for that in a way that is accountable to taxpayers.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Any further comments? And on the motion as proposed, those in favour of the motion please raise their hand. Anybody opposed? I see none opposed. The motion is carried unanimously.

Are there any other comments or motions with respect to MLA allowances? I recognize Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Chairman, at our last meeting we had a great deal of discussion about how members should recoup some of the out-of-pocket costs that they are being asked to incur. As we've had an opportunity to reflect over the last several weeks about this, it has become clear that the solution we arrived at was not necessarily the most optimum one. To that extent I will be moving the following motion and I would like to comment on it afterwards. I would move:

That effective April 1, 2005, that minute no. 1602 of meeting no. 6 of '04 be revoked and that directive 21, the annual indemnity and expenses be amended as follows:

- (a) to delete the number 65,001 in clause (1) and replace it with the number 66,431; and
- (b) delete the number 5,319 in clause (6) and replace it with the number 5,436; and

that for the fiscal year 2005-2006 the indexing provision in clause (8) not be applied to either number referenced in clauses (a) or (b) of this motion.

I would so move.

**The Chair:** — We have a mover, and for us for comment, could I get a seconder. Seconded by Mr. McMorris. The Chair recognizes Mr. Thomson.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — In the discussions we had had before Christmas about the members' expenses that they incur and the way that they should be reimbursed for them, we had undertaken to make some changes to the allowances. As we had reflected on that over the last several weeks, it became clear that we should as much as possible stick to the provisions that were outlined within the McDowell Commission report that dealt

with our pay and provisions back in 1994 . . . 1995, that came into effect in 1995.

Those provisions would allow for today the members, as of April 1 of this year to be paid \$65,001 in taxable income and have an offset, a flow through account, an indemnity of \$5,319, or . . . sorry, \$5,436 as of April 1 to deal with other expenses.

I think in reflecting on these matters, it is always difficult to determine exactly how members balance off the cost of doing their job with what is an appropriate amount of pay. This motion today restores the integrity of the McDowell Commission report. It will provide that members receive no more than the McDowell had set out for them to receive under the terms and conditions he had identified, and it provides I believe still for members to still receive sufficient funds to undertake their jobs to carry out the extra duties they have and at the same time to support their families.

The overall change in terms of the impact on members between this and minute 1602 is not particularly significant. This results in about \$65 a month less flowing to members in terms of gross pay but I think it maintains the integrity of the McDowell Commission which we, of course, we are all familiar with.

With these changes I think that we're in a better position to deal with the discharging of our duties and to be able to make sure that the appropriate remuneration is in place. And so that is why I have moved this motion tonight, and I appreciate the support of the opposition in undertaking these changes and revoking minute 1602 and I would ask members to support these changes.

**The Chair:** — Any further comments or questions? Then I think we have a seconder, Mr. McMorris. Then on the motion by Mr. Thomson and Mr. McMorris, those in favour of the motion, please raise your hands. I see six hands. Any opposed? None. Motion is carried unanimously.

Are there any other items that members wish to address? I do believe then that the agenda that members set out at 10 a.m. this morning to accomplish has been completed. And the time now being almost exactly 10 o'clock in the evening, thank members for their last 12 hours of continuous service, broken only by the occasional coffee break and lunch.

I thank all members for their diligence to this task, and this of course will be now reported to the Committee on House Services.

I recognize Mr. Hagel.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, just through you, I would like to express appreciation to all of the officers of the Assembly who did careful deliberation in bringing the budgetary proposals for next fiscal year to us today.

And also in particular, Mr. Speaker, to express our appreciation to all of those who provide service to members through the Legislative Assembly branch, to say thanks for not only the budget preparations but their ongoing service to the members year-round.

**The Chair:** — It's been duly noted.

Motion to adjourn? Mr. Hagel. Motion to adjourn. All in favour? Motion is carried. Thank you.

The board adjourned at 22:01.